

The 2017 Council of Europe Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education: 'Connecting the dots' between responses from governments and civil society organisations

Matteo Tracchi

University of Padova

- The article argues that the 2017 Council of Europe Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education is limited.
- The review process of the Charter on EDC/HRE merely provides two unrelated summaries, one based on data collected from governments and the other one from the perspective of civil society organisations.
- The selection of responses analysed shows analogies and discrepancies between governments and NGOs that have not been connected by the Council of Europe.
- NGOs identify the lack of priority among decision makers as the greatest challenge to their practices in EDC/HRE, while this option does not even fit into the top four responses given by governments.
- Governments report on EDC/HRE measures and activities but only 30% of the survey participants from NGOs confirm that they are aware of them.

Purpose: The article gives a brief introduction to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) and illustrates the review process of its implementation. Focusing on the second review cycle of 2016, it stresses that the Council of Europe fell short of a thorough analysis of the discrepancy in perceptions between governments and NGOs with respect to the effective implementation of EDC/HRE.

Design/methodology/approach: Looking at the 2017 Report resulting from the second review cycle, the paper analyses analogies and discrepancies between responses received from governments and civil society organisations to the surveys organised by the Council of Europe.

Findings: Through the selection of answers analysed, it is shown that there are areas in which responses from governments and civil society organisations are similar and aligned, for example on the issues for EDC/HRE to address and on the little priority given to make financial support available. However, there are other areas in which considerable discrepancy can be highlighted. The article draws a reflection on the way in which the Report has been put together and argues that, in order to build a more accurate analysis, the Council of Europe should have connected the responses received from governments and civil society organisations and make them dialogue, rather than providing two unrelated summaries on the state of citizenship and human rights education without merging analogies and questioning discrepancies between responses received from different stakeholders.

Keywords: education for democratic citizenship (EDC), human rights education (HRE), Council of Europe, review, implementation, state-civil society perspectives

Corresponding Author:

Matteo Tracchi

Email: matteo.tracchi@tiscali.it



Introduction

'The past 12 months have seen a gear shift in Europe's security concerns – points out the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland in his 2016 annual report (Council of Europe, 2016) – Recent terrorist attacks have sent a shockwave through our societies. Unco-ordinated responses to the migrant crisis have sustained chaos at our borders. [...] Combined with ongoing economic uncertainty, such insecure conditions are creating fertile ground for nationalists and xenophobes who seek to exploit public anxiety. Hate crime, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are on the rise. Trust in state as well as European institutions is in decline.' The Secretary General highlights that education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and human rights education (HRE) are increasingly important in addressing discrimination, prejudice and intolerance, and thus preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalisation in a sustainable and proactive way. They also make an essential contribution towards building inclusive societies: therefore, improving the effectiveness of such education is an imperative for the Council of Europe member states. Along the same lines, the Secretary General affirms in his 2017 annual report (Council of Europe, 2017) that member states continue to argue that education for democracy and human rights should be the central part of the Council of Europe's education activities and a fundamental component of any measure taken to address discrimination, prejudice and intolerance. While there is an overlap in the language used by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in his 2016 and 2017 annual reports, and there is no doubt about the crucial role of education for democracy and human rights in addressing current global challenges, it can be noted that the Council of Europe's education activities in 2017 focus more clearly on narrowing the implementation gaps in the field of EDC/HRE. The 2017 report states that tackling the implementation gaps will be achieved through events such as the major international review conference on the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE). The report coming from this review constitutes the main focus of this article aiming to show that the Council of Europe fell short of a thorough analysis on the status of implementation of EDC/HRE in Europe.

