

PEACE EDUCATION AS A LIFELONG LEARNING MEANS TO EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

POLICY ROUNDTABLE

European Parliament, 14.06.2022, 11.00-13.00

Welcoming Remarks

Elisa Gambardella, SOLIDAR Foundation, remarks on the current annual theme adopted by the pillar of work in SOLIDAR Foundation that focuses on education, explaining that this is peace education. The immediate urgency might have been informed by the situation in Ukraine, but the work of the SOLIDAR Foundation membership has always taken an angle linked with peace, with a section of the membership already boasting a vast experience on dealing with the inclusion of peace in education practices. She clarifies that the role of the Round Table is not to come with a comprehensive set of conclusions but rather to explore the different conceptualisations of peace in the work of the different stakeholders present, find common grounds in this work and provide inputs, ideas and opinions that would support SOLIDAR Foundation in developing a policy paper on the topic of peace education. At the same time, participants are encouraged to explore the potential policy initiatives that can be activated in relation to peace education, and that they would deem as essential.

Understanding the role and impact of non-formal and informal education to promote peace education

Lana Jurman, [Centre for Peace Studies \(CPS\)](#), Croatia, presents the long-standing work on the topic that her organisation has been doing over the past 25 years. A member of SOLIDAR Foundation, CPS, aims to provide a foundation for promoting non-violence and social change by means of research and activism through a non-formal education course. The work on peace education emerged in CPS in the aftermath of the Balkan wars, and, upon reaching its 25th anniversary, CPS is continuing to advance its education programme which is aimed towards restless citizens. These citizens identify the injustice of the world and would like to obtain the tools needed counteract it. As time passed, she explains how the thematic of the course adapted to the zeitgeist in Croatia, but never diverting too far from peace education, non-violence, asylum and integration or combatting inequalities. The course is an interdisciplinary programme that combines research with public actions, public policy and advocacy.

In the frame of the course, CPS collaborated 11 years ago with the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb on a piece of research that would assess the possibility to include peace education in formal education in Croatia. The outcomes of this work were that peace must be included in a cross-curricular manner in formal education, across social sciences-related subjects, while also an extra-curricular component needs to be provided in partnership with the civil society and while a stand-alone subject for peace education should still be established. Given this requirement, CPS proceeded to promote quality civic education as the umbrella under which peace education can be promoted. Lana explains that the definition used for peace education qualified the subject as values education that develops a culture of peace, promotes equality, socially just relations, sustainable community developments as well as active and responsible citizens.

The non-formal education programme CPS proposes aims to do just that, focusing on human rights, discrimination policies while combining theory and practice. Participants would be supported through mentoring and lectures to unpack structural and cultural violence and oppression while guided by

facilitators coming from both the academia and practice. The goal of the course is to promote Johan Galtung's vision of a positive peace, which radically transforms values and the social order so that each human being can fulfil their potential.

The course is delivered in clusters which tackle the following perspectives:

- The practice of non-violent communication and collaborative manner of working
- Social change and the theory and practice around human rights
- Human security, or more broadly what rights humans should have to be truly secure
- Global society and economic justice, which also includes an angle on the ecological crisis
- Feminism and gender.

Participants can finalise the course only if they do some practical work in which they reveal their newly acquired knowledge. The course boasts 700 alumni with some currently working in ministries, agencies or civil society organisations and using the lens developed during the course. The course is co-created with teachers and learners working together to unlearn aspects and discover what is needed to be fully attuned to peace.

Roundtable discussion

Katerina Toura, Policy Officer on Anti-Racism, DG JUST, explains that many people still experience discrimination and racism which has severe impacts on their dignity, life opportunities and personal safety. To this end, the [EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025](#) serves as the overall policy on combatting racism, mainstreaming the fights against it in all EU policy fields, including education, while working in cooperation with civil society and Member States. This work is invaluable considering that structural racism can affect education, and implicitly the educational achievement and the situations of non-attainment for those discriminated. Young children whose education is curtailed by structural racism are shown to be at greater risk of poverty and exclusion from civic life. Based on EU research, this has been exacerbated by the lost opportunity to in-person schooling in vulnerable communities during COVID-19, as there seems to be a higher likelihood of lower retention and completion rates in these communities.

