

Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation (DISCO) EU/CoE Joint Programme

DISCO

Projects of the 5th cycle (2018-2019)

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



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Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation (DISCO) EU/CoE Joint Programme

Projects of the 5th cycle (2018-2019)
Information Leaflet
Compiled by Daniel Trilling

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Cover and layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

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Printed at the Council of Europe

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DISCO
Democratic and Inclusive
School Culture in Operation

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Introduction



Europe's twentieth-century history underscores the importance of democracy and human rights – both in terms of what can be achieved when they are respected, and of the dangers that exist if they are neglected. By the end of the century we were left with an international human rights framework and stronger democratic systems in many countries, but these gains are not to be taken for granted. In the last decade, a surge in terrorist attacks in Europe, along with the prevalence of racism, intolerance and violent extremism reveals the urgent need to defend and promote democratic culture and inclusive societies. The aftermath of the refugee crisis that reached its peak in 2015 presents a further challenge for governments and societies committed to protecting people's rights and dignity.

In this context, the European Union and the Council of Europe see the role of education as essential, and recognise that it must keep pace with changes in technology and society if it is to remain effective. In 2015, education ministers from around the EU committed themselves to sharing the best ideas and practices in promoting active citizenship and non-discrimination¹, while the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers agreed on an Action Plan² for educational initiatives that would counter violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism.

DISCO, the Joint Programme for Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation³, is a crucial part of this effort. Launched in 2013 as Human Rights and Democracy in Action, by the Council of Europe and the European

Commission, it provides funding to enable at least three states party to the European Cultural Convention to co-operate on projects of common interest within the field of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. At least one of the states should be a member of the European Union. Underpinning the programme are the Council of Europe's Competences for Democratic Culture – the values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and critical understanding that are essential for citizens to participate in democratic society.

This leaflet profiles the projects funded by DISCO in its 2018 to 2019 cycle under the themes “digital citizenship education”, “building democratic and inclusive school cultures” and “managing controversial issues”. Three calls for proposals were issued for this period. One was to fund two multi-partner projects that would promote the two strategic priorities of the cycle that correspond to the first two themes: Digital Resistance and coLAB, discussed below, are the result. The remaining two calls were to fund “micro-projects” that aimed to disseminate the results of previous programme cycles; they are also profiled below. Together, the nine successful proposals delivered projects in many parts of Europe, incorporating countries both inside and outside the EU. They showcase an inspiring range of educational activities and strategies that highlight the importance of co-operation – not just between countries and regions, but between all the people involved in education, from teachers, students and pupils to parents, managers and policymakers.

1. Paris declaration on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

2. Action Plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism.

3. www.coe.int/disco

Digital Citizenship Education



1. DIGITAL RESISTANCE – MULTI-PARTNER PROJECT

” It was surprising to see how different teachers and pupils approached the topic of fake news ... many different shades and examples of this phenomenon were brought up in class.”

Richard Heise, Leibniz University of Hannover

Implementing organisations:

- ▶ *Leibniz University of Hannover, Germany (coordinating partner)*
- ▶ *University of Vienna, Austria*
- ▶ *1st EPAL Korydallou/Athens – Public VET school, Greece*
- ▶ *University of Pavia, Italy*
- ▶ *Buzau County School Inspectorate, Romania*

■ In 2015, the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers declared itself “united around our principles against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism”, noting that education for democracy was a crucial part of the fight against this 21st-century threat. Across Europe, young people are particularly vulnerable targets for propaganda and fake news spread by extremist and anti-democratic political groups. This makes it vital for schools and educators to support their pupils in developing the competences for dealing with indoctrination and discrimination in their lives both online and offline.

■ Inspired by the 2015 declaration, academics at Leibniz University of Hannover came up with a proposal for the Digital Resistance project. Developed with colleagues in Italy, Austria, Greece and Romania, this project aims to strengthen resistance to indoctrination by developing and enhancing two key skills: how to critically analyse the media and pupils’ own consumption of online content; and how to recognise when news is delivered uncritically from a single viewpoint.

■ Digital Resistance works not just by developing skills but with a project operating in several countries at once, encouraging pupils to share experiences and perspectives across borders.

■ It is an attempt to build a “pupils’ community of digital citizens”, using peer education and inquiry-based learning methods to raise awareness of how social media influences politics and civil society. The project disseminates its ideas through a digital handbook for use in teacher training, and through training schemes themselves, carried out at two partner schools in each participating country.

