

REPORT FROM The European Wergeland Centre Inauguration Conference OSLO, MAY 29TH 2009

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) was established in 2008, as the result of an agreement between the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Government of Norway. The agreement was approved by the Norwegian Parliament (The Storting) in October 2008, and the Centre started its work in February 2009. The mandate of the Centre is to provide training and research within the fields of Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship. It is open to all member states of the CoE, and the target groups are teachers, teacher trainers, school administrators and other relevant actors in the field (www.theewc.org).

The Centre is named after Henrik Wergeland, one of Norway's greatest poets. All his life he worked tirelessly for religious tolerance, freedom through knowledge and equality between nations and social classes. With his zeal for knowledge, Wergeland would have become deeply engaged in the global challenges we face today. And today, as it did 200 years ago at Wergeland's time, education is the way to achieve our goal of a society based on values, those of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and intercultural dialogue.

Over 140 representatives from 35 countries met in Oslo on 28-29 May 2009 to celebrate with us the establishment of the European Wergeland Centre, taking part in the Opening Conference. The theme of the Conference was closely linked to the mandate of the Wergeland Centre: "Building bridges: education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, from policy to practice". From the policies and legal instruments to the concrete challenges that teachers and teacher trainers are faced with in the classroom every day:

- What is the role of teachers and teacher trainers in fostering a democratic culture and intercultural dialogue?
- What are the competences that teachers must learn and teach in order to handle diversity of cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds in the classroom?
- How can we strengthen the cooperation among the organisations working in the field?
- What part can The European Wergeland Centre play in these processes?

These are some of the questions that were posed and discussed during the conference. Based on the presentations, discussions and feedback received, we have produced a present conference report.

We would like to express our gratitude to all contributors and participants that came to Oslo to share this moment with us.

Ana Perona-Fjeldstad
Executive Director
Oslo, 24 June 20

SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE

Theme:

“Building bridges: Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship, from Policy to Practice”.

Opening Session:

Mr *Svein Lorentzen*, Chair of the EWC Board and Master of Ceremonies, welcomed all participants to the Conference. He then gave the floor to Mr *Thorbjørn Jagland*, President of the Norwegian Parliament, who articulated his speech around the importance of understanding of what binds us together, instead of what divides us. Jagland was followed by Mr *Bård Vegar Solhjell*, Norwegian Minister of Education, who used this occasion to praise diversity within Europe. His address was followed by H.E. Mr *Daryal Batibay*, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe, representing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Mr Batibay chose to give an overview of important recommendations of the Council of Europe in this field, before giving the floor to Mr *Jonas Gahr Støre*, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Mr Støre first and foremost praised the importance of multicultural dialogue, and wished great success to the EWC. A short video message then followed, in which Rt Hon *Terry Davis*, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, explained the background for the creation of the EWC.

Session I: Education for Intercultural Understanding, from Policy to Practice

Chair Ms *Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni*, Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport at the Council of Europe (CoE), opened this first session with a brief overview of the Council of Europe’s current activities in the field and presented concepts from the CoE’s “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue”. She then gave the floor to keynote speaker Mr *Jan Egeland*, Director of the Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs, who shared with us what he had learned from students while visiting schools around the world. Mr *Robert Jackson*, Director of Warwick Religious and Education Research Unit at the University of Warwick, was the first panellist. He chose to focus his address on his field of religious diversity in relation to intercultural education. He then gave the floor to Ms *Loveleen Rihel Brenna*, President of the Norwegian National Parents’ Association for Primary and Lower Secondary Education and EWC Board Member, who shared with us her hands-on experience in dealing with issues concerning children in multi-cultural environments, and the important role of kindergartens and schools in giving children the skills to handle a multicultural society.

