

## VALUES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION FROM THE MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE CONTEMPORARY EUROPE. VISIONS AND LIMITS OF PLURALISM

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*The full realisation of human rights requires all human beings to be aware of their and other people's rights and of the means to ensure their protection. This is the task of human rights education which builds knowledge, skills and attitudes prompting behaviour that upholds human rights.*

Navi Pillay, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>1</sup>

*My purpose here, is to develop an analytical framework to highlight and support the undeniable potential of human rights education in the double context of globalization on the one hand, and very notion of multiculturalism and assessment of its usefulness to grasp the challenging realities of present times and provide viable descriptions, interpretations, and explications of contemporary processes, on the other. This paper concentrates on the issue of rethinking the concept of multiculturalism, integration, tolerance and human rights in the context of the wider ongoing debate about the place of multiculturalism in contemporary Europe. In interpreting contemporary debates about multiculturalism in Europe, it is critical to distinguish between political discourse and government policies. At the level of discourse, there is a widespread perception that multiculturalism has failed and that governments that once embraced a multicultural approach to diversity are turning away adopting a strong emphasis on civic integration. Nevertheless, those civic integration initiatives are often being layered on top of existing multicultural programs,*

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<sup>1</sup> Interview from A PATH TO DIGNITY: THE POWER OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION, *Human Rights Education Associates (HREA), Soka Gakkai International (SGI), UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR)* (2012), available at: <http://path-to-dignity.org/film-english>.

*leading to a blended approach to diversity. With the above in mind, I will argue that an understanding of different cultures and how to communicate across them has been a great asset, and challenge to human rights and citizenship education activities taking place across Europe.*

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#### INTRODUCTION

Recent social and political changes in European societies pose many theoretical and practical questions concerning different notions of pluralism in Europe. Lately this debate on pluralism and multiculturalism has focused on issues dealing with the very identity of Europe and its future developments. It centres on such legal areas as protection of human rights, constitutional aspects of European integration, regulation of migration and European citizenship, as well as inclusion of minorities.

All European states face similar dilemmas which the author would qualify as *human rights policy questions*. Europe is committed to democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are essential to our societies and are the non-negotiable framework for managing diversity. While some specific traditional practices are not compatible with human rights principles, most of the specific needs of different groups can be accommodated within this framework without much difficulty. There can be scope for different interpretations of what certain human rights principles require in specific situations, when this is the object of consensus within the society. However, the existing normative framework of international and European human rights law must be respected by all. For the above reason, one of the most disturbing recent experiences in the field of human rights politics is that right-wing movements in Europe have rhetorically taken up parts of the human rights agenda using such a selective approach for human rights as a powerful weapon against the recognition of cultural diversity in general and Muslim minorities in particular. The paradox as well as the cunning of their strategy is that they invoke *liberal achievements*, especially gender equality and respect for sexual minorities, with an *antiliberal*

*intention*, i.e. with the purpose of excluding cultural and religious minorities from full membership in society. This rhetorical pattern is often successful because there are obvious tensions between the liberating spirit of modern human rights and traditional patriarchal norms as they still seem to prevail in some milieus among cultural minorities. At the same time, however, it is clear that turning human rights into an argument for *excluding* some groups of persons, due to their cultural or religious backgrounds, actually means to *abuse* human rights and deny their universalistic and inclusive aspirations.

All the more so, although almost all societies are multicultural in the sense that they contain two or more languages or religions, and people there live according to many value systems and traditions, few countries can be labelled as ideologically multicultural societies. This multiculturalism implies a positive or at least a neutral government attitude towards cultural diversity, public support for the maintenance of cultural practices and identities, and public efforts to overcome social inequalities based on cultural backgrounds or markers. States are required under international law to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, and therefore must ensure that: education about human rights, through human right and for human rights is aimed at strengthening the enjoyment of human rights and the full development of the human personality<sup>2</sup>.

In this presentation, the author argues for an inclusive understanding of human rights that open up the space for an *explicit recognition of cultural diversity*. Stressing the inclusive spirit of human rights does not mean to turn a blind eye to conflicts—sometimes harsh conflicts—between the liberal human rights and authoritarian elements as they obviously exist in some cultural traditions. However, in openly addressing such conflicts, human rights require sensitivity and above all wise and broad education in order to avoid stereotyping and sweeping stigmatisation.