She continues by presenting a set of findings from the [EU minorities and discrimination survey](#) implemented by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, which has revealed that one in eight respondents experienced discrimination in educational settings in the past five years. The Roma population as a group has experienced such discrimination at a higher rate than the average. 9% of people with a Sub-Saharan background reported similar discrimination in the past five years while 13% of North-African background respondents experienced such instances of discrimination. The discrimination could also be based on religious grounds, with 13% of the Muslim respondents confirming such discrimination in the past 5 years. If considering the [2019 Roma and Traveller Survey](#), 28% of respondents were discriminated against in the educational settings in the past 5 years.

Katerina continues with the set of measures from the EU level to address the identified challenges. The [Race Equality Directive](#) represents the first port of call, with the European Commission being committed to combat all forms of racism in education and beyond through policies and funding. However, the content and organisation of training systems rests with Member States, therefore the European Commission can only work on strengthening inclusive education as a priority within EU-level cooperation. At the same time, inclusion and fairness are mainstreamed as priorities within the

European Education Area, expanding also to the digital realm via the updated Digital Education Action Plan. The European Solidarity Corps programme serves also to support activities combatting racism, while the [Citizens, Equality, Values and Rights \(CERV\) programme](#) provides financial support to Member States' authorities, civil society organisation and national organisations, amongst others, to address racism, xenophobia and discrimination, including with regards to lack of access to education.

Katerina invites participants to look at the Council of Europe's [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)'s Policy recommendation no. 10 on combatting racism and racial discrimination](#) in and through school education to identify also the requirements in terms of training the members of the teaching profession to work in multicultural environments. It also considers racism in the process of teaching history, including colonialism and its permeating legacy in learning by means of revising curricular content and revising history education to eradicate stereotypes. Without decolonizing history, it is difficult to understand contemporary societies.

Katerina concludes with a call for expanding the work on peace education and combatting racism outside of formal education, ensuring a lifelong learning perspective for this and emboldening CSOs and stakeholders to collaborate on addressing these challenges.

Victor Negrescu, MEP, S&D Group, highlights the existence of work on peace education within the European Parliament's CULT Committee while referring to its scope as the participation of European citizens at global level in efforts for promoting peace, stability, tolerance, respect and the broader EU values. The goal is defending them and promoting them abroad to ensure a stable environment within and beyond the borders of the EU. To this end, school curricula needs to be revised, to include more aspects on the relevance of tolerance, history and debate/dialogue, promoting hard and soft skills connected to this. He underlines the fact that peace represents a way to live in harmony, ensuring that communities living close by are getting along and thriving. Non-formal and informal education can be a way to achieve this.

He links the work on peace education with the recommendations that came out of the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#), namely with those that were focused on the expansion of the powers of the EU in relation to citizenship education. The work on this is ongoing and he reiterates the commitment to collaborate with SOLIDAR Foundation in developing recommendations linked to peace education that the CULT Committee can promote in relation to the European Education Area. This can take the form of an Own-Initiative Report from the CULT Committee on Global Citizenship Education which would benefit from the perspectives of organisations involved in the work on the themes, such as SOLIDAR Foundation. Dialogue and collaboration is needed now, more than ever, to boost the prominence of peace education in Europe.

Ruba Hilal, Secretary General, International Falcon Movement, draws attention to the fact that peace education should not only be reduced to the absence of war, while peace education must be used to develop critical thinking and the knowledge of how to practice it. There is a consensus over peace being the desired status-quo but more work needs to be done on creating an environment in which this consensus is put into practice. She details how, in the work of the IFM, a difference of opinions can also be a conflict. However, a conflict should not be seen with negative connotations, but should rather be considered from the perspective of the opportunities it arises in terms of how the conflict is dealt with. The conflicts should be welcome, while tools need to be developed to ensure that people are equipped to learn and grow from conflicts. Therefore, these tools cannot be provided only within

formal education. Many times, there is even an inadequacy in terms of explaining to children within formal education how situations, like the one in Ukraine, should be dealt with. IFM endeavours in supporting formal education and other learning experiences through the development of toolkits and educational resources on peace education.

