

The European Wergeland Centre – Strategy Plan 2009 - 2012

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) is a **resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship**, established in cooperation between Norway and the Council of Europe (CoE). The cooperation agreement was signed in Strasbourg September 16th 2008, and approved by the Norwegian Parliament October 23rd 2008.

In accordance with the agreement, the EWC shall cooperate with the CoE on the basis of the CoE's and Norway's shared values and goals as regards education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

The EWC Strategy plan 2009-2012 is based on the Agreement between Norway and the CoE; the EWC Statutes; the recommendations from the EWC Inauguration Report (28-29 May 2009); the principles of the CoE's Education Programme 2010-2014 (draft version); the CoE White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity" and other CoE relevant documents. In accordance, the EWC Strategy plan 2009-2012 is built around one main action line:

Education for intercultural understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship: building bridges between policy and practice.

Mission

The EWC is designed to build bridges between policy, research and practice, and between cultures, individuals and organizations in the fields of education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship. It shall provide support for practitioners, multipliers, researchers, administrators and decision-makers among others. Through its capacity building agenda, its research and development activities, and its tailored-made interactive tools facilitating dialogue and exchange, the EWC shall create a community of practice based on the shared values of the CoE and Norway as regards education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

In cooperation with the CoE, the EWC shall:

- Act as a **resource centre** on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship for the member states of the Council of Europe;
- Carry out and support **research** on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship;

- Provide **in-service training and support** for the professional development of **teachers and teacher training professionals** on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship;
- Disseminate information and serve as a **hub** for researchers, teachers, teacher training professionals, policy makers and other relevant actors.
- Establish a comprehensive database of experts in the field – researchers, PhD-students, teacher trainers, teachers and others – which is free and accessible to all.

Target groups and bodies of cooperation

*“The European Wergeland Centre, is a truly innovative example of cooperation between the Council of Europe and its member states. It will offer a unique opportunity for coherence and harmony between different projects to further intercultural understanding and for real exchanges between practitioners from different horizons. Not unlike the North South Centre in Lisbon, it will seek co-operation with Europe’s neighbors, thus actively contributing to the dialogue between civilizations (*1).”*

The main **target groups** of the EWC are:

- multipliers (teacher trainers),
- practitioners,
- researchers,
- administrators and
- decision-makers

in education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship and related fields in **formal and non-formal education**.

The EWC shall act specifically as an **instrument of the CoE and the Government of Norway** while remaining **open for cooperation with all CoE’s member states** in support of the promotion of intercultural dialogue and intercultural education, particularly through collaborative programmes with other relevant organisations such as:

- the European Commission;
- UNESCO;
- ALECSO;
- The Alliance of Civilizations;
- The Anna-Lindh Foundation;
- ODHIR;
- Relevant representatives from civil society active in the field: NGOs, educational institutions and organisations.

Within the CoE, the EWC will cooperate with:

- The Committee of Ministers of the CoE, directly or through GR-C and other relevant bodies such as the CoE Steering Committee for Education (CDED); CoE Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR); and the relevant bodies active in the Youth field, in the areas of intercultural education, democratic citizenship and human rights education;

¹ From the Council of Europe Education Newsletter Nr. 26 (Autumn- Winter 2008)

- The appropriate units of Directorate General IV of the CoE, and specifically with: the Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education, and the Directorate of Youth and Sport;
- Other CoE services and entities, as required

The EWC and the CoE's Education Programme 2010-2014

The EWC's activities for the period 2009-2012 will be closely connected to the CoE's Education Programme 2010-2014 which overall aim is to develop a coherent vision of the role of education, with particular emphasis on preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and rule of law and the ability of our societies to engage in intercultural dialogue.

This programme aims to support the development of the full potential of learners, taking into account the nature of education as a human right and its fundamental role in establishing a solid basis for lifelong learning and as a precondition for social cohesion and the enjoyment of other human rights.

Education is of crucial importance in the developing of sustainable societies for future generations. European societies must be governed by democratic institutions and the rule of law and they must be respectful of human rights and cultural diversity, in accordance with CoE standards. However, institutions and laws alone will not create this culture based on values, democracy, human rights and intercultural understanding. The attitudes and skills needed to put these principles into practice should be taught and learned, practiced and maintained throughout life.

Education professionals play a vital role in the process of change. All learners must develop the competences required in sustainable democratic societies, and all teachers in different educational settings need to contribute and need to be trained (*2). The EWC shall facilitate these processes, and seek to build bridges between policy and practice in accordance with its mission.