Session II: Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship, from Policy to Practice

Chair Ms *Hanne Sophie Greve*, Justice and Vice Chair of the EWC Board, opened the session by speaking about how human beings need to be educated and cultivated to develop their human nature. She was followed by keynote speaker Mr *Thomas Hammarberg*, Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, whose presentation focused on the need of having teaching methods that are in line with those values we are teaching. The first panellist, Mr *Nils A. Butenschøn*, Director of the Centre for Human Rights in Norway, then presented the UN Paris principles and the UN decade for Human Rights Education. He was followed by Ms *Viola Georgi*, Professor at the Free University of Berlin, who introduced the idea of a European Master's Degree in Human Rights, with the EWC as a suggested partner. Lastly, Mr *Said Al-Kitani*, Acting Permanent Representative for the Sultanate of Oman at UNESCO Headquarters, gave concrete examples on how his country has been bridging the gap from policy to practice in the field of Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship.

Session III: Cooperation in Education in Europe and beyond, from Policy to Practice

Chair Mr *Cezar Birzea*, Director at the Romanian Institute for Educational Sciences and EWC Board Member, opened this last session by setting out the expectations for the EWC. He gave the floor to keynote speaker Mr *Krzysztof Stanowski*, Deputy Minister of National Education of Poland, who pointed out the need to cooperate with Eastern partners as well. Panellist Mr *Jean-Pierre Boyer*, Secretary General of the French National Commission to UNESCO, then focused on the need for cooperation within, but also outside Europe. He was followed by Ms *Lisbet Rugtvedt*, State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, who argued that the challenges brought by globalisation should be met and dealt with in the classroom. Lastly, Mr *Edouard Jagodnik*, Chairman of the Education Committee, INGOs, at the Council of Europe, recommended that the EWC work in close cooperation with partners in the fields, and more particularly with the Graz Centre for Modern Languages, which also works on bridging the gap from policy to practice.

CONFERENCE REPORT

OPENING SESSION:

Thorbjørn Jagland, President of the Parliament, Norway:

Mr Jagland argued that in Europe, society exists for the sake of the individual, and not the other way around. He called this the *essence of our democracies*, the *heart of Europe*. Today, as religions, cultures and traditions are clashing in the public sphere, he stressed the importance of understanding what our true common values are and what binds us together, instead of what divides us. Although “no one can be free without belonging”, as Norwegian sociologist Stein Ringen once said, it is a shame that many only find their identity when it is based on antagonism towards other groups. Jagland pointed out the values of Henrik Wergeland, such as enlightenment and freedom of faith and expression, and how post-war Europe has developed into a better place. But he also underlined how the democratic culture needs to be developed further, together with a greater sense of social belonging, and that this is where the European Wergeland Centre will play an important role.

Bård Vegar Solhjell, Minister of Education, Norway:

Mr Solhjell started his address with a quote from Terry Davis: “The Council of Europe is just as necessary today as it was 60 years ago, perhaps even more.” He went on to praise the value of diversity in Europe, arguing that it was typically European to be different. In this sense, we should see and use diversity as a resource. Mr. Solhjell also addressed the need for multicultural dialogue in order to provide peace and economic stability. Additionally, he stressed the importance of Education for Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship, values that were dear to Henrik Wergeland. After a brief presentation of the famous Norwegian poet and historian, he quoted: “Ignorance and slavery are the same. Enlightenment and freedom likewise”. Mr Solhjell closed his address with the famous concept: “All different, all equal.”

Rt Hon Terry Davis, Secretary General, Council of Europe (video message):

Mr Davis opened his address by thanking the Norwegian government for their generous contribution to the creation of the European Wergeland Centre. He continued by explaining that no human being is born with the knowledge, the understanding and the skills necessary to live together in a democratic, multicultural environment. Human Rights, democracy, and intercultural skills must be learned from a very early age, and refreshed throughout life. Diversity should be viewed as a source of pleasure for individuals, and as an asset for our societies. This, Mr. Davis said, is why the European Wergeland Centre is such an important institution. Its unique mandate, with very specific target groups and a clear mission, will make the Centre a valued contribution to fill the gap between policy and practice, by working towards and with the grass root level. Mr. Davis hopes the Centre will become a hub, recognized throughout Europe, for exchange of information and experience, and a place to try out new ideas. He is particularly pleased that it will be open to all member states, without exceptions, and that it will reach out to our neighbors around the Mediterranean, and maybe even further. Mr Davis wished the EWC every success.