■ This is uncharted territory for many schools – in Germany, for example, digital skills are still only a minor part of the curriculum, and where they are taught they tend to focus on technical knowledge rather than media literacy. There are signs, however, that this is changing. Several other similar European projects have recently been launched, including the Erasmus+ programme. From the experience of the Digital Resistance project coordinators, pupils respond enthusiastically to this kind of work. At the schools where this was piloted, pupils (mostly aged between 14 and 18) felt motivated to do research on pieces of fake news they found online, and were able to relate the skills they developed to their everyday lives.

■ The inquiry-based learning approach saw pupils conduct their own research on items of fake news – learning how to reverse image-search to find the true source of an image online, for example. They presented their work in the form of videos, blogs, posters and presentations published online. An evaluation process monitored the project’s work, by asking pupils for their feedback. In general, they were enthusiastic about the project, especially where they felt it gave them concrete skills they could apply outside the classroom, such as knowing how not to get fooled online (although some pupils felt the discussion of the wider political context was too abstract).

■ The project was successful as far as resources in schools would allow. Teachers who took part often had to do this work in addition to their regular hours, which meant they had less time to implement the programme in class. This made it more difficult to carry out the inquiry-based learning aspects of the project, where pupils would discuss research they had done under their own initiative and reflect on the learning process. For future development, a handbook is being produced that will offer support and guidance to teachers. Practical advice will free up their time for lesson preparation, while the guidelines will be adapted for different school contexts, different amounts of free time available and varied age groups.

2. SCHOOL PRACTICES FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE IN THE DIGITAL ERA – MICRO-PROJECT

” We learned that all kids were equal and that nobody should act violently or discriminate against children.”

pupil at Krume Kepeski primary school, Skopje

Implementing organisation:

- ▶ Association Centre for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRRCR), North Macedonia

■ Since independence in 1991, there have been a number of initiatives in North Macedonia to strengthen democratic processes, the rule of law and protections for human rights. Citizenship was introduced as a mandatory subject in primary schools in 1997. A life skills program, which includes human rights, was developed in 2009. In 2018, schools adopted a new curriculum for citizenship education and began a process to fully integrate citizenship and human rights as cross-curricular themes in primary and secondary education. This includes strengthening teacher training too.

■ In this context, CHRRCR’s project aims to promote the Council of Europe’s competences for democratic culture and digital skills in North Macedonia’s education system, to bring it in line with European standards. CHRRCR is a non-governmental organisation that works to improve inter-ethnic relations and promote human rights, and specialises in developing education initiatives. Working with four pilot schools at primary and secondary level, CHRRCR designed training modules and delivered workshops to equip teachers with skills in promoting democracy, human rights and digital citizenship. The project activities focused on the themes of discrimination, violence and cyber-bullying,

children’s rights and democratic participation. Teachers took part in workshops that equipped them to lead classroom activities like interactive exercises, group discussion and text analysis – as well as role plays in which pupils took on the roles of journalists or advertising campaign designers, dealing with issues such as air pollution, violence or hate speech.

■ The project promotes pupil-centred learning and involves key decision-makers. CHRRCR carried out intensive follow-up activities after the training sessions, through school visits and classroom observation, and offered extra support to teachers. This support included a tool for teacher self-assessment and an online platform with 32 examples of good practice for the promotion of democratic culture across the curriculum. The platform also features a translation into Macedonian of the Council of Europe’s democratic culture reference documents. CHRRCR believes that further work is needed to formalise and expand teacher training in this area.





3. EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH DIGITAL TOOLS AND NFE (NON-FORMAL EDUCATION) – MICRO-PROJECT

” AEGEE strengthens mutual understanding and brings Europe closer to young people.”

aegee.org

Implementing organisation:

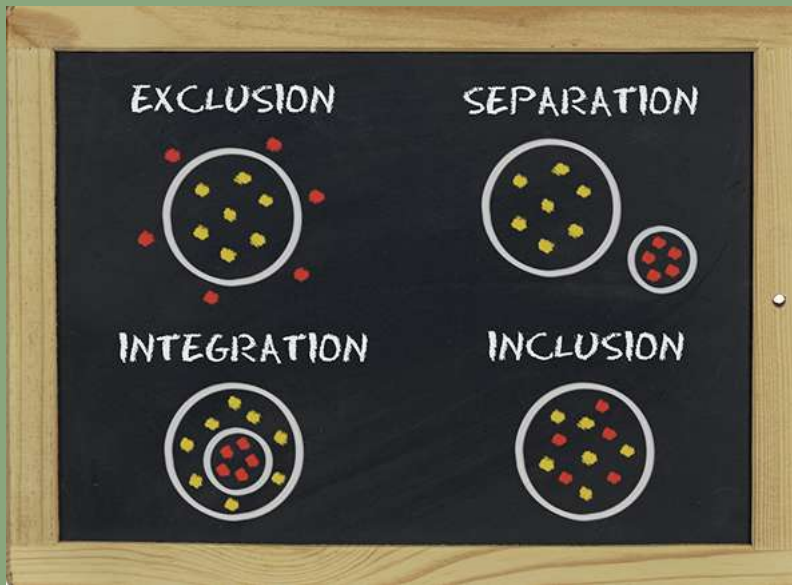
► *AEGEE-Europe, Belgium*

■ The European Students’ Forum (AEGEE) is an international students’ association with around 13,000 members in 200 groups across Europe. It is a politically independent non-profit organisation that works to promote a democratic and diverse Europe without borders, and aims to empower young people to take an active role in society. Its project aimed to promote citizenship and human rights education among high school pupils in several parts of southern and eastern Europe – Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine – through non-formal education and peer learning.

■ In practice, this was carried out through online games and other digital tools that were designed to fit with the Council of Europe’s Democratic Competences in the Digital Era, an earlier project that aimed to promote and modernise citizenship and human rights education in other parts of southern and eastern Europe.

■ AEGEE’s project trained a pool of youth workers and youth representatives to understand and apply the Council of Europe’s standards, and to support pupils in their work. As well as the online game they developed, they produced a toolkit on how to promote citizenship and human rights education through non-formal methods and prepared a policy paper on how digital tools could be used to achieve these goals. They also organised a series of events around Europe to raise awareness of the project and promote the Council of Europe’s charter on citizenship and human rights education⁴.

4. The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE).



Building democratic and inclusive school culture by embedding the learning environment in the local community

4. COLAB – A LABORATORY FOR NEW FORMS OF COLLABORATION – MULTI-PARTNER PROJECT

” As we are communication and psychology schools, it seemed appropriate that we worked on this project – that we try and improve the representation of the migrant population, that we develop a better understanding of one another.”

Helene Pochet, IHECS Academy

” In my family and friends, I hear many negative things about migration, about migrants. Now I am able to form my own opinion and defend my point of view because I have some substance. And having had a teacher who experienced migration has made my arguments stronger.”

Student interview, UCA

Implementing organisations:

- ▶ *Haute Ecole Galilée, Belgium (coordinating partner)*
- ▶ *IHECS Academy, Belgium*
- ▶ *Université Clermont Auvergne, France*
- ▶ *Università di Roma LUMSA, Italy*
- ▶ *University of the Arts London – London College of Communication, UK*

■ According to the UN's refugee agency, the UNHCR, over a million people arrived in Europe in 2015 to claim asylum – the peak of what is known as the “refugee crisis”. Since then, the number of people arriving has fallen sharply, but European countries are still working through the task of accommodating the new arrivals. To support this potentially vulnerable new population, higher education institutions around Europe have begun programmes to integrate refugees and migrants. Education has a crucial role to play, not just in academic institutions, but in strengthening wider society too. There have been lots of great ideas and local projects but more collaboration and synergy is needed for initiatives to be efficient and sustainable.

■ coLAB, a collaboration between five higher education institutions in Europe, is born from the observation that many refugees bring with them substantial professional experience and qualifications. Unfortunately, their prior achievements may not be recognised by their new host communities, and it is common for refugees to experience higher than average levels of unemployment, or to be employed below their level of skill. The coLAB project aims to remedy this by hiring refugees as “visiting experts” who can share their knowledge with students and teaching staff, within the frame of the academic curriculum. The project provides valuable training to refugee experts and promotes inclusive academic practices that can potentially benefit everybody in higher education. Beyond the education objectives, this project aims to improve wider understanding of the challenges faced by refugees, and to promote mutual understanding and respect between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

5. SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS FOR ALL: TOGETHER WE CAN LEARN BETTER – MICRO-PROJECT

” I have not only gained an understanding of how to deal with my pupils and colleagues, but also with my own daughter – she has questioned her sexual orientation. Thank you for what you are doing!”