After a brief introduction to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (section 1), the article illustrates the review process of the implementation of the Charter (section 2) in order to focus on the second review cycle of 2016. Taking the Council of Europe Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe (Council of Europe, 2017a) produced as a result of this second review cycle and considering only some of its many interesting findings, which would deserve a more thorough and comprehensive discussion, the article aims to draw a reflection on the way in which the Report has been put together. More specifically, since the Report is based on data collected from a survey for governments (organised by the Education Department of the Council of Europe) and a survey for civil society organisations (organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe), and since the questionnaire for civil society organisations was designed on the basis of the one for governments, the article looks at analogies and discrepancies between responses received from different stakeholders to the same question (section 3). This methodological approach is based on complementarity theory (Klijn & Skelcher, 2008) which 'emphasizes how politicians attempt to cope with complexity by engaging civil society in policy formulation, thus not only strengthening input legitimacy but also policy efficacy through the pursuit of shared cognitive maps for action.' (Chaney, 2015).

Furthermore, the input of civil society organisations to rights implementation is defined as 'the key to knowledge transfer, policy responsiveness and effective practice – as well as a means to uphold government accountability and legitimacy.' (Chaney, 2017). The selection of answers analysed in this article shows that there are some issues on which responses from governments and civil society organisations are similar and aligned, but there are other areas in which considerable discrepancy can be highlighted. These results are quite telling and raise questions about the development process of the Report. Of course, the argument here does not state that responses should have been the same or fully aligned, clearly and rightfully governments and civil society organisations have different roles to play in the review of the implementation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. What the article suggests is that the Council of Europe, in order to provide a broad and reliable picture on the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe, should have connected the responses received from governments and civil society organisations and make them dialogue. Indeed, such an analysis would be more accurate and allows to identify discrepancies among the responses which could be further investigated to understand whether, for example, governments have overestimated their record, civil society organisations have been too critical and negative about the implementation of the Charter in their country, or different perceptions are simply due to the different roles of the respondents in society. This analysis could offer a springboard for developing measures and activities to reduce discrepancy in perceptions between government and civil society with respect to the effective implementation of EDC/HRE. This is also set as a measurement criteria of the parameter 'Education and culture for democracy' under the pillar 'Inclusive societies' in the 2018 annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2018), therefore an objective to aim for.

1 Council of Europe charter on education for democratic citizenship and human rights education

Since the early nineties, both nation states and international organizations (among which UNESCO, the Council of Europe, etc.) have demonstrated a considerable interest in education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and its link with human rights education (HRE) without often distinguishing the differences between these two. It seems to be a general assumption that they both deal with human rights knowledge, but this is clearly a limited and superficial understanding. The growth in interest in HRE, and in related pedagogies such as citizenship education, can be linked to international recognition of the need to address through education the challenges presented by continuing injustice and inequality in the world. Furthermore, the process of globalisation and consequent migration has led to increasing diversity in local communities. HRE, then, is increasingly seen as an essential and integral part of education for democratic citizenship in multicultural societies (Osler and Starkey, 2006). The relationship between HRE and education for democratic citizenship is strongly present in the literature (Osler and Starkey, 2005 and 2010; Covell, 2010; Banks et al, 2005; Fritzsche, 2007; Fernekes, 2016; Monaghan & Spreen, 2016). Democratic citizenship, including HRE, is often seen by regional human rights agencies as a way to 'manage diversity' (Tibbitts and Fernekes, 2011) and the Council of Europe offers a very good example of longstanding commitment to promoting EDC/HRE.

Since 1997 the Council of Europe (CoE) has developed a broad range of co-operation programmes in the field of citizenship and human rights education, both in formal and non-



formal education. It also long-promoted democratic practices and European citizenship identity through educational and cultural policies. Even before the nineties the Council has shown its commitment to human rights education. For example, it passed a resolution in 1978 on the teaching of human rights (Council of Europe, 1978) and then passed a recommendation in 1985 on teaching and learning about human rights education in schools (Council of Europe, 1985). On 11 May 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the 47 CoE member states adopted the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) (Council of Europe, 2010). With the adoption of the Charter, the member states committed themselves to 'the aim of providing every person within their territory with the opportunity of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education'. The path to the Charter was marked by a series of advancements made by the CoE, especially in the field of democratic citizenship education. Therefore, a comprehensive legal tool on EDC and HRE started being seen as necessary to systematize the work of the Council in this area.