Ruba informs participants that, as of 1987, IFM as received the Messenger of Peace distinction from the UN General Assembly, and it has continued tirelessly ensuring that there is no disturbance of peace anywhere, as any such disturbance around the world is impacting the entire world. IFM will remain committed in this work in the coming years.

Discussion

Participants and speakers share resources, advancing with a more in-depth discussion on the work performed by each speaker in terms of context, partners, scope. Ruba Hilal touches upon the Building Bridges project of IFM.

Participants raise the concern that many times the young people are not the focus of active citizenship and citizenship education, especially from the perspective of them not being included as part of the stakeholder discussions on topics that concern them. Similarly, in supporting children, representatives from the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) highlight an insufficient support regarding working with families and carers. The teaching profession requires more preparation on how to collaborate with the families, especially when it comes to controversial topics and developing an expertise on broaching sensitive and emotional topics in a way that constructively steers classroom debates. This would also require a curricular revision to ensure that minority histories are also opened up within the classroom, a point which was made by representatives from Euroclio.

Following another thread, participants discuss on the broad range of terminology existent when it comes to peace education and adjacent topics, exploring the possibility of sharing a common language but also the implications in terms of diversity of views caused by a common language around the topic. The consensus in this sense among the participants was the need to provide all forms of learning, and, potentially, focus on establishing a concept, such as the Council of Europe's North-South Centre's global education, as an overarching topic which would then allow for divergencies at national or local context.

Participants recall also the power of informal learning, through various examples of their work which foresaw cooking activities, sports activities and the like in an effort to mix different types of learners and promote peace through activities which unite people. Participants express interest in the research to follow up on the indicators for assessing how knowledge on peace is acquired by learners. At the same time, they stress on the fact that the policy recommendations should promote the transversal learning of peace education, in a cross-curricular fashion, the promotion of intergenerational learning, as well as the usage of critical pedagogy and the fostering of a whole-community approach in which communities and the civil society are allowed to be more present within formal education.

The European Commission representative launches a word of caution on the feasibility of developing shared histories in education processes, as similar initiatives were previously tried and have not led to long-term success. However, she encourages participants to get in touch with her for being connected to the Member State representative from their country working on the development of a new

compendium of the national promising practices regarding work done against racism and racial discrimination

SOLIDAR Foundation Policy Paper on Peace Education: overview of the research questions and working methods

Dea Maric, Lecturer at the Department of history, University of Zagreb and **Rodoljub Jovanovic, PhD in Conflict and Cultures of Peace**, present themselves as the research team developing the Policy Paper on Peace Education on behalf of SOLIDAR Foundation. They provide their background and reflect on pursuing threads from today's discussion connected such as the idea of focusing less on pre- or post-conflict, but rather on conflict management tools and skills. The research team clarifies that the entire work will consider how the work on peace education is approached differently based on countries and contexts, as the nature of peace education depends on the issues relevant in each specific society. The researchers provide a short explanation on the existent types of peace education and list the foreseen research questions for their work:

- How is non-formal and informal peace education understood and practiced across the EU?
- What is the relevance of peace education for short/long term needs?
- Which are the successful practices on peace education?

The following steps in their work would include a literature review, a policy analysis process and the implementation of interviews and surveys on SOLIDAR Foundation members, with the latter step occurring over the summer of 2022.

Concluding remarks

Elisa Gambardella, SOLIDAR Foundation, reiterates the role of the round table in feeding the upcoming research rather than reaching immediate conclusions. In this sense, the work of the research team together the participants and the members of SOLIDAR Foundation will continue over the summer, with the Policy Paper foreseen to be officially published in November 2022. The main lesson learned, however, is that multi-level action and interaction are needed for a policy framework that can enable practices, facilitate exchanges and ensure that formal, non-formal and informal education providers are collaborating.