Universality of human rights must be firmly upheld, but universality of *all* human rights, including economic and social rights. In Europe many problems relating to cultural diversity are problems of social justice and non-realisation of social and economic rights for some sectors of the population. In addition, it is absolutely essential that effective measures are taken to combat discrimination and racist attitudes that mark European societies already for some time.<sup>3</sup>

Balancing security with fundamental rights, integration, religious

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<sup>2</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Art. 26.2.

<sup>3</sup> EUROPEAN UNION FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AGENCY (FRA), (Press Release 21 March 2016), available at <http://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2016/attacks-against-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants-are-unacceptable-say-heads>.

freedom, respect for diversity, and security (both physically and online), are current problems for European human rights and citizenship education programs and policy.<sup>4</sup> It is obvious that in order to combat the further spread of prejudice, human rights education and training that reaches out to all age groups and professions is vital. We need to *live together as equals*, and human rights do not provide a blueprint for solving, let alone generally avoiding conflicts in culturally pluralistic societies.

### I. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This essay explores a couple of issues in the relationship between human rights education, historical education, and multicultural education. My argument does not assume that there is an obvious and necessary connection between historical learning and human rights education. Instead the author argues that studying the history of the European colonial expansions, the historical ties between European states and Arab world does not automatically confer an appreciation for human rights as fundamental principles and an understanding of their necessity. Nor does it automatically confer an understanding of the contemporary relevance of human rights norms, even within democratic societies. At the same time, however, the author indicates that historical and political education are indispensable for understanding human rights.

A historical perspective on human rights can play a key role in promoting public awareness about human rights and clarifying the contemporary significance of human rights for both the individual and society. Human rights education can incorporate the historical perspective in two ways: first, by remembering and reconstructing the occasionally neglected link between experiences of injustice and the protection of human rights; and second, by illuminating the potential for future progress in human rights.

As such, human rights education must avoid presenting human rights as timeless, eternal, and uncontested. In order for students to properly understand human rights and human rights violations, they have to explore social conflicts and their history and understand how contemporary definitions of human rights emerged. History is not simply an enhancement, but an essential component in the project of human rights education. A historical perspective on human rights concepts and issues not only benefits

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<sup>4</sup> FRA has built up a large body of evidence-based information on topical issues related to equality and discrimination, which is continually expanded as new challenges arise. *See* <http://fra.europa.eu/en/research>.

students, but can help to shape a broader social and political discourse on human rights.

In addition, we must address the complexities of historical perspectives that deepen our understanding of and engagement for human rights in both human rights education and political discourse more broadly. Our understanding of history is shaped by our own social location and point of view, which cause us to remember the past differently from others. Such “conflicts of memory” may lead to competition between different groups of victims. Educational programs must adopt a reflexive stance that interrogates different perspectives while recognizing that they cannot simply be explained away.

Having the above in mind, it is correct to indicate that education free from narrowness and human rights education in its specific scope is central to democratic societies. In principle, the higher their level of education, the more actively citizens participate in elections and other aspects of democratic life. Education for democratic citizenship aims, by equipping learners with knowledge and skills, to empower them to exercise and defend their human rights and responsibilities in society.

There is no question that human rights education, together with education for democratic citizenship has an important role to play in bridging cultural and social divide in society-ethnic, religious, linguistic, economic, etc. and in contributing to building an open mind and identity in line with the diverse, interconnected world of today. Therefore, education, in this broad sense, becomes a real asset for our diverse democracies. It must equip citizens with skills to understand and navigate the ideological, cultural, economic and political complexities of 21st Century without fear and with resilience to manipulation, including by radical ideologies.

## II. MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT

The debate on human rights has long been concerned with the issue of minority cultural rights and their relationship to democratic principles of equality, as well as the underlying principles which should guide our attempts to address the contentious issues of difference and heterogeneity in immigrant societies<sup>5</sup>.