H.E. Mr Daryal Batibay, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe, on behalf of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

Mr Batibay chose to list a series of recommendations setting out principles and guidelines that have been established as a complement to the European Convention of Human Rights:

- Recommendation 15 (2001): the role of history teaching in the development of a responsible, active citizen, respectful of differences;
- Recommendation 12 (2002): the central role of education for democratic citizenship in the educational reforms and its key position in international cooperation for peace and stability in Europe; The action programs of the Council of Europe focusing on democratic citizenship and on history teaching, especially the new project on “The Image of the Other”, will certainly contribute;
- Recommendation 12 (2008): teaching which takes into account religious diversity within intercultural dialogue.

Mr. Batibay also referred to the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, which the Committee of Ministers launched in May 2008; how we can live together “as equals in dignity.” He also presented a conference that the Committee of Ministers is organizing this year in June: the second Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue. Like last year, the Exchange will bring together representatives of the religious and non-religious convictions, as well as other actors of civil society, in open, transparent dialogue on the theme “Teaching religious and convictional facts”. The European Wergeland Centre will also be invited to contribute to the 2009 Exchange. Lastly, he underlined how it is the effective implementation of policies and legal standards which will ultimately make the difference. And this is where the European Wergeland Centre will play its role; being a place for representatives of different target groups to come together to dialogue, and where they can develop the intercultural competences needed to handle a diverse Europe. The Centre has the strong support of the Committee of Ministers, and he wishes the Centre success.

Jonas Gahr Støre, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway:

Mr Støre first mentioned that *our good deeds* are not meant to take us to heaven, but to prevent us from going to hell. He pointed out that the value of dialogue must be highlighted by governments also. Mr Støre described dialogue as the key to managing the concept of globalization, but a skill that needs to be taught, as dialogue does not come automatically. According to him, dialogue means seizing the middle ground.

The Minister then mentioned a book by French sociologist Dominique Moisi called “The Geopolitics of Emotions”, in which the author identifies the three main human emotions as fear, hope and humiliation. After 9/11, Mr Støre said, the international debate on how to solve conflicts changed. It is important to turn this tendency around, and to stop the trend of demonizing *the other*. We need to revitalize the discussion, to create arenas for dialogue both internationally and domestically.

Mr Støre emphasized the need to focus on dialogue to include the excluded also domestically, where some groups are not given access to the channels of communication. He underlined the need to hear a much broader range of voices in the public debate, and mentioned the new phenomenon of non-state actors; a social, political, and religious reality, stressing the importance of finding new ways of dialogue with them. Mr Støre also stressed the need to engage in dialogue in order to reach the necessary insight, and to find ways of dealing with differences. It is vital, he said, to find new meeting places. And the European Wergeland Centre is such a place; somewhere to explore how to build bridges between people, cultures and future generations

Mr. Støre also talked about the concept of freedom of expression, stating that the flight of the spirit cannot bear to be restricted, but that this freedom has to coexist with other fundamental rights, and that we need to manage it with responsibility.

The Minister described dialogue as the language of reconciliation, giving the example of Nelson Mandela. Can Afghanistan choose this road? Can we save the Middle East from war through the channel of multicultural dialogue? Mr Støre concluded his address by wishing good luck to the EWC, asserting that education and cultural encounters can, and do, build bridges.