The Charter is the outcome of an extensive consultation process organised in the framework of the Council of Europe with the aim of strengthening and further developing citizenship and human rights education in the fifty States Party to the European Cultural Convention¹. The text reflects the Council's understanding of the importance of the role of education in the promotion of its core values – democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and in the prevention of human rights violations. The Charter asks all member states to provide EDC and HRE in formal and informal education. It also outlines the member states' agreement on the objectives and principles (section II); policies (section III); and evaluation and co-operation in this area (section IV). Although there was some discussion of making the Charter legally binding (and of including some light external monitoring), an overwhelming majority of member states rejected this idea and voted for the text to remain non-binding (Keating, 2014). However, the Charter provides an important reference point for educators and policy makers in relation to HRE, is a catalyst for action in the member states and a way of disseminating good practice and raising standards. The Charter is the only international legal document which makes explicit reference to both education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. As such, it has potential for being further strengthened as a basic document for policy making and as a practical tool for the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law through education.

The Council of Europe Charter on EDC/HRE provides the most and well defined example of what the CoE means by EDC and HRE, as well as the basis for its work in the field. The Charter states that EDC and HRE are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. EDC focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society, while HRE is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives. The definitions of EDC and HRE as formulated in the Charter are: '*Education for democratic citizenship* means education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law. *Human rights education* means education, training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower learners to contribute to the building and defence

of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.'

The Charter was adopted in the framework of the Swiss Chairmanship of the Council of Europe as one of the decisions intended to provide follow-up to the Declaration and Action Plan adopted unanimously at their Conference at Interlaken in February 2010 on the future of the European Court of Human Rights. The first charter review conference was held in the framework of the Andorran chairmanship in November 2012. The Andorran chairmanship consequently organised a conference in Andorra la Vella on 7 and 8 February 2013, which gave impetus to the work on competences for democratic culture. Finland hosted the 24th Conference of Ministers of Education in Helsinki on 26-27 April 2013, which called on the Committee of Ministers to 'consider developing descriptors and a reference framework to assist member states in implementing a competence based education for democracy and intercultural dialogue'. At the 25th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education held in Brussels on 11-12 April 2016 Ministers of Education, 'mindful of the particular challenges with which Europe is faced, in particular terrorism and violent extremism, the greatly increased number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe, an increased sense of crisis, the rise of populism and the jeopardising of democratic values as a reaction to that sense of crisis', undertook to support the development of a long-term strategy for a more coherent and comprehensive approach to education for democratic citizenship and human rights at European level. The Ministers also endorsed the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture and requested the Council of Europe to consider ways of increasing the impact of its Charter on EDC/HRE (Council of Europe, 2016a). Having set the framework in which the Charter was developed, I will now briefly sketch out the essential points of the review process of its implementation in order to then move to the main task of this article.

2 Review of the implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE)

The first review cycle of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE was organised in 2012, two years after its adoption. It consisted of a report and a conference 'Democracy and Human Rights in Action – Looking Ahead. The impact of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education' organised in Strasbourg on 28-29 November 2012 in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Wergeland Centre. The review entailed questionnaires to state authorities responsible for education in the member states and an open questionnaire addressed to non-governmental organisations. It aimed at gathering data and information about the implementation and dissemination of the Charter among the member states. It also sought to get a sense of the further progress of member states in pursuing the aims and principles of EDC/HRE promoted in the Charter over the next five years (Kerr, 2012).