School teacher, Ukraine

Implementing organisation:

► NGO Fulcrum UA, Ukraine

■ In 2017, staff at Fulcrum UA, a human rights NGO based in Kyiv that promotes equality and non-discrimination, were unpleasantly surprised by the results of a school survey they carried out with Ukrainian young people aged between 13 and 19. An overwhelming majority of LGBT young people surveyed – 88.5 per cent – had encountered verbal harassment at school, and over half had been the target of physical violence in the past year. Worse still, over half of all young people who had received negative comments about their gender had heard these remarks from teachers or school staff.

■ Fulcrum UA has been working for several years to counter bullying in schools, with a particular focus on LGBT issues. In light of this, their project with DISCO aims to build the capacity of school teachers and psychologists to address bullying in schools, and to provide support to pupils via a mobile app that can be used to report incidents. The project includes training for school teachers and psychologists, translating into Ukrainian and distributing the Council of Europe’s guide to addressing violence in schools, plus creating a more targeted guide for Ukrainian educators. They

are also producing a report on education policy in Ukraine as it relates to discrimination, bullying and violence in school, which will be submitted to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO), who are documenting the experiences of LGBT pupils in European schools.

■ The project was carried out with schools in Kyiv and the nearby city of Obuhiv. The latter case is the first time that a city council has partnered with an organisation that promotes LGBT rights, and the NGO was able to provide training for some teachers at every school in the district. This could be developed further to cover training for all teachers in these schools, plus provide mentoring support and carry out research into how effective this work is and how it can be improved. The need for this work was highlighted by the reluctance of some teachers taking part in the project to recognise discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexuality or ethnicity – and the training aimed to remedy this. This work is being carried out at a time when Ukraine’s national government is taking more notice of bullying and discrimination: it has made several new laws in recent years, although the government’s inclusive education policy still does not contain protections for sexual orientation and gender identity.

6. DIGITAL TEACHING TECHNOLOGIES AS SCAFFOLDING TOOLS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION – MICRO-PROJECT

” Teachers and pupils believe that technologies could be used as collaborative tools, and that in this way people with and without disabilities can enhance their knowledge and empathy.”

Branko Andjic, teacher at Radojica Perovic school and PhD researcher at Johannes Kepler University

Implementing organisations:

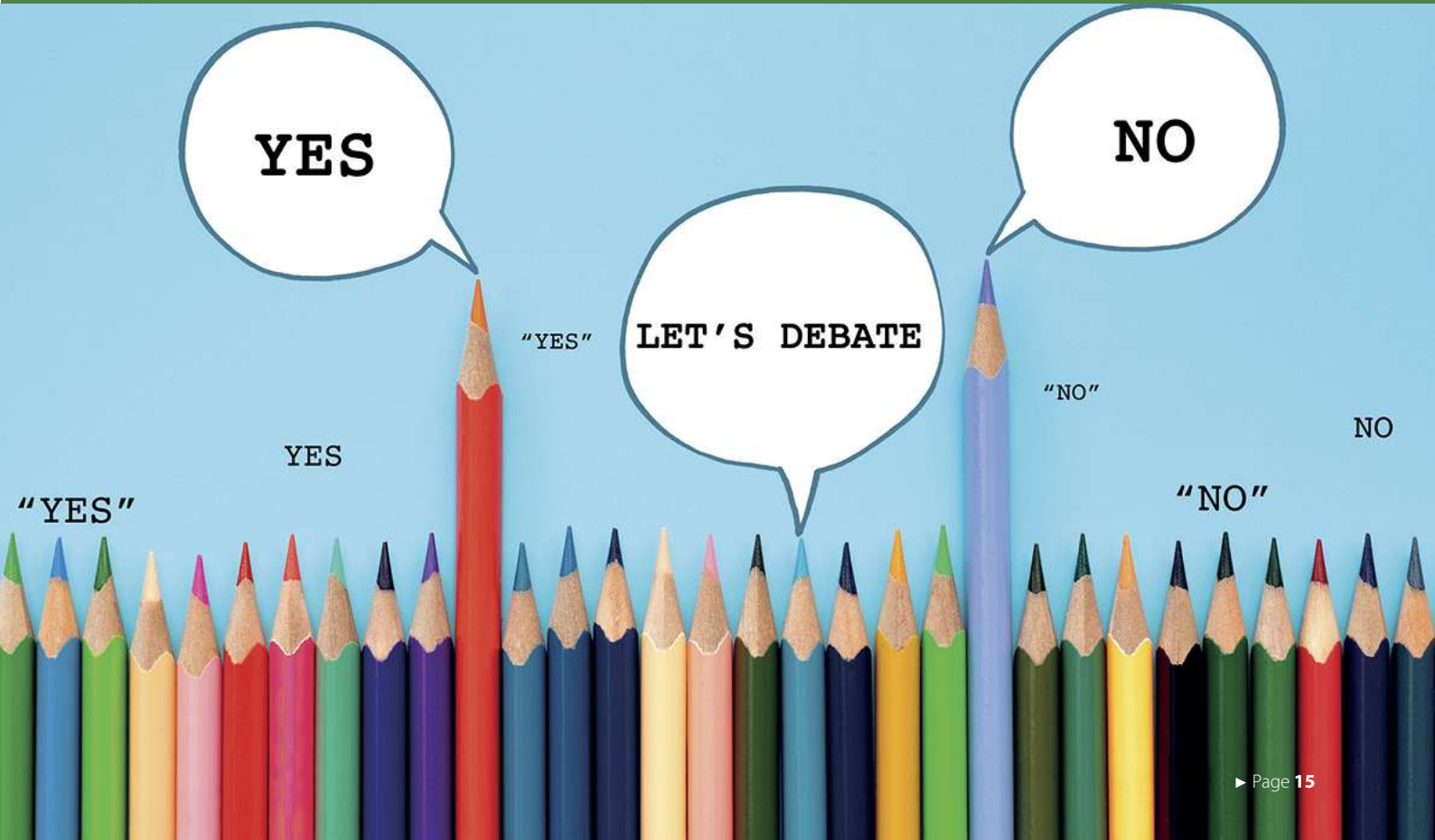
- ▶ *Radojica Perović school, Podgorica, Montenegro (coordinating partner)*
- ▶ *Johannes Kepler University, Linz, Austria*
- ▶ *Zalik primary school, Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina*
- ▶ *State Publishing House – Textbook and Teaching Aids, Podgorica, Montenegro*
- ▶ *NGO CELULA, Montenegro*

■ Digital technology such as educational software, tablet devices, and 3D printers can be a major help in developing inclusive learning between young people with and without disabilities. However, implementing this technology is a particular challenge in the Western Balkans, where many of the schools in this region lack the technical equipment and software, or adequate teacher training on how to use it. This project draws on the research expertise in this field at Johannes Kepler University’s School of Education, working with partner organisations in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina to develop digital education tools and materials for teacher training.

■ The project aims to provide several schools with free digital equipment and software, and to give guidance that will encourage best practice more widely. Around 150 teachers from ten different schools received training in how to implement digital teaching technology in the classroom, and shown how to train other teachers in future. Around 300 pupils were taught how to use 3D printers for collaborative learning between pupils with and without learning difficulties. The project outcomes will also be published in outlets including international academic journals, to contribute to wider research in the field.

■ As this project involved the distribution of equipment as well as training, there were logistical difficulties in delivering 3D printers to schools in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, because there was no local distributing company. However, once the equipment had been delivered, pupils turned out to be quick to learn how to use the technology creatively, because of their familiarity with digital devices in their everyday lives. The project’s progress was monitored via questionnaires before and after the workshops, of which audio recordings were also made. It could be developed in future by creating more specific tools for collaborative learning that includes pupils with specific sensory, cognitive or motor disabilities.

Managing Controversial Issues





7. M.I.C.R.ON! MANAGING ISSUES OF CONTROVERSY BY HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION – MICRO-PROJECT

” Teachers who participated in our workshops had expressed fear and reluctance to coordinate discussions on controversy in the classroom.”

Naya Tselepi, ANTIGONE

Implementing organisation:

- ▶ *ANTIGONE Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Nonviolence, Greece*

Encouraging and managing discussions around issues such as race, gender or sexuality is a challenge for teachers in any setting – but it can be even more so in areas of a country that lack the resources of large cities for human rights education. The M.I.C.R.ON! project is an attempt to support teachers and educators in their work, primarily by translating the Council of Europe’s Managing Controversy training tool into Greek and running workshops to develop and pilot educational programmes in five key regions of Greece.