SESSION I

- EDUCATION FOR INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING, FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

Presentation by Chair *Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni*, Director General, Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, Council of Europe:

Ms Battaini-Dragoni gave a brief overview of the CoE's agenda in the field. She stressed the importance of planning more and stronger initiatives to encourage member states to integrate intercultural understanding in the school curricula. Ms Battaini-Dragoni also emphasized the need to develop a formal system of certification/recognition of schools that have plans and practices on multicultural education at a qualitatively high level. She talked about the importance of educators from all levels playing a part in the fostering of dialogue and being good role models, and how the European Wergeland Centre will cooperate with the Council of Europe in the work of promoting the core values shared by both institutions through capacity building. One of the main focuses for the Centre will be to give teachers and trainers the intercultural competences they need. Lastly, she addressed the topic of journalist education and the integration of intercultural understanding in the training of journalists, which has not yet been done.

Jan Egeland (keynote), Director, Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs (keynote):

Mr Egeland started his presentation by underlining the mutual benefits of direct contact between policy makers and students which he has witnessed when visiting classes in various countries. The main question asked by students, from all regions in the world is: "Is the world getting better, or is it getting worse?" The numbers say yes. But even if less people live under the poverty line today, this does not mean that the world is getting more just. The gap between those still under that line and the rest is widening. Young people are getting more aware than before of the injustice of the world. This is a challenge for the future. There are fewer wars and fewer refugees in the world today than a generation ago. Mr Egeland then evoked the necessity to present facts and understanding about the positive developments in most countries during the last decades in the fields of health, education, economic growth and others. According to him, mass media too often concentrate on negative developments, crisis and armed conflicts, and this tendency should be reversed.

Mr Egeland went on to mention recent surveys (2006) that show widespread stereotype attitudes amongst Christians and Muslims towards each other. He argued that education for dialogue is a main challenge that can be met through focusing on positive trends and results, and on future challenges for individuals, groups, organizations, countries and international institutions.

Robert Jackson (panellist), Director, Warwick Religious and Education Research Unit, University of Warwick, United Kingdom:

Mr Jackson chose to concentrate on his own field of expertise; religious diversity in relation to intercultural education. From the point of view of official projects, e.g. on intercultural education, the CoE offers a structure which fully integrates development and political processes. However, Mr Jackson argued, the outputs of these projects need further dissemination and discussion, in relation to policy making and teacher training, for example. This is where the EWC will play an important role; in the active dissemination and discussions of the CoE's work. And so the task of the EWC is an important one. Mr Jackson continued with an explanation of how the presence of religions in society is a cultural reality; religion is out there as part of human social life. He mentioned the 2003 Athens Conference of the European Ministers of Education on 'The religious dimension of intercultural education' held in Oslo in June 2004. He also mentioned the recommendation issued by the Committee of Ministers last year, based among other on ideas from the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, providing a set of principles that can be used by all member states on the management of religious and convictional diversity in schools. One important task of the EWC work on intercultural education will be to disseminate this recommendation, and to facilitate the development of policies and good practice in different parts of Europe. Mr Jackson concluded by expressing his gratitude that the EWC will encourage research, initiate networks, and build bridges between research institutions and schools of different disciplines dealing with religion, culture, history, civics, and language.

Loveleen Brenna (panellist), President of the National Parents' Association for Primary and Lower Secondary Education, EWC Board Member, Norway:

Ms Brenna started her address stating that by making exceptions when talking about human dignity, we are discriminating. She went on to stress the importance of early teaching and learning, from kindergarten and primary school, as a necessity to develop multicultural understanding. She asked what skills our children will need to succeed 15 years from now, and her answer was multilingualism, the ability to deal with multicultural situations, and the ability to solve conflicts. Ms Brenna emphasized the importance of school teachers having knowledge of how to deal with different cultures.

Ms Brenna also argued that referring to a minority group as a "problem" or a "challenge" in the media would have negative impacts, especially on kids, and that what they need instead is hope. The words, the language that we use, both as politicians and as educators, are important for developing tolerance and understanding; some concepts might conserve stereotypes and prejudices.

Ms Brenna also pointed out that education for intercultural understanding must focus on the variety inside cultural groups, on individual differences.

She concluded her address with a metaphor comparing a human being in a new country to a tree in the nursery: its roots need to be protected by a plastic bag before they can grow in new soil. This plastic bag represents your religion, your language, and your traditions. But you should not be having this plastic bag after 30 years, or the fruits on the tree will not be good, and the tree will be judged by its fruits. If you keep longing for your home country, it will reflect on the way you integrate in the new one.