Drawing on the lessons from the first exercise in 2012, the second review cycle of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE took place in 2016 with a report and a conference 'Learning to Live Together: a Shared Commitment to Democracy. Conference on the Future of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe' held in Strasbourg on 20-22 June 2017. This second review cycle aimed to provide a clear and reliable picture of what has been achieved since 2012, define strategic guidance for future action and effectively support and promote stronger action in the member states in the area of EDC/HRE. The main input to the second



review cycle consisted of a survey for the governments (organised by the Education Department of the Council of Europe) and a survey for civil society organisations (organised by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe). The questionnaire included multiple choice questions as well as open-ended sections in which respondents could provide comments, examples of good practice, and further information. The consultation process of the second review cycle was initiated in February 2016. A questionnaire (available in electronic form, in English and French versions) was sent out by the CoE Secretariat to the representatives of the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE) with a copy to the Coordinators for Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE coordinators²) and Permanent Representations of the member states to the Council of Europe, for completion by governments. The initial deadline was set by mid-June 2016 and then extended to 25 July 2016. Questionnaires were completed by designated representatives in each country, the majority of whom worked in ministries, boards or national agencies that deal with education and youth. About half of respondents (19 out of 40) were members of the Council of Europe network of EDC/HRE coordinators. A list of other recommended contributors was included in the questionnaire, and in many countries those completing the questionnaire sought information from a range of key stakeholders involved in EDC/HRE in order to provide full and accurate responses. Replies from key stakeholders came mainly from research institutions, education professionals and civil society organisations such as teacher, youth, children and parents' organisations.

As a result of this second review cycle of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE, forty replies were received which is an 80% return rate. This is the same return rate as for the first review on this topic. Thirty-two of the country respondents came from the same countries that participated in the 2012 evaluation. The forty replies and then the thirty-two countries responses from both the 2012 and 2016 cycles provided the raw data that had been entered into a spread sheet to be processed and analysed by the CoE Secretariat. A quantitative analysis was carried out to generate a series of descriptive statistics. For the purpose of assessing change since 2012, analysis of trends were made when identical questions have been asked in both the 2012 and 2016 questionnaires for the thirty-two countries that participated in both review cycles. The quantitative data was complemented with a qualitative analysis of the open-ended responses. Feedback from civil society organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), was also collected directly by the Council of Europe Youth Department. The review of the implementation of the Charter by youth organisations and other NGOs working with young people was run with the aim to analyse how the Charter is implemented in the member states of the Council of Europe and what role youth organisations and NGOs have in this process. The data was collected through an online questionnaire, using the software SurveyMonkey, made available for the respondents in English, French and Russian from May to August 2016. The questionnaire was designed on the basis of the questionnaire for the governments developed by the Education Department of the Council of Europe in order to allow for comparisons between both surveys. However, some questions were added and others were adapted in order to better fit the specificities of youth NGOs. The evaluators received 166 responses (148 in English, 10 in Russian and 8 in French), out of which 70 were incomplete or spam. Therefore, 96 answers were taken into consideration for the review. The respondents were from 44 countries, out of which 36 are states parties to the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe. Taking into account the specificity of the work of the Youth Department, which includes working with the international youth organisations and involving participants from outside Europe in some educational activities,

the evaluators decided to include all responses in the review. However, the contribution of respondents from outside Europe was not included in the quantitative analysis but was taken in consideration for the qualitative aspects of the review. The respondents from civil society organisations represent a variety of youth organisations (formal or informal) and other NGOs active either on local, regional, national or international levels. These organisations work mainly in the field of EDC/HRE implementing educational activities and/or advocacy campaigns. Where possible and relevant, the results of this review from civil society organisations were compared to the ones of the previous review conducted in 2012. However, given that the respondents to this survey are not necessarily the same as the ones from 2012, the comparison is to some extent limited in terms of relevance and depth.

The summary of the review process of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE elaborated in this section clearly shows the objective of the Council of Europe to collect information from both governments and civil society organisations in order to analyse how the Charter is implemented in the member states. This is a commendable undertaking as it allows for the construction of a more comprehensive and realistic picture on the status of implementation of EDC/HRE in Europe. Unfortunately, as I will show below, the Council of Europe did not properly finalise the analysis of the responses collected from different stakeholders.