As this debate has shown, multiethnic and multicultural societies are inevitably confronted with what Charles Taylor calls the “politics of recognition”, but at the same time must grapple with the tendency for such

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<sup>5</sup> This debate was spurred by the publication of CHARLES TAYLOR, *MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION* (Princeton University Press, 1992).

cultural politics of identity to subvert the ideal of universal and inalienable human rights. This multifaceted debate has nonetheless reached the broad consensus that a key challenge facing democratic and human rights policies is the need to recognize ethnic and cultural diversity while simultaneously ensuring the full and equal participation of migrants in the host country. This challenge requires us to understand integration as a reciprocal process in which the majority must also make accommodations. Our willingness and ability to undertake this task is both an educational and a political issue, and its success requires a long-term commitment to social learning and social change.

The dilemmas confronting multicultural and migrant societies in the area of human rights have much to do with the preservation and transformation of historically determined forms and understandings of identity. For this reason, history and collective memory are important and contentious issues, both in terms of the struggle of minorities for recognition of their cultural identity and right to self-determination, as well as the majority's reaction to this demographic and social change. Migrant and multicultural societies necessarily encourage the proliferation of diverse historical narratives and collective memories. As a result, the majority must come to terms with the breakdown of formerly transparent and universal representations of the past in public institutions and discourses. These issues create clear challenges for the "politics of recognition" in migrant societies. Human rights education can help students critically engage with the human rights problems that arise in migrant communities, including discrimination against ethnic and cultural minorities, and especially against refugees and asylum seekers. Given the diversity of understandings of morality and rights within migrant societies, which are also reflected in the thoughts and actions of students, we cannot assume any social consensus about the universal validity of human rights. Instead, human rights education must work to achieve this consensus. Thus, the primary goal of human rights education in multicultural environment should not be to act as a vehicle for conveying universal human values, as this would conflict with the historical understanding of human rights as the concrete outcome of a process of struggle. Rather, human rights education should convey that human rights are not a universal end point, but the historical outcome of a development that is still underway.

What might first appear to be a weakness of human rights education in multicultural societies—the diversity of students and the apparent absence of pre-defined understanding of human rights—is in fact its strength; it is this diversity which creates the conditions for an educationally fruitful

dialogue about the meaning and importance of human rights. Moreover, human rights education that integrates the experiences of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and in their countries of origin can help advance communication among groups with different religious affiliations, cultural backgrounds, and world views. This learning is best accomplished within self-reflective dialogue about the injustice of human rights violations, including discrimination against minority groups. It can also help students understand the importance of human rights for the organization of society and the law. In fact historical education is a crucial element within this learning process, since the study of history shows that all human rights advances, whether in the past or present, have been achieved through contestation and struggle. Indeed, the fact that human rights remain an ongoing project today ensures the credibility of human rights education and empowers students to engage in the critical self-reflection that is central to the conceptual link between human rights education and memory work.

The major challenge when discussing the issue of education and multiculturalism is dealing with some of the inherent tensions that arise in reconciling competing world views with each other. Such tensions reflect the diversity of values which co-exist in a multicultural world. Often, cannot be resolved in a single “either/or” solution. However, the dynamic interchange between competing aspects is what lends richness to the debate on education and multiculturalism.

Therefore, in order to strengthen democracy, education systems need to take into account the multicultural character of society, and aim at actively contributing to peaceful coexistence and positive interaction between different cultural groups. Multicultural approach to education uses learning about other cultures in order to produce acceptance, or at least *tolerance*, of these cultures. This form of education has to be the main tool to combat racism and xenophobia. But using the “traditional” educational model where a teacher imparts knowledge to his or her students is not, in this case, the most appropriate. Non-formal education, by contrast, uses games, discussion or exercises to help people recognise, understand and challenge attitudes and behaviour, and develop new skills and competencies. Such approaches are increasingly common in all types of settings: school, youth centre, business and community groups. Non-formal education aims to go beyond passive coexistence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of *understanding* of, *respect* for and *dialogue* between the different cultural groups. This model of education uses non-formal methods to help participants examine how they interact with other cultures, societies and

social groups, and develop more “cultural awareness”. In this context, local and regional authorities have an important role to play in fostering intercultural dialogue, active citizenship and cultural diversity, thereby enabling inhabitants to live better together, and to prevent and overcome ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides. In order to achieve this, intercultural competences should be taught and learned, and spaces for intercultural dialogue should be created and widened. Local and regional authorities<sup>6</sup> have to accommodate different cultures, people, nations, religions, ethnicities, and also involve them in democratic decision-making processes. If cultural diversity is well managed—with diversity being understood as enriching and positive—and based on the principles of tolerance and solidarity, a culture of peace, cross-cultural dialogue and civic engagement, democracy becomes more representative, and consequently more stable and consolidated.

