

**SESSION III: Cooperation in Education in Europe and Beyond.
From Policy to Practice.**

**Outline of the Speech by
Krzysztof Stanowski, Deputy Minister
at the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland
to be given at the European Wergeland Centre Inauguration Event.
Oslo, 29 May 2009.**

Dear Sirs,

I feel honoured that I can participate in the conference inaugurating the operation of European Wergeland Centre and make a contribution to the discussion on political and practical implications for cooperation in education in Europe and beyond.

This session complements two previous meetings devoted to new opportunities for the promotion of intercultural understanding and cooperation in the field of human rights and democratic citizenship education resulting from the establishment of the European Wergeland Centre, and I must admit that many important concepts and opinions have already been presented.

Therefore, let me relate to the most essential issues:

1. The Council of Europe is the oldest international institution working towards European cooperation and the first one, which has believed that common values and principles are fundamental for its operations. The notable contribution on the part of the organisation that makes it stand out from other European and transatlantic institutions consists in the promotion of human

rights, democracy and the rule of law as the essential features of European identity.

Commitment to education is one of the highest priorities set by the Council of Europe and prominence of education as a focal point of interest of the Council of Europe stems from two facts:

First of all, education is one of indispensable human rights;

Secondly, education is one of the most efficient tools to promote human rights, the rule of law and democratic values in a society.

2. More than 50 years of educational activity conducted by the Council of Europe stemming from the provisions of European Cultural Convention, forms a unique political mandate directed at the promotion, development and protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Heads of States and Governments emphasized these values during the Third Summit of the Council of Europe in Warsaw in 2005.

The Council of Europe implements educational programmes developed by Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sports, and these are supported by activities in the field of education conducted by its other bodies, to mention the Parliamentary Assembly, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and Directorate of Human Rights and Legal Affairs.

3. Education is a domain of inter-institutional cooperation, which helps the Council of Europe to open out to the world.

UNESCO is one of the organisations with whom the Council of Europe has cooperated for many years. Moreover, in order to implement decisions of the Warsaw Summit, the Council of Europe has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the European Union to regulate their bilateral relations, and

Declaration on Cooperation with OSCE. The Council of Europe has also established working contacts with NATO, to deal, among others, with issues related to Kosovo.

We are very pleased that the Norwegian Financial Mechanism effectively supports the integration.

According to the Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Prague held on 7 May 2009, the Eastern Partnership will engage a wide range of actors, including government ministries and agencies, parliaments, civil society, international organisations (such as OSCE, Council of Europe and OECD), international financial institutions, the private sector, and economic and social partners in the framework of multilateral platforms.

As for transatlantic dialogue, we are aware that influential institutions promoting Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in the USA are interested in establishing close relations and cooperation with the European Wergeland Centre. Based on the experiences of the Council of Europe, we believe that this is a good platform for cooperation.

4. The Council of Europe has played a historic role by supporting the integration of several Central and Eastern European countries with the European Union. Efforts made by the Council of Europe in those countries have included assistance in the development of modern democracy and laws, as well as the establishment of individual institutions, and providing information, training and consultancy. It was with the help of the Council of Europe that these states could voice their aspirations to enter the European Union.

At present, the Council of Europe has an important mission to accomplish, which is not to allow for an arbitrary divide into EU member states and other countries that are outside the European Union, and especially those who will not

apply for membership in the foreseeable future. **The Council of Europe should be a leading partner for the European Union in the promotion of goals pertaining to human rights, democracy and the rule of law under the Eastern Partnership Programme.**

5. The Council of Europe and OSCE play complementary roles. While OSCE concentrates on the development of obligations with political implications, the Council of Europe focuses on legal standards. OSCE mainly operates in the field, whereas the Council of Europe offers expert knowledge and expertise. Signing the Joint Declaration on Cooperation by the Council of Europe and OSCE provides many more opportunities for cooperation than their traditional teamwork on elections monitoring.

Certain countries of Central Asia are members of OSCE and are also committed to cooperation with the EU and NATO. These countries will soon become natural candidates for observer status in the Council of Europe. They may be invited to join in several instruments of the Council of Europe, and education is a natural area, which would help to institutionalize the dialogue with those countries.