3 Analogies and discrepancies between responses from governments and civil society organisations to the 2016 review cycle

In line with the main objective of the article, this section goes through the responses received from governments and civil society organisations to some of the same questions asked to the two different stakeholders in the surveys of the second review cycle of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE. Since the questionnaire for civil society organisations was designed on the basis of the one for governments, though with additions and adaptations as clarified above, it is possible to make a comparison between both surveys. Unfortunately, this endeavour has not been undertaken by the Council of Europe to develop its 2017 Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe. As a result, the Report limits itself to provide two unrelated summaries, one based on data collected from governments and the other one based on data collected from civil society organisations.

In this article the analysis of the responses from governments and civil society organisations is structured as follows: the title of each subparagraph corresponds to the issue investigated by the question; the first paragraph of the text is a summary of the responses from governments; and the second paragraph of the text is a summary of the responses from civil society organisations. The results show that there are issues on which responses from governments and civil society organisations are similar and aligned, but there are also areas in which considerable discrepancy can be highlighted. This disjuncture contradicts the complementarity theory which argues that governance networks, term used to describe public policy making and implementation through a web of relationships between government, business and civil society actors, enable greater participation in the policy process and sensitivity in programme implementation. Indeed, 'governance networks – when predicated on the basis of deliberative and other democratic practices deriving from the communicative theory of rationality – engender both a democratic ethos and consensual decision-outcomes that transcend and accommodate partial preferences.' (Klijn & Skelcher, 2008). Clearly, the aim of this article was not to conduct a comparative analysis of all the responses received from

governments and civil society organizations but to show, through the analysis of a limited number of responses, that it would have been important for the Council of Europe to connect the responses received from governments and civil society organisations in order to provide a broad and reliable picture on the status of implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE. Indeed, among various intergovernmental fora, the Council of Europe has always paid attention to and valued the contribution of civil society to policy development, monitoring and evaluation. Already in the 1970 the Council introduced, for example, a series of governance reforms that included the involvement in educational co-operation processes of additional actors, namely practitioners, teachers, cultural organisers, project workers and representatives of the voluntary and NGO sector. Creating networks of practitioners and activists with similar concerns who participate in peer learning and evaluation is still used today as an approach that can help to diffuse policies to a wider audience and strengthen the legitimacy of policy initiatives (Keating, 2014). The cooperation with civil society actors, particularly NGOs, is considered essential for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the work of the Council of Europe. This article suggests that the review process of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE took into account this aspect when developing the surveys to collect information from both governments and civil society organisations, but then it did not provide an accurate analysis to understand and respond to discrepancy in perceptions between government and civil society emerged from data collection.

3.1 Would you agree that citizenship and human rights education is a means to address...

The survey enquired as to the extent to which EDC/HRE was considered to be a means to address a number of current challenges. According to governments' responses, the challenges for which EDC/HRE was deemed to be most relevant were as follows: i) violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, ii) deficit of democratic participation of both vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups in society with the overall aim of building cohesive and equitable societies, and iii) integration of migrants and refugees, with just under 30 countries out of the 40 respondents or about 70% identifying strongly (to a great extent) with this opinion. The economic crisis was in general seen as slightly less of an issue for EDC/HRE to address (with only 12 out of 40 country responses to this question or 30% giving this the strongest score).

Very similar responses were received from civil society organisations. They confirmed that EDC and HRE are without doubt regarded as a means to address challenges societies are now facing and identify strongly (to a great extent) with the following: violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism (67%), integration of migrants and refugees (69%), both vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups in society with the overall aim of building cohesive and equitable societies (74%), and consequences of the economic crisis/austerity measures/social exclusion (54%). It has to be noted that participants to the survey are slightly less positive for the latter, aligned with the responses received from governments.