While some of the focus on multicultural education in international and culturally diverse national contexts centres on the value and practices of human rights education, one must not forget about the importance of the access to quality multicultural education as a human right of its own accord. That is, the author argues that all students are entitled to an education that is multicultural. In this regard, the author believes that conceptions of human rights need to value the potential role of multicultural education. In my view assertion that multicultural education is a human right comes from recognition of access to quality education as well as cultural diversity as internationally recognized right. Multicultural education plays a role to assure access to quality education, affirm cultural and linguistic diversity, and promote broader human rights aims. Education can play an important role in addressing the losses created by assimilatory policies. It begins with a multicultural and human rights-based education in which each student sees her or himself in the curriculum as one tool to address historical educational inequalities. Education must respect and positively represent each student’s individual cultural background so that each person can make the most of it in their personal journey and in their interaction with others. They learn

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<sup>6</sup> The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution and a recommendation on 25 March 2015 focusing on the role of local and regional authorities in combating and preventing radicalisation, and drawing up a Congress strategy on this basis. This initiative is in line with the new “Council of Europe Action Plan 2015-17 to combat extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism”, and other Council of Europe activities, such as the Intercultural Cities Programme. As part of the strategy on preventing radicalisation, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will compile an educational toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and inter-faith activities. Furthermore, the promotion of education for democratic citizenship and human rights will be at the heart of the 2016 World Forum for Democracy organised by the Council of Europe, to which the Congress will make an active contribution.

about their past, understand their present, and acknowledge their power to fight for their future. A central tenet of multicultural education must be that the reduction of racial and cultural prejudices is not only possible but also desirable, while anti-racism is most associated with a human rights approach to education, it is also consonant with all other approaches to multicultural education including social justice approaches. In conclusion: learning from others is yet another human right that is supported by multicultural education.

### III. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND CHALLENGE OF MULTICULTURALISM IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

Europe as a whole is multicultural. It was ever thus but the complexity is increasing as a consequence of mobility and migration. It is important to clarify the impact of this societal phenomenon on individuals who are potentially or actually multicultural as a consequence of experiencing multicultural social life. The threats to social cohesion which increased multiculturalism bring, have to be counter-acted by education for intercultural dialogue which depends on intercultural competence.

Although multiculturalism has been discussed for quite some time, only in the last few years it has taken a prime position in popular discussions. Some commentators have claimed that multicultural policies are to blame for the rise of extremism, as these policies encourage the segregation of cultural groups.<sup>7</sup> Others have insisted that religious and cultural attachments should remain in the private sphere and should not be supported or encouraged by the state<sup>8</sup>. Multiculturalism is further accused of ignoring the national identity; even more so, of inciting disrespect towards it. The argument goes that individuals are encouraged to develop their cultural allegiance, rather than solely their national identity. Since, multiculturalism is not a term explicitly mentioned in any human rights or international law instrument, and only sparse references can be found in UN discussions, different versions of the concept appeal to different commentators. Generally speaking, multiculturalism is primarily about respecting and celebrating the culture of the individual in the public sphere. It cannot be

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<sup>7</sup> For example, in the UK context, see Gilles Kepel, *Europe's Answer to Londonistan*, OPEN DEMOCRACY (24 Aug. 2005), available at [http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-terrorism/londonistan\\_2775.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-terrorism/londonistan_2775.jsp); William Pfaff, *A Monster of Our Own Making*, OBSERVER 24 (London: 21 Aug. 2005); Martin Wolf, *When Multiculturalism Is a Nonsense*, FINANCIAL TIMES 15 (London: 31 Aug. 2005).