The project was carried out by ANTIGONE, a non-profit organisation based in Thessaloniki that has been working with school communities in northern Greece for the last seven years. For the workshops, ANTIGONE chose a geographical spread of regions around Greece – sessions were held in Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Achaia, Heraklion, Lesvos and Chios – and focused on areas with significant refugee and migrant populations, or where there had been activity from far-right political groups. In recent years, there have been violent confrontations in Greek schools around issues such as the enrolment of refugee children, and educators have lacked the tools and the confidence to deal with these conflicts.

More than a hundred people took part in the workshops, from across the educational community: teachers, policymakers, school directors and parents’ associations. These stakeholders were brought together for a final conference, held in Thessaloniki, to discuss future collaboration in the same field. During the project, the participants developed educational tools for activities such as peer mediation in secondary schools, techniques of peaceful conflict management, arts in human rights education and the prevention of cyber-bullying. ANTIGONE representatives have distributed two thousand printed copies of the Managing Controversy training pack, and they make it available for free download on their website.

The project workshops empowered and motivated educators to deal with controversial issues, though a significant number of participants expressed a lack of confidence in implementing programs on human rights education, as well as some uncertainty about the potential of embedding the principles of the Managing Controversy training tool in schools. With the completion of the MICRON! project, ANTIGONE successfully received the Greek Education Ministry approval for the Managing Controversy toolkit as appropriate pedagogical material for schools. The organisation wants to continue its work in schools and is seeking funding for future projects.



8. MANAGING CONTROVERSY: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH – MICRO-PROJECT

” We believe it’s a must to encourage students who want to pursue a teaching career to examine their beliefs and biases. Becoming aware of their blind spots will allow them to become better teachers.”

Sorana Pogacean, New Horizon Foundation

Implementing organisations:

- ▶ *New Horizon Foundation, Romania (coordinating partner)*
- ▶ *Nicolae Dumitrescu Association, Republic of Moldova*
- ▶ *Babes Bolyai University, Romania*

■ Is freedom of speech a right that one receives after becoming an adult, or is it part of everyday practice in schools? At what point do you learn that your own rights must not be used to harm the rights of others? Or what if some of the adults responsible for children’s education and upbringing themselves hold anti-democratic attitudes? The way in which educational systems address these questions has big implications for the democratic culture of wider society. In Romania and the Republic of Moldova, non-governmental educational organisations like the New Horizon Foundation have identified a gap between the countries’ official commitments to human rights and the resources available for educating young people about them.

■ The participants in this project have worked to develop effective training for dealing with controversial issues in schools and to build capacity among teachers and school

directors. The Council of Europe’s Teaching Controversial Issues and Managing Controversy guides have been translated into Romanian. A linked training workshop was adapted for use and piloted in selected Romanian and Moldovan schools. In collaboration with Babes Bolyai University in Cluj, Romania, the project coordinators developed a questionnaire to assess teachers’ attitudes to democratic values and their own prejudices. This was a difficult issue to address, since it required people to examine their own potential failings, but six schools in Romania and Moldova were willing to take part. Adapting the training meant that examples of controversial issues not only had to be tailored to two different national contexts, but from school to school: for example, the Romanian schools that took part in the project all included sex education on the curriculum, but national policy in Romania keeps sex education optional.

■ The project coordinators at New Horizon Foundation would like to make the training programme they have developed in collaboration with the other participants a part of teachers’ initial training. From autumn 2019, they will be aiming to build partnerships with universities to introduce these tools into their pedagogy lessons.

9. LEARNING HOW TO HANDLE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATION SETTINGS: A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE – MICRO-PROJECT

” We don’t want to make it a boring document you just download. We want something that brings the manuals to life and shows you how you use them.”

David Kerr, Citizenship Foundation

Implementing organisations:

- ▶ Citizenship Foundation, United Kingdom (coordinating partner)
- ▶ European Wergeland Centre, Norway