SESSION II

- EDUCATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP, FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

Presentation by Chair Hanne Sophie Greve, Justice, Vice Chair of the EWC Board, Norway:

Ms Greve started her address by talking about how all human beings are born with a human nature and human dignity, and that each and every member of the human family as such holds an inherent dignity and worth. However, she added, the human being needs to be educated and cultivated to develop his or her human nature; we must cultivate our mental capacities. It is from this *cultura animi* - cultivation of the mind - that our concept *culture* originates. She quoted Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer from "Bildung zum Menschen"; that is to teach or create humanity in the individual for him or her to become fully humane. Ms Greve also referred to Immanuel Kant and his belief that no human being is or should ever be treated as merely an implement or a remedy. The goal is to have the multiple rights of everyone respected simultaneously and constantly.

Thomas Hammarberg (keynote):, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe:

Mr Hammarberg opened his address by stating that, as Henrik Wergeland sought to unite Norway, the European Wergeland Centre should try to unite Europe. He stressed the importance to invest more in education, arguing that this was the way out of this financial crisis we are going through. In the field of Human Rights education, Mr Hammarberg considers that the rhetoric is there, but that there is not enough real action, and that this is what the European Wergeland Centre should provide.

Mr Hammarberg went on to talk about the concept of awareness raising, and the importance of explaining and defining what Human Rights really represent. He stated that curricula in Europe lack a clear Human Rights dimension, giving the example of history education as a tool to prevent discrimination.

Mr Hammarberg argued that you cannot teach about Human Rights by saying "Human Rights are such". We must avoid indoctrination, and this has to be done through dialogue. Not *through* education, but *in* education. Respect the child and his/her opinions, including opinions on how to be taught. When we teach those values, the methods should be in line with those values: Practice as you preach! Additionally, police forces need to understand Human Rights better; there is room for improvement in education there. Politicians also play a key role, and some of them are unfortunately using minorities, demonizing them to win elections. He argued that we also need to develop a dialogue with NGOs and civil society. Lastly, Mr. Hammarberg mentioned the importance of teaching journalists about Human Rights.

Niels A. Butenschøn (panellist), Director, Centre for Human Rights, Norway:

Mr Butenschøn started his address by presenting the UN Paris Principles, according to which National Institutions have the responsibility for:

- Assisting in the formulation of programs for the teaching of, and research into, Human Rights and to take part in their execution in schools, universities and professional circles;
- Publicizing Human Rights and efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, in particular racial discrimination, by increasing public awareness, especially through information and education and by making use of all press organs.

However, he noted, the UN decade for Human Rights education (1994-2004) resulted in an evaluation that showed poor results.

Mr Butenschøn recommended that the EWC coordinate with existing European national Human Rights institutions, either on a bilateral basis or on a regional initiative. He also suggested inviting the European Group of National Human Rights Institutions to a workshop, to work out a common strategy for the promotion and practical implementation of Human Rights education in Europe.

Viola Georgi (panellist), Professor, Free University of Berlin, German:

Ms Georgi pointed out the communication gap from policy to practice in the education sector. She encouraged the idea of in-service training for teachers, and the need for action applicable research. Ms Georgi also presented a set of recommendations and ideas for the EWC. In the international graduate sector, she presented the idea of the creation of a European Masters in Human Rights, which would allow us to go beyond national perspectives. She suggested the EWC to be a partner in such a program. Ms Georgi also introduced the idea of an annual conference on Human Rights Education, which would become *the* place to disseminate cutting edge research convertible into change. Again, the EWC could be responsible for such an event.