<sup>8</sup> BRIAN BARRY, CULTURE AND EQUALITY: AN EGALITARIAN CRITIQUE OF MULTICULTURALISM 32—40 (2001).

denied that multiculturalism challenges the dominant culture and recognizes more allegiances than only that to the state, and this is the reason why, during discussions often one can encounter following questions: Do the recognition of groups other than the state and the recognition of multiple identities undermine the national identity? Does multiculturalism encourage the proliferation of “fundamentalist” views? My answer to this question is negative. On the contrary, it is the emphasis on one culture that runs the danger of inciting extremism. The continuing discrimination and exclusion of certain groups from mainstream society explain the radicalization in Europe. Individuals coming from oppressed groups, groups that are excluded from the public life, are more likely to alienate themselves even more, to create a completely separate system, and to try to undermine the state’s sovereignty.

One of the main challenges for multiculturalism lies with the management of ethnic, religious, or cultural allegiances when in conflict. Within a multicultural society clashes between cultural practices and values and human rights often occur. The interaction sometimes causes friction and conflicts that are resolved following institutions and procedures of discussion that all participants have accepted as legitimately binding. It is important that the groups are not pushed towards a forged cultural consensus or a symbolic order, for a simple reason that individuals from any background may identify themselves with values associated with a range of sources. At the same time, there are also individuals who claim a more bounded cultural identity. Thus, a multicultural society is not a patchwork of several fixed cultural identities, but a network of crosscutting networks and identifications which are situated, contested, dynamic and fluid, and heavily dependent on context. In this context there is a particular role for human rights education in multicultural societies. Europeans must be aware of the fact that Europe has become a melting pot of diversity. The perspective for the future is rather one of more diversity than one of less diversity. Cultural diversity does not only mean that we ought to strive towards a society where each person’s talents are being acknowledged or expressed and where one has, on paper, just as many rights. It also means that individuals of different cultural backgrounds want to live with and next to each other.

However, whether we like it or not: We Europeans simply do not understand each other. Is this because we do not want to understand each other or is this because we are not able to understand each other? For the moment I hold on to both possibilities. Without understanding or respect for the motive of the other person and only viewing the world from someone own reality it is hard to reconcile differences. Unfortunately this is an

ongoing human process we encounter every time. We lock ourselves up in our moral ivory tower and judgement, in addition to which it is easier to multiply the differences instead of reconciling them. Sometimes we have to add to these factors, such as the feeling of superiority and power, which makes the situation even less charming. We experience a separation within Europe based on different historical experiences, painful historical experiences, bitterness that constantly leads towards looking backwards instead of looking forward. This in turn determines to a larger extent what we see and what we can or will see.

It seems that those who oppose to migration inflows to Europe in general often fall into a trap of West-centralism. This is a notion of a supposed uniqueness and cultural and political superiority of the West civilization. This notion argues that democracy, humanism, freedom and human rights all uniquely belong to the West. In this view, all the above concepts emerged as a result of heritage of ancient Greece and Rome, Christianity, Renaissance and the Enlightenment and finally as a fruit of industrial revolution and democratic movements. In fact, this standpoint ignores the profound achievements of different civilizations which have been far advanced of anything in the West for ages.

Globalization and growing migration are increasingly driving states toward ethnic and cultural diversification. Unfortunately, this phenomenon continues to give rise to xenophobic and discriminatory feelings and practices in populations around the world. Numerous international instruments such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the international Covenant on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, have been created to promote non-discriminatory access to basic human rights for all human beings, regardless of cultural heritage. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity<sup>9</sup> particularly recognizes the value of diverse cultural heritage and addresses the challenges of ensuring harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities, as well as willingness to live together. Despite the high number of conventions and declarations on

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<sup>9</sup> The *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* that was unanimously adopted by the 188 Member States of UNESCO on November 2, 2001. The timing of the adoption of this Declaration, less than two months after the fateful events of September 11, is significant and it is questionable if some of its provisions would have been retained under different circumstances. The General Conference in 2001 was the first ministerial-level meeting held after September 11. Participants at the meeting felt a strong need to reaffirm the importance of intercultural dialogue in response to the attacks on the World Trade Centre. In the introduction to the UNESCO publication on the Universal Declaration, the Director-General stated that the adoption of the Declaration “was an opportunity for states to reaffirm their conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace and to reject outright the theory of the inevitable clash of cultures and civilization.”