The EWC main action line: building bridges between policy and practice

There is an acknowledged discrepancy between states' commitments and rules adopted in international fora and the reality on the ground in terms of intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship. Likewise, there are myriads of organizations, networks, projects and programmes associated with and dedicated to the work of education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, but oftentimes there is a gap between these initiatives and their concrete target groups at grass-root level. As expressed by the Secretary General of the CoE at the EWC Inauguration:

“...This 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

² Fragments from the Council of Europe's Education Programme 2010-2014 (draft, March 2009)

grass root level. I hope the Centre will become a hub, recognized throughout Europe, for exchange of information and experience, and a place to try out new ideas. ..." (3).

Consequently, The EWC aims at building bridges:

- **between policy and practice**

For 60 years, the Council of Europe of Europe has developed recommendations, policy documents and legal instruments. The EWC will aid the implementation of these legal practices, policies and the recommendations into the everyday life of educational professionals.

Through an integrated approach of research and development, capacity building, information and dissemination, networking and management, the EWC aims at enhancing and improving education professionals' competences by facilitating training and exchanges of experiences, and provide accessibility to information, state of the art research and good practices. This strategy will help diminish the bottle neck created between the rich universe of materials and its target groups, and address precisely the needs of these groups for greater accessibility to information and exchanges of experiences.

- **between different cultures, individuals and organizations both within and beyond Europe**

"...Dialogue is the most feasible way to solve conflicts. Dialogue opens doors and builds bridges. A key to solve many conflicts worldwide is to understand the cultures of those involved, so dialogue and knowledge are part of the solution..." (4).

To reinforce the value of the dialogue, the EWC's role as a hub, meeting place and facilitator of networks will be further developed and strengthened through a plethora of activities in the areas of capacity building, research and development, dissemination and networking as described in further detail in the annual EWC activity plans. The EWC recognizes the need for further collaboration across borders and across sections in a context of an international scene where fragmentation of initiatives is the main characteristic.

- **between research and practice**

The mutual dependency of research and practice underpin all EWC activities. Therefore, the EWC's activities will combine a theoretical reflection on the methods and concepts which inform educational practice with empirical feedback from practitioners on methodological and conceptual frameworks, in an integrated approach. To this end, the EWC will develop tools for qualitative evaluation and documentation of middle- and long-term impacts of educational practice.

The EWC approach

The EWC aims at building bridges between research and practice through an integrated approach. At the core of this approach lie the shared values and goals of the CoE and Norway as regards education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic

³ Rt Hon *Terry Davis*, Secretary General, Council of Europe, 29 May 2009 (video message)

⁴ Norwegian Foreign Affairs Minister *Jonas Gahr Støre*, at the Inauguration of the EWC, 29 May 2009.

citizenship, as well as an emphasis on blended learning and the benefits of continuous and systematic assessment of all activities.

For the EWC, an integrated approach means an emphasis on dynamic work processes that comprise all aspects of institutional activity, such as research and development, capacity building, information and dissemination, networking and management. It means assessment and self-assessment of all activities and stakeholders at all stages, acknowledging the value and necessity of feedback and mutual influences in order to bridge the gap between policies, research and practice.

The EWC aims at enhancing and improving education professionals' competences by facilitate training and exchanges of experiences, and provide accessibility to information, state of the art research and good practices. Thus, the EWC approach will emphasize blended learning and continuous assessment of its activities in accordance with qualitative, participatory and process oriented assessment principles.

The scope of the EWC's mission, target groups and activities necessitate a wide variety of means and an emphasis on blended learning. Such an approach could have a profound effect on distance learning because it offers learners the opportunity to combine face-to-face learning with computer-mediated learning. A community of learners can interact at anytime and anywhere because of the benefits that computer-mediated educational tools provide. Blended learning provides a mix of technologies and interactions, resulting in a socially supported, constructive learning experience.

Consequently, the EWC will develop and provide both offline and online resources: *Offline* to emphasize the importance of dialogue and face-to-face meetings in training and sharing of experiences, and *online* to emphasize the use of internet – and especially a web 2.0 grassroots approach – both as a basic democratic competence in itself and as an important tool for dissemination, information and communication with the EWC target groups and the public at large.

Strategic Objectives 2009 - 2012

During its first four-year period, the EWC shall – as an overall strategy – establish itself as a **professional, visible and cooperative institution**, according to the mission and goals of the cooperation agreement between the CoE and Norway.

During the period 2009 - 2012, the EWC shall be acknowledged as one of the leading European professional bodies of its kind.

