

**May, 2002**

Report on Conference organized by the Norwegian authorities in cooperation with the Council of Europe on “**Student/pupil participation in Education and Training.**”

**Oslo, Norway**

Meeting report presented by Ibrahim Ismayilov, member of the working group on “**Children, Democracy and Participation in Society.**”

*Participants on behalf of the working group to the conference:*

*Mr. Ibrahim Ismayilov (AZERBAIJAN)*  
*Mrs. Guri-Mette Vestby (NORWAY)*

**Meeting report on “Student/pupil participation in Education and Training”  
May 2002 in Oslo, Norway**

**Organization:**

The conference “Student /pupil participation in education and training” was organized by the Council of Europe’s Division on Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and Humane Rights and at the invitation of, and in co-operation with, the National Board of Education in Norway.

**Participants:**

EDC coordinators from 37 Council of Europe member states, pupil’s organizations, NGO members were present at the event. Two members of the working group on “Children, Democracy and Participation in Society” were represented in the conference. During the conference the pupils of cultural schools were invited to make an amazing cultural and musical presentations, which were very appreciated by the participants.

**Aims and objectives:**

The aim of the conference was to provide a setting for a discussion on participatory strategies and practice in democratic citizenship.

**Objectives were:**

- To serve as a forum for the exchange of good practices on participation and participatory approaches in and through school;
- Offer an opportunity for an exchange of information and experiences between EDC coordinators / Heads of Delegations and to thus contribute to facilitating European inter-institutional cooperation in the field of EDC;
- Provide participants with information about the situation in the area of EDC in the different member countries (e.g. definitions of EDC, good practice, successful reforms, planned reforms, challenges possible solutions to problems, etc.);
- Establish the main needs of Member States in the EDC field, mainly on participation;
- Further define the role and tasks of the EDC coordinators;
- Examine possibilities for the promotion of EDC in different national contexts.

## **Topics covered:**

### *Pupils/Students:*

- Pupil/Students' participation in school, in the framework of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities (there were made number of presentations by the Norwegian school representatives and student councils where they described in perfect *English* the way the education process affected and perceived in considering the voice of young people);
- Motivation for participation; forms of participation; obstacles for participation; (the pupils/students and other participants discussed these issues as well as bringing the examples of concrete approaches);
- Local environment, consultation process in the school, inclusion of minority groups and disadvantaged students (it was interested to note the differences in approaches varying from west to east of Europe and how the participation and incorporation of pupil/student takes place);

### *Headmaster/teacher and pupils*

- Hierarchy and democracy; willingness to change (in this stage the number of problems were tackled in different CoE member countries: lack of specialists, unwillingness to change the present course of actions, missing knowledge about on how to manage the change)
- Also were discussed the examples of how the curriculum is developed in several of Norwegian schools and the State's role in this process.

### *Parents:*

- There was a discussion about the role of the parents in the educational process and how they incorporated and participating in school life.

*Lessons structure, Extra-curricular Activities, Policy framework and Democratic Councils were discussed during the event.*

The work of the conference was positive and enriching experience, while based on opportunities of dialogue of pupils/students with adults, the discussions in the working groups, the opportunity of gathering the data at the information market and exposure to case studies.

## **Outcomes:**

The participants have agreed that there is a strong need for exchange of good practices among the member states in order to more efficiently increase the pupil/student participation in educational system. Though the 'participation' was the major topic of discussions it appeared to be that there is yet no common understanding of definition of this phenomena.

## **The role of the members of the working group on “Children, Democracy and Participation in Society”**

The members of the working group were very active in disseminating the information about their role in the conference and the mission of the working group. Upon the request of Mr. Ismayilov, the copies of calls on “Children Participation in the Family and Other Living Arrangements” and “Children’s Participation in Schools and Local Communities” were widely distributed among the participants of the working group. Members of the group were explaining the details about the calls to the conference participants in the workshops and plenary presentations. The presentation was accepted with interest since the majority of participants were directly involved with the work of the ministries of educations within the member states and had an access to the number of projects but apparently were unaware about the initiative of the program “Focus on Children and Families” within the Directorate General III on Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe. The participants were asked to assist in disseminating the calls in their respective countries as well as to be a resource of good practices on children participation.

Mr. Rolf Mikkelsen, National Research Coordinator of the Civic Study in Norway from the University of Oslo was also briefed about the agenda of the working group and was requested to contribute through identifying the data resources dealing with children participation in families or other living arrangements, schools and local communities.

The printed descriptions of some projects were collected during the conference and will be sent to Mrs. Siri Farstad, Programme Adviser for Children and Families.

Sincerely,

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*Note: This meeting report compiled on the basis of conference documents and personal notes taken during the participation in the event.*