Said Al-Kitani (panellist), Acting Permanent Representative for the Sultanate of Oman, UNESCO Headquarters:

Mr Al-Kitani started his address by pointing out that intercultural understanding, human rights, and democratic citizenship cannot be isolated from one another, that they always come together as one package. He went through the list of concepts he had been hearing at the conference, such as *diversity, identity, equality, freedom, ethnicity, tolerance, dignity*, etc., and stated that these concepts had been “...around in the world for many decades now, like ghosts; We feel them sometimes but we cannot touch them. We hear about them, but we do not see them in reality”. Mr Al-Kitani asserted that knowledge has no value if it is not put into practice. He therefore warmly welcomed the creation of The European Wergeland Centre.

Mr Al-Kitani went on to give examples of how some of the above mentioned concepts are being taught in Oman, notably through the notion of an old irrigation system used in rural areas and that provided shared water to all farms; a metaphor used to teach children in Oman the complex concepts of dialogue, human rights and democracy. He also presented a project called “Connecting Cultures”, initiated by British educator Mark Evans, and supported by the Omani Ministry of Education. Through this program, young people from around the world meet in the Omani desert, without access to computers or mobile phones, to engage in a constructive dialogue for almost two weeks. All of this under the guidance of well experienced educators.

Mr Al-Kitani also pointed out that the above mentioned values cannot be appropriately taught only by introducing them as school subjects, but that they must be practiced in every aspect of day-to-day life of schools and families. Finally, his recommendations for the EWC were to support practical projects, to focus on teachers, and to take into account the local contexts of the societies it will be serving.

SESSION III

- COOPERATION IN EDUCATION IN EUROPE AND BEYOND, FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

Presentation by Chair Cezar Birzea, Director, Institute for Educational Sciences, EWC Board Member, Romania:

Mr Birzea opened the third session of the Conference by asking what kind of cooperation was expected by the EWC. There are different expectations, he said, but we have to be realistic. Mr Birzea explained that an integrated approach to the challenges was needed. In this sense, the role and identity of the EWC should be helping the transition from policy to practice in the fields of intercultural understanding, human rights, and democratic citizenship. In this framework, cooperation is necessary. This means not only inter-governmental cooperation; cooperation with those individuals working on the ground is also crucial.

Krzysztof Stanowski (keynote), Deputy Minister of National Education, Poland:

Mr Stanowski welcomed the creation of the EWC, ascertaining that it would be profitable to both policy makers and practitioners in the work of promoting the core values of the CoE. He pointed out that education is not just a tool to improve Human Rights, but that it is in fact a human right in itself. In this sense, one part of the concrete work of improving Human Rights also means promoting education.

Mr Stanowski described the important work of DGIV, in connection with other bodies and international organizations, such as PACE and UNESCO. He also mentioned the Eastern Partnership Summit held in Prague on May 7th this year, and how the CoE mission should also be to promote core values in eastern countries, including non-members of the EU, under the Eastern Partnership Programme.

Mr Stanowski stressed the importance of fighting against Islamophobia, and mentioned a potential cooperation with ALECSO and other Islamic and Arab organizations. He also underlined the need to integrate Israel in the dialogue.

Mr Stanowski also encouraged transatlantic dialogue and cooperation for the EWC, and concluded with a series of objectives for the Centre, e.g. dialogue in concrete action every day and preparing school books and involving teachers directly in the work of the Centre. He also suggested the Centre to facilitate dissemination of state of the art research (PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, eminent researchers and international research projects), to build a database of professional organizations, NGOs, researchers and projects, and to facilitate networking, as well as provide teacher training seminars and build bridges with different international organizations. Another concrete suggestion was a cooperation project between the EWC and the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre of Poland on an Annual Regional Summer Academy, starting in 2010. The target audience would be education professionals from Central Eastern Europe and Caucasus, and the courses organized as one or two week modules. The Polish National Ministry of Education was ready to implement this concrete cooperation proposal.

Jean-Pierre Boyer (panellist), Secretary General, French National Commission to UNESCO, France:

Mr Boyer articulated his speech around two main themes: learning how to live together, and cooperation within and beyond Europe in the field of education. He explained that education should be constructive, recognizing diversity.