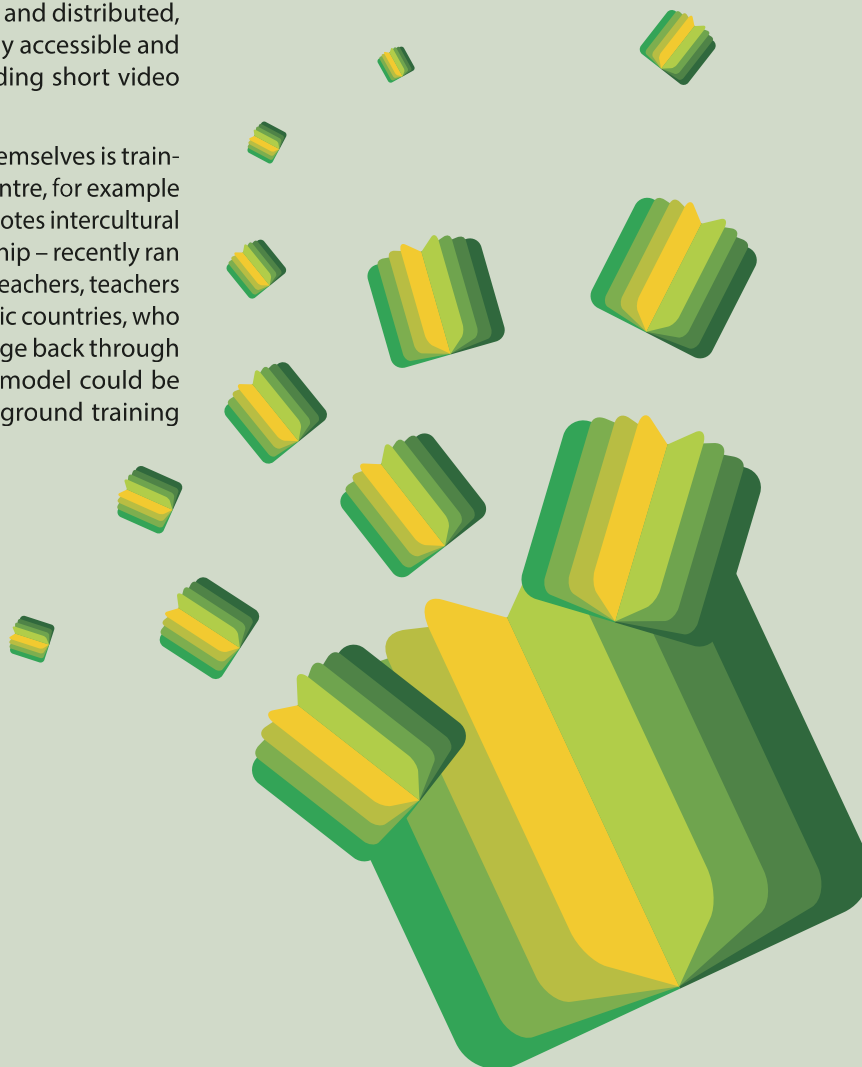
■ With advances in technology and the growth of social media, schools today cannot aim to simply shelter their pupils from controversial issues in society. From terrorism and political extremism to discrimination and harassment of people on the basis of their ethnic background or gender or sexual identity, educators need to be able to deal with these issues confidently in a way that promotes inclusion.

■ Sharing good practice is a vital tool in developing skills, and this project builds on two manuals previously produced for the Council of Europe. The first, Teaching Controversial Issues, was aimed at individual teachers who wanted to learn how to better manage controversial issues in the classroom. The second, Managing Controversy, was aimed at schools and institutions themselves. This “whole school” approach dealt not just with teaching strategies but how schools could work with parents and pupils and develop a communications policy that would complement what went on in the classroom.



■ The resources have been used in individual schools but also by government institutions in several parts of Europe – by the Danish Education Ministry, for instance, or at a training summer school in Montenegro for teachers, school leaders and policymakers. The new good practice guide aims to draw together this knowledge in an online resource that includes guidelines and case studies. Whereas resources like these in the past tended to be produced as documents to be downloaded or printed and distributed, this new online version will be more easily accessible and makes use of multimedia content, including short video testimonies from trainers and teachers.

■ Just as important as the resources themselves is training people to use them. The Wergeland Centre, for example – an educational resource centre that promotes intercultural understanding, human rights and citizenship – recently ran a training project on the manuals for headteachers, teachers and education ministry officials from Nordic countries, who then relayed their new skills and knowledge back through their domestic education systems. This model could be developed further and used for on-the-ground training elsewhere in Europe.



This information leaflet aims to provide a glimpse of the projects implemented during the 5th cycle (2018-2019) of the Democratic and Inclusive School Culture in Operation (DISCO) Programme funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe.



The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

www.coe.int

The Member States of the European Union have decided to link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders.

<http://europa.eu>



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