the topic, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance and discrimination continue to plague most regions of the world. This persistence signals a very serious problem that international community must seek to address. Therefore, human rights education approach to this challenge should be based on tolerance and respect for the right to be different in the sense of Voltaire's famous words, "*I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.*" Tolerance in this sense does not mean indifference, simply putting up with "otherness", but the willingness to actively meet and welcome it. But a human rights-based approach to integration means no tolerance for activities or practices that seek to undermine human rights or limit them excessively. Our common European history has taught us that tolerance sounds its own death knell if it does not protect itself from intolerance. In the words of Thomas Mann, "*tolerance becomes a crime when applied to evil.*"

In my opinion the concept of *tolerance* must be seen as a *minimum* standard and precondition for peaceful co-existence in multicultural societies. What's more tolerance and multicultural dialogue do not require one to see all cultures, practices and beliefs as equally true or valuable. Rather, they are based on the fact that one approaches other people, groups and practices with a certain identity and worldview of one's own, although these might change and develop through encounters and exchanges with others from different backgrounds. In sum, such interpretation of multiculturalism implies that different cultures and ways of life are recognised and valued as they have important meanings for the members of the societal culture. The multicultural governance thus has to involve the issue of ethnic diversity in its policies and actively encourage a peaceful coexistence of cultures and the preservation of cultural customs. It is apparent from the outline of different governance models, the positive elements and the many criticisms of multiculturalism that its concept is not easy to grasp and contains tensions that still need to be solved. In my view the concept of multiculturalism is somewhat misunderstood when declared a failure in political discourse for a simple reason: It is a fact of life and diversity is not a value, but a natural state. Therefore, we should be advocating for a holistic approval to promote multiculturalism and diversity. The backlash against multiculturalism is repeatedly presented as the preserve of neo-conservative movements at a time where politicians need to react to the social fears provoked by the escalation of terrorist acts in the name of Islam, on the one hand, and reclaim the nationalist imaginary of social unity in order to confront the economic crisis, on the other. Although the economic weaknesses that swept the EU since 2008 have become

increasingly obvious, the chief reason behind the rise of xenophobic right<sup>10</sup> has not been the economic alternatives it offers, but rather its hostility towards unrestricted migration from Africa and Middle East.

#### IV. A GLANCE AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE STANDPOINT ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

It is a fact that Europe is more and more a multicultural space and that multiculturalism must be properly managed. It is also true that our societies are not only multicultural, they are also increasingly polarised. We must do everything we can to reach across the gap and close it through dialogue, understanding and mutual respect. We must protect our values of democracy and human rights against people who openly preach or even use violence against them, but also speak out against those who hypocritically use these values as a flag of convenience for their own intolerance, prejudice and political objectives. During debates about migration, integration and diversity, human rights are frequently invoked, by all sides of the political and religious spectrum. In principle, it is good news that fundamental rights have once again become a “hot topic”. Human rights are too important to be left only to experts and specialists. As our common value base, they must be firmly anchored in society as a whole. Human rights are crucial not only in the relations between the state and the individual, but also in the relations between individuals themselves. However, the starting point in managing this European boiling pot must be that human rights are universal and therefore cannot be pushed aside in the name of cultural diversity. In contrast to what one might assume on the basis of recent public debate, a multicultural approach towards the human rights of migrants has never been widely spread in Europe. Just as surprising might be the observation that instead of a retreat, multiculturalism has generally increased in the last couple of decades. Also against expectations perhaps is the fact that the road to incorporate multiculturalism into national cultural policies has been full of obstacles, tensions and other difficulties.