Mr Boyer presented the works of the Delors Commission, for which he was Chargé de Mission. He explained that there are many ways of cooperation, for example on the image of different cultures in school books in European and Arab schools, and that the key question is the training of teachers.

Moreover, he added, the “other” cultures are actually within Europe, they belong to it, they make up Europe. Mr Boyer concluded with recommendations for the EWC, encouraging the centre to work closely with UNESCO, and the International Bureau for Education in Geneva.

Lisbet Rugtvedt (panellist), State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway:

Ms Rugtvedt presented the EWC in and for international cooperation. She stressed the necessity to understand and respect core values, and that education is crucial for sustainable democracy. She also emphasized the need to preserve the open mind all children are born with, and the need for a curriculum that educates teachers on these values. Furthermore, international cooperation in these fields is necessary. Ms Rugtvedt argued that, as globalization brings new challenges, common solutions are to be found in schools, and that teacher education should therefore have a more multicultural and multilingual orientation. Ms Rugtvedt also emphasized the need to keep working for tolerance, equality and human dignity, and how the EWC gives unique opportunities to make common efforts within these fields. She followed up by saying that the Centre could contribute, through international cooperation, to the development of an international module for teacher training in the field of intercultural dialogue.

Cooperation with the EWC, Ms Rugtvedt added, can be of different kinds, e.g. secondments, trainees and financial contributions. She encouraged cooperation with the Centre, and stressed the fact that in order to face the challenges in the implementation of policies in education for democracy, intercultural understanding and human rights, we need the capacity to develop strong partnerships and networks both nationally and internationally.

Edouard Jagodnik, Chairman Education Committee, INGOs, Council of Europe:

Mr Jagodnik described education as a tool to resist totalitarianism. He mentioned the Bologna Process as an example of good practice that could inspire the EWC. He hopes that the EWC will become a point of reference, but to get this result, the human resources will have to be at an excellent level. Mr Jagodnik suggested the EWC collaborate with the Center for Modern Languages in Austria, a centre dealing with the same question of going from policy to practice. He emphasized the need to develop dialogue and cooperation with NGOs and civil society working in the field.

Mir Asghar Husain, Education Consultant, the MBI Al Jaber Foundation

Mr Husain thanked the hosts on behalf of H.E. Sheikh Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber, Chairman of the MBI Foundation, for the invitation. He expressed the Sheikh’s deep regrets for not being able to attend the ceremony. The Foundation also wanted to express its support to the Centre, and looked forward to future cooperation. The MBI appreciated particularly the EWC’s emphasis on practice and effective implementation of innovative capacity building programmes. The strong support the Centre receives, both politically and from a wide public, was underlined as a great asset, as well as the “joint ownership” between The Government of Norway and the Council of Europe. The Sheikh also wanted to focus on the potential of the Centre regarding its outreach, especially to countries south of the Mediterranean, which would enrich the programmes of the Centre. Within this perspective, the Sheikh Al Jaber would like to propose cooperation with The European Wergeland Centre not only through the MBI channel and his broad business networks, but also in his personal capacity as UNESCO’s Special Envoy for Education, Human Rights, Tolerance and Cultures.

RECOMMENDATIONS, SUGGESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Throughout the conference, both keynote speakers and panellists made several suggestions and recommendations for The European Wergeland Centre. Three main concepts seemed to be recurrent:

1. The need for the EWC to build bridges

1.1. From policy to practice: *What will really make the difference is the implementation of the legal practices, the policies and the recommendations that already exist into the everyday life of the classroom, as expressed by the representative of the CoE's Council of Ministers. This aspect was particularly emphasized by several speakers as well as the audience. The EWC has a clear mission focusing on education professionals and their needs regarding capacity building, access to relevant pedagogical materials, good practices on education for human rights, democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue.*