The World Programme for Human Rights Education implemented in cooperation with the Council of Europe, UNECSO, ODIHR/OSCE and UNHCHR (the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) should be further developed.

6. Education offers a platform for cooperation based on partnership and equality of rights. Such dialogue, from the point of view of individual governments and societies, serves to restore trust in areas struck by conflict.

Information Offices of the Council of Europe in individual member states, which are open to all citizens, also play an important role in the development of

civil society in those countries. Thanks to their activities addressed to individual citizens, they can greatly contribute to the attainment of this goal. A good example here is the Information Office in Poland and its work devoted to the development of civil society, not only in Poland, but also in Belarus.

7. Several international organisations are committed to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, but due to the success of the White Paper of Intercultural Dialogue entitled “Living together as equals in dignity”, the Council of Europe is particularly positioned to do so.

Intercultural dialogue constitutes a founding stone when building civil society free from xenophobia and prejudice. Having in mind the presence of various national minorities across Europe and the upward trend for immigration from outside the continent, this is an issue of paramount importance. Ethnic and religious diversity in Europe calls for harmonious relations between individual groups. This is why a meaningful dialogue and cooperation with regional organisations from outside Europe, especially those from the countries that border on Europe, are of paramount importance. The initiatives of the Council of Europe aimed at preventing islamophobia and at cooperation with organizations like ALECSO (the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation) and ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) are of great value.

Committing Israel to cooperation is of great importance from the perspective of the development of intercultural dialogue. Let me remind you that Israel attended the Conference of Ministers responsible for Culture devoted to “Intercultural Dialogue as a Basis for Peace and Sustainable Development in Europe and its Neighbouring Regions” held on 2 and 3 December 2008 in Baku, Azerbaijan,

Starting last year, Polish minister of education has invited teachers from Israel to attend European workshop organised in Poland devoted to the teaching on Holocaust in authentic places of remembrance, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau. Moreover, a flagship programme of the Council of Europe entitled “Teaching remembrance – education for the prevention of crimes against humanity” provides many opportunities for the inclusion of representatives of Arab organizations and the State of Israel.

At present, the main task of the Council of Europe is to translate policy into practice and make the idea of intercultural dialogue take shape in every day life. Here teaching intercultural skills and observance of cultural diversity are the most vital issues. The Council of Europe avails of many tools designed for this purpose, to mention legal framework (i.e. relevant conventions), educational materials, and mechanisms for cooperation of youth and non-governmental organizations. Other initiatives include “Intercultural Cities” action, annual exchanges focused on religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, and, last but not least, the European Wergeland Centre, which has been established thanks to the commitment of the government of Norway and the support of the Council of Europe.

8. In the context of implementation of educational programmes matching the scope of activities taken by the European Wergeland Centre, such as intercultural, citizenship and human rights education, INGO Conference of the Council of Europe gains prominence.

As its name suggests, Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations embraces organisations, which thanks to their independent status, take action without taking into consideration political interests and support individuals and groups who are not generally welcome by other pillars; to

mention representatives of civil society in Belarus and inhabitants of regions struck by war who look for a platform allowing for work on a joint solution.

9. Having outlined the true pan-European structure of the Council of Europe and international context for its activity, I would like to present specific proposals for cooperation between European Wergeland Centre and National In-Service Teacher Training Centre in Poland.

10. Here I will give a multimedia presentation (featuring photos) on the National In-Service Teacher Training Center (NTTC - CODN) as a unit subordinate to the Ministry of National Education in Poland. The Centre launches and implements educational programmes at the national level through a network of well-trained multipliers (including networks of regional EDC/HRE coordinators, trainings, publications, etc.), followed by;

- a good practice example; participation of the National In-Service Teacher Training Centre in International Book Fair (teacher training, promotion of Compasito);
- a proposal for staging in Poland, since 2010, an Annual Regional Summer Academy for educators from countries implementing the Eastern Partnership Programme (one or two weeks in July or August);