3.2 In your country, is priority given to...

The priority given to EDC/HRE is generally high across different types and levels of engagement and support, for example over half of countries that responded said that EDC/HRE was largely their priority at the national level of government. This rose to 38 countries out of 40 who assessed that EDC/HRE was either a fairly or to a large extent a priority. There are some additional findings regarding trends on priorities for the countries that responded to both the 2012 and 2016 review cycles. According to the data, countries increased their priority level the



most on support training about EDC/HRE for teachers and school leaders with 11 countries out of 30 or 37% increasing their priority score. This was followed by an increase for 8 countries out of 30 or 27% in the national priority given to EDC/HRE. In contrast, and more worryingly, the greatest decrease in priorities was for making financial support available (9 out of 29 country responses or 31%). Already in the 2012 review one-quarter of countries (23 per cent) reported little priority in making financial support available.

Civil society participants point out that governments in their countries give the greatest priority to four main areas: supporting training about EDC/HRE for youth workers and youth leaders (41% answered to a fair extent or to a large extent), supporting co-operation with NGOs, including youth organisations (37%), EDC/HRE at educational institution level (33%) and making resources/materials about EDC/HRE available (37%). The areas that get less consideration include: supporting training about EDC/HRE for teachers and school leaders (20%), EDC/HRE at local government level (18%) and making financial support for EDC/HRE available (18%).

3.3 Inconsistencies between EDC/HRE principles and national education policies, between policies and practices and between education policies with other sector policies...

The review inquired as to whether there were inconsistencies found in countries between EDC/HRE principles and national education policies, between policies and practices and between education policies with other sector policies. The analysis shows that in the majority of cases country respondents suggest that there are no inconsistencies between principles and national education policy in EDC/HRE. When it comes to the implementation of EDC/HRE policies in practice, there is a substantial number of countries that observe a fair level of inconsistency, 66% in 2016. Since 2012 the level of inconsistencies between policies and practices has risen considerably with almost 50% increase for the countries that participated in both review cycles.

Civil society respondents confirm that different inconsistencies can create additional challenges to EDC/HRE work. Their answers to the question related to identified inconsistencies, differently from governments' responses, spread quite equally – all were scored from 50 to 59% (to a fair and large extent) at all levels: i) EDC/HRE policies and other policy sectors; ii) EDC/HRE policies and their implementation in practice; iii) statements of principle (on the value of EDC/HRE in education for all people) and existing policies.

3.4 What are the key challenges to the promotion and development of education for democratic citizenship and human rights in your country?

Country respondents have identified the following challenges as salient for the promotion and development of EDC/HRE, according to their medium to high impact: i) lack of media interest and support (73% of respondents), ii) lack of awareness/interest/ support among education professionals (78%), iii) lack of public interest and support (73%), iv) reduction/ cuts in funding (71%).

The survey by youth organisations and other NGOs revealed that working in education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, whether in formal or non-formal education, involves facing various challenges. The lack of priority among decision makers seems to be the greatest challenge to their practices in EDC/HRE (89%). This point is similar to the outcomes of the review of the Charter in 2012, where the lack of political support was rated as the third biggest challenge among the respondents. However, the number raised from



47% to almost 89%. The lack of proper training for teachers and youth workers (62%) is the second challenge identified by the survey participants followed by the lack of media interest (55%) and the lack of awareness/interest/support among teachers and youth workers (52%). While there are some similarities with responses received from governments to this question (e.g. lack of media interest), it is quite telling that youth organisations and other NGOs identify the lack of priority among decision makers as the greatest challenge to their practices in EDC/HRE and this option does not even fit into the top four responses given by governments.

3.5 Measures taken and activities planned to promote EDC/HRE...

All countries that took part in the 2016 assessment said that they took concrete measures to promote citizenship and human rights education, in accordance with the objectives and principles of the Charter. This presents a positive change since the last review cycle in 2012 when fewer than 70% or 22 out of 32 countries were reported to be implementing measures on EDC/HRE. Another important area in which the situation is quite positive is related to future activities planned to promote EDC/HRE. In 2016 almost all (93%) respondents indicate that future activities are foreseen in particular related to: i) curricular reform, ii) providing further support and resources (e.g. translation of materials, training, campaigns to raise awareness, etc.), and iii) international cooperation with other countries or international institutions.