During 2009-2012 the EWC shall give priority to the following strategic objectives:

- 1. Develop and implement capacity building activities in the field of EDC, HRE and ICE, aiming at improving the capacity of trainers in accordance with the EWC approach.**

Priorities:

- a) Conceptualize the “EWC” approach of capacity building using traditional as well as blended learning methods:
 - a.1) Implement a series of capacity building activities using the EWC approach targeting education professionals;
 - a.2) Create a pool of experts linked to the EWC, establishing a Forum of Practitioners, an online platform accessible to practitioners who are active in the EDC, HRE and ICE fields;
 - a.3) Develop pedagogical materials and publish (electronically) papers and conclusions of the meetings/seminars to foster further discussions;
 - a.4) Develop and implement projects within EDC, HRE and ICE;
- b) Support the CoE *Pestalozzi Programme* through:
 - b.1) joint activities (Pestalozzi-Wergeland annual seminars);
 - b.2) support of its existing networks;
 - b.3) engagement in the development of materials;
- c. Be an active partner of the CoE “Promoting social inclusion and combating discrimination in and through education Programme”, particularly regarding the design and implementation curricula for intercultural education and the promotion of diversity with regards to teacher education;
- d. Establish the Wergeland Award recognizing good practices in EDC, HRE and ICE among practitioners.

2. Establish an active clearinghouse for research and development work (R&D), based on the EWC approach.

Priorities:

- a) Build a base for applied research exploring conceptual, methodological and policy issues and facilitate access to state of the art research, research projects and professionals in the field;
- b) Link the research with the capacity building activities, promoting dialogue and exchange among researchers, teachers and teacher trainers;
- c) Provide a space for collaboration and foster activities oriented to dialogue and exchange for organisations working in the field or related fields;

- d) Develop evaluation tools (contemplating both quantitative and qualitative aspects) in order to assess EDC/HRE/IC projects and act as external evaluator;
- e) Develop a fellowship programme, inviting researchers to the EWC for short periods, aiming at publications at the end.

3. *Develop a high quality documentation centre addressing the needs of the practitioners and other multipliers in these fields, especially with regard to CoE values, standards and achievements.*

Priorities:

- a) Disseminate existing and new educational material and project outcomes, trying to maximize their results and impact in the selected target groups;
- b) Build and maintain a well structured electronic library/repository with documents and pedagogic materials, which is user-friendly, accessible and able to expand to scale;
- c) Design, build and maintain a comprehensive database of experts, trainers, researchers, teachers and PhD students, which is free and accessible aiming at facilitating and enhancing networking opportunities;
- d) Benchmark good practices and acknowledge them through the web;
- e) Be part of the CoE “Learning Democracy and Human Rights in School and out of School throughout Life Programme”, focusing on dissemination of CoE tools and manuals and promoting partnerships and networking.

4. *Develop strong and sustainable cooperation with the bodies of the CoE and with the member states; and act as a hub for institutions and organizations active in the field both in Norway and internationally.*

Priorities:

- a) Support programmes and implement projects develop by CoE within the field of education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship;
- b) Foster new partnerships with institutions and organizations in the field;
- c) Participate in the work of established cooperative networks (events, projects, other initiatives);
- d) Participate in the CoE “Education for Intercultural Understanding and Sustainable Democracies Programme”, especially on the Intercultural

Education and Exchanges (CoE Label on Intercultural Education) and the Shared histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines Programme;

- e) Organize conferences and seminars aiming at fostering further collaboration with relevant actors in the field.

Horizontal actions

Underlining these strategic objectives there are horizontal actions that must be put in place during the setting up period of the Centre concerning:

- A. *Personnel and facilities.* Actions will be undertaken to develop the EWC's organization into an integrated team of administrative and scientific staff, involving both permanent and short-term staff;
- B. *Monitor the planning and building process* of the EWC new premises at Villa Grande;
- C. *Strengthen and diversify the funding* in order to expand the range of activities of the EWC through cooperation with Norwegian and international contributors, adding to the basic capital and funding supplied by Norway and other partners;
- D. Develop and implement a coherent *communication strategy* to make the centre a visible institution in our field.

Communication Strategy

During the first four-year period, the EWC shall – as an overall strategy – work to be established as a professional, **visible** and cooperative institution.

The communication objective is twofold:

1. *By developing informative, engaging and interactive communication activities, the EWC will enhance knowledge and interest about its services, resources and values among its target groups.*
2. *Motivate and inspire the target groups to utilize EWC's services*

Priorities:

- A. EWC is a dynamic organisation and its activities shall be communicated and updated continuously, utilising different communication channels (website, information material, newsletters, events, etc); as well as external sources and partners;

- B. Strengthen and expand the online resources, the documentation centre and the interactive services available on the EWC Website, the main communication tool of the centre;
- C. Enhance online networking services: the expert database, online discussion forums, and social media channels.

As part of the communication strategy, the EWC has set up and implemented internal guidelines to make sure information and publicity about staff activities are communicated to the outside world, to utilize every opportunity to focus on the centre. The internal communication strategy also includes guidelines on forwarding information, material, documents and news items that are relevant to the website to the communication adviser.

Each year EWC will develop an action plan with specific communication activities to be undertaken to make sure the communication objectives of the centre will be met.

The Strategy Plan 2009 – 2012 shall be evaluated by the Board shortly after the turn of 2012, as a basis for a revised Strategy Plan 2013 – 2016.