In the above context, it is particularly important to notice that the Council of Europe has been trying to develop an approach in which firm insistence on human rights and intercultural tolerance is not seen as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, for the Council of Europe, reconciling

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<sup>10</sup> Xenophobic parties in Europe range from simply wanting tighter border controls, to calling for a “whites-only” immigration policy, to demanding the wholesale deportation of minorities. Though virtually all xenophobic parties are at least “soft Eurosceptic”, some merely call for greater national autonomy within the EU, whereas others are petitioning to quit the EU altogether, primarily in order to resolve the present immigration crisis.

respect for different identities with fostering social cohesion can only succeed if it is based on universally recognised human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles.<sup>11</sup> This has been also the main message of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue—living together as equals with dignity*.<sup>12</sup> Published in 2008 document emphasises the commitment of the Council of Europe member states to open and diverse society, based on the Council Europe core values—human rights, democracy and the rule of law—as well as intellectual dialogue. Of special importance is the third part which points out the opportunities and risks of intercultural dialogue, analyses the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to cultural diversity like assimilation and multiculturalism and describes the conditions, under which intercultural dialogue can become a successful endeavour<sup>13</sup>.

The next and very significant example of the Council of Europe activities in the field of human rights education was adopted in 2010 the *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*<sup>14</sup>. The Charter is an important reference point for all of Europe and provides a common framework, a focus and catalyst for action by member states to implement democratic citizenship and human rights education, disseminate good practice and raise standards throughout Europe and beyond. It is intended to guide member states in the framing of their policies, legislation and practice, with the aim of “providing every person within their territory with the opportunity of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education”<sup>15</sup>. The Charter sets out objectives and principles for human rights education and recommends action in the fields of monitoring, evaluation and research. It calls on member states to include education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in the curricula for formal education at pre-primary, primary and secondary

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<sup>11</sup> Broadly speaking, everything what has been done since the creation of the Council of Europe in 1949 is directly or indirectly related to the promotion of human rights and diversity. This organization sees diversity not as a threat, but as a source of enrichment. Europe thrives on its diversity. CoE actions are focused on preserving the differences between European nations and regions, the diversity of languages, cultures and mentalities, of all persons living in Europe, irrespective of whether they have lived here for generations or have arrived more recently from other continents.

<sup>12</sup> COUNCIL OF EUROPE, WHITE PAPER ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE: “LIVING TOGETHER AS EQUALS IN DIGNITY” (Committee of Ministers, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2008), available at [www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper\\_final\\_revised\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf), accessed 17 October 2016.

<sup>13</sup> White Paper, at 17—24.

<sup>14</sup> The full text of the Charter is available online at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Links/charter\\_adopted\\_en.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Links/charter_adopted_en.asp#TopOfPage).

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010), Art. 5(a).

school level, and for vocational education and training. The Charter also calls on member states to ensure ongoing training and development for education professionals, youth leaders and trainers in the principles and methodologies of human rights education in order to ensure sustainable and effective delivery of human rights education<sup>16</sup>.

As Europe has been lately confronted with the greatest migrant crisis since WWII, the introduction of a new, coherent and effective model of multicultural human rights education has become a priority like never before. The latest expansion of *fortress Europe*, overly restrictive policies, walls and fences and militarised solutions fail to respond to the real challenges faced by human beings, and has created not only a physical barrier around the continent but emotional one, too, around Europe's sense of humanity. The fate of migrants and refugee attempting to entry this *fortress Europe* has triggered new European debate on racism and intolerance and an urgent necessity to endorse the formal human rights and citizenship education system which could be used to address the challenges currently facing European societies. There is no question that educational interventions can be used to counter prejudice and intolerance towards other national, ethnic and religious groups, and to reduce support for violent extremism in the name of religion (especially when that education is delivered in collaboration with local partners and community organisations).

In this context, the Council of Europe has once again reaffirmed the essential role of education in promoting and protecting democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in preventing human rights violations. Building on work that comprises education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, Council of Europe has developed a Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, which has been made up of three main components: the model of competence, a range of descriptors and supporting documents.

In April 2016 the Council of Europe has brought forward<sup>17</sup> this new conceptual model of the competences which citizens require to participate in democratic culture and live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies. *Competence for Democratic Culture: Living Together as*

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, Art. 5(h).

<sup>17</sup> The project was presented to the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education on April 11-12, 2016. The descriptors were tested with educators in summer and fall 2015 and are now being tested more broadly in actual teaching and learning contexts. The development of supporting documents as well as the training of trainers has been launched.