1.2. Between different cultures both within and beyond Europe, and between individuals: *Go beyond the concepts of "us" vs. "them" and allow a greater range of voices to be heard in the public debate, as the Norwegian Foreign Affairs Minister expressed. To reinforce the value of the dialogue, the EWC centre's role as a facilitator of networks both for experts and organization as well as common meeting places was also highlighted as a relevant feature to be developed further in the future. Several of the contributors and participants, among them the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, underlined the need to cooperate with actors also beyond Europe, in order to build bridges between our cultures. This was supported by representatives from outside Europe such as ABEGS¹, Qatar and Oman.*

1.3. Between research and practice, and providing research relevant to change: *The EWC is a resource centre with a mission to carry out and support research, to facilitate the dissemination of state of the art research and its outcomes, to provide researchers, professors and students doing field work on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship a common platform where they can meet and discuss. Prof. Jackson emphasized the importance of this task, as one of the very particular features of the EWC.*

1.4. Between the documents in the bookshelves and the trainers and teachers working in the field, *who need to access this information and the examples of good practices to be used in the day to day teaching in the classroom. There is no lack of documentation and materials, but one of the main problems is the bottle neck created between the rich universe of materials and its users. The EWC's has designed its*

¹ Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States

website as a tool which addresses precisely the needs of these groups for greater accessibility to information; establishing a digital library that is user-friendly, with a logical architecture, one that will be able to be extended and grow, free of access, and open to all those interested in the EWC field of actions. This initiative was warmly welcomed by the participants. The comments reflected the importance of maintaining the library as a resource with emphasis on the user-friendliness and openness aspects.

2. The concrete pragmatic focus of the Centre as an asset

2.1. The EWC and its pragmatic focus: *The EWC has a very clear mission and specific target groups. By working towards teachers and teacher trainers, the multipliers, the Centre has a great advantage. It will both have the opportunity of becoming a place where representatives from the different target groups come together to dialogue and explore new ideas, and a place where they can be put into practice. The need to strengthen the financial resources of the centre was also underlined, in order to comply with its mission and deliver effective and concrete results.*

2.2. The EWC and the need to use blended learning strategies: *The need to use and develop blended learning methods in the EWC's capacity building agenda was underlined. There are two issues connected to this matter: on the one hand the need to address massive numbers of teachers and trainers, scattered all around Europe and beyond; and on the other hand the fact that ICTs and social media are already preferred common places for young people who are the ultimate recipients of the EWC work.*

3. The need for the EWC to establish and actively promote collaboration in the field

3.1. Collaboration across borders and across sections *was pointed out as necessary from several of the contributors. There is an international scene where fragmentation of initiatives is the main characteristic. The need to create and maintain cooperation across borders and across sections was mentioned throughout the conference by different stakeholders that also emphasized the EWC particular position.*

3.2. The Centre being open to all member states of the Council of Europe was emphasized as a great asset. *All member states are welcome to cooperate and propose concrete proposals such as the one from Poland on the organization of the EWC Summer Academy from 2010. This initiative is highly welcomed by the Centre.*

3.3. Facilitation of academic cooperation *was underlined as an important task of the Centre, also between research and training in the relevant fields, to get experts together at an individual level. The EWC strategy concerning open digital databases to gather information on experts in the field was very welcomed as well.*

3.4. The need for a platform for cooperation with other NGOs was also expressed. A proposal for a joint initiative EWC- INGOs represented at the CoE is under consideration at the moment, following this concern.

3.5. EWC should facilitate forums and conferences where experts can discuss matters of common interest: For instance, it was suggested to invite the European Group of National Human Rights Institutions to a workshop, in order to work out a common strategy for the promotion and practical implementation of human rights education in Europe.

3.6. Cooperation with other international organizations and centres working in the fields of education, human rights, intercultural dialogue and democratic citizenship, was stressed by several panellists. Several new proposals came across during the conference and the EWC is currently exploring how these proposals could become concrete cooperation initiatives enabling the centre to fulfill its mission.

On behalf of the European Wergeland Centre Team, we would like to thank all participants at the Inauguration conference for their strong support, positive encouragement, and concrete feedback and suggestions for our future work.