*Equals in Culturally Diverse Democratic Societies*<sup>18</sup> is the product of intensive work over a two-year period, and has been strongly endorsed in an international consultation with leading educational experts.<sup>19</sup> It provides a robust conceptual foundation for the future development of curricula, pedagogies and assessments in democratic citizenship and human rights education. Its application will enable educational systems to be harnessed effectively for the preparation of students for life as engaged and tolerant democratic citizens. In brief, this document describes a conceptual model of the necessary competences (values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding) which need to be acquired by learners if they are to participate effectively in diverse, multicultural societies. Of the particular importance is the issue of competences which has been developed in such a way as to allow member states to adapt themselves to suit their own needs and the distinct cultural profile of their own societies. Through this framework, teachers will be able to instil in their pupils the values of tolerance and respect, as they grow to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to others. The project is constructed in such a way that it will continue to educate for human rights and democracy by offering member states advice on the implementation of this competence framework and help training those who will make it work in practice.

Now the model is being tested in actual teaching situations, from primary school up to higher education and vocational training institutions throughout Europe. The testing is expected to result in several concrete outputs, and at the beginning of 2017 should finally come out as a report with human rights and citizenship education understood as a broad concept of all aspects of schooling based on European key competences framework that lists knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Then, the Council of Europe experts will draw together evidence on formal curriculum, regulations regarding students and parents participation in school governance, student participation in extra-curricular activities, how schools are evaluated on human rights and citizenship education and how teachers

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<sup>18</sup> COUNCIL OF EUROPE: COMPETENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE. LIVING TOGETHER AS EQUALS IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE SOCIETIES (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing 2016), available at: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/competences/CDC\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/competences/CDC_en.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> A first draft of the current document was circulated in 2015 in an international consultation exercise which involved academic experts, educational practitioners and policy makers, including experts nominated by the education ministries of the member states of the Council of Europe. These stakeholders were invited to provide feedback and comments, particularly concerning the conceptual soundness of the model, whether there were any significant omissions from the model and the clarity of the text. The model was also presented at various conferences, workshops and meetings attended by academic experts, educational practitioners and policy makers during the first six months of 2015, where additional feedback and comments were gathered.

are trained on this form of education.

It is not easy to predict whether this project will be effective and will bring positive and satisfactory results all over Europe in the foreseeable future. The good news is that visible step forward has been made in terms of moving from words, conferences and declarations to action.

### CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that diversity is a non-negotiable feature of modern society, whether one likes it or not, whether one views it as an asset or as a problem. Diversity is there, and will not go away. There is no use trying to counter it or trying to demonstrate that it has downsides. Diversity is a dynamic phenomenon, developing as society develops. It is a contextual phenomenon too, specific to a specific place and period. As enriching as cultural diversity is, managing it is a challenge. It is so, because recognising everyone's equal entitlement to individual rights and freedoms inevitably leads to tensions. These are only inherent and healthy in a society, provided that they are adequately and proactively managed.

In my opinion ethnic and cultural diversification will certainly continue in European societies. Whether we prefer multiculturalism or not, it will be increasingly interesting to follow the implications this development will have on national and local human rights education policies. Experiences so far tell us that there could be rousing and instructive debates and discussions ahead. The EU and its member states have to accept that Europe is a continent of migration and that it is in Europe's self-interest not only to allow manage migration but also to ensure the integration of migrants. A holistic approach to migration policy is in the best interest of current and future EU citizens. It must be therefore coordinated with wide reaching human rights and citizenship education policy.

In sum, multiculturalism implies that different cultures and ways of life are to be recognised and valued as they have important meanings for the members of the societal culture. The multicultural governance thus has to involve the issue of ethnic diversity in its policies and actively encourage a peaceful coexistence of cultures and the preservation of cultural customs. It is apparent from the outline of different governance models, the positive elements and the many criticisms of multiculturalism that its concept is difficult to grasp and contains tensions that still need to be solved.

It can be concluded that contemporary understandings of human rights and education converge in productive ways with contemporary but especially critical multicultural education principles. They both share a

belief that cultural diversity is essential for human rights, democracy, and social justice.

The next step is moving these human right principles to actual educational practices. The author believes that multicultural education could become the premiere pedagogical framework from which this move from principles to practices might occur. This will require teacher training around multicultural education, reducing institutional resistance, changing the ideology and dialogue of ministry and state education officials, and building alliances with teacher associations and unions.