Survey participants from youth organisations and other NGOs were asked if they are aware of any measures or activities that are planned in their countries to promote EDC and HRE in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Charter. Some 30% of the respondents were aware of such measures and activities and they highlighted several actions. However, there are a lot of bitter words in the comments to the questions related to the passivity and lack of awareness about EDC/HRE in governments. This is made even more problematic by the worryingly high number of responses 'I don't know/I don't answer' from the civil society sector (57%) to the question about measures taken and activities planned to promote EDC/HRE.

3.6 Shared definition of EDC/HRE...

With regards to Article 3 of the Charter (Relationship between education for democratic citizenship and human rights education), 78% of the respondents from governments (31 countries) have confirmed that there is a shared working definition of EDC/HRE in their country.

When asked about a shared definition of EDC/HRE in the country, 51% of the respondents from civil society claim not to know it or declined to answer the question. Only about 17% of them are sure of the existence of such a definition. People who took part in the survey have some difficulties in singling out both definitions and explain the differences between EDC and HRE. Some state they are the same or that one feeds the other. They also argue which definition is more containable: is EDC a part of HRE or vice versa. Therefore, replies from youth organisations and other NGOs highlight there is still considerable room for improvement to achieve a shared definition of EDC/HRE at national level.

Conclusion

As highlighted by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in his 2016 and 2017 annual reports, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are increasingly important in addressing discrimination, prejudice and intolerance, and thus preventing and combating violent extremism and radicalisation in a sustainable and proactive way. However, one of the main conclusions of the 2017 Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe is that citizenship and human rights education must not only be seen as an emergency response in times of crisis, but also as a long term basic tool for building democratic societies based on respect and dialogue. It is important to explore how the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education can be further strengthened as an effective support instrument in this area. Furthermore, what is clear is that such education needs to be constantly questioned, tested, reviewed and updated and that this process must be inclusive, respectful and democratic. It should not be about adding more on top of what education systems already have to cope with, but rather about doing things differently. According to the 2017 Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe, substantial progress has been made in all countries and EDC/HRE is gaining more ground in education systems and in school communities around Europe. Some of the most salient challenges in the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE include: inconsistencies between policies and their implementation, lack of resources, lack of a long-term approach, lack of evaluation tools and lack of awareness among key partners.

Beyond the many interesting findings of the Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe, which are not the main focus of this article and would deserve a more thorough and comprehensive discussion, this paper examined the responses received from governments and civil society organisations to some of the same questions that have been asked through the surveys organised by the Council of Europe as part of the second review cycle of the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE. As it has been shown through the selection of answers analysed, there are some areas in which responses from governments and civil society organisations are similar and aligned, for example on the issues for EDC/HRE to address (3.1.) and on the little priority given to make financial support for EDC/HRE available (3.2.). However, there are other areas in which considerable discrepancy can be highlighted between responses from the two different stakeholders. For example, while governments' responses only raise inconsistencies between EDC/HRE policies and practices, civil society organisations are more critical and underline in their responses that there are inconsistencies at all levels: i) EDC/HRE policies and other policy sectors; ii) EDC/HRE policies and their implementation in practice; iii) statements of principle (on the value of EDC/HRE in education for all people) and existing policies (3.3.). Regarding the key challenges to the promotion and development of education for democratic citizenship and human rights, there are some similarities between responses received from governments and civil society organisations to this question (e.g. lack of media interest), but it is quite telling that youth organisations and other NGOs identify the lack of priority among decision makers as the greatest challenge to their practices in EDC/HRE, while this option does not even fit into the top four responses given by governments (3.4.). Another interesting discrepancy pointed out by the article concerns the measures taken and activities planned to promote EDC/HRE (3.5.). Indeed, all governments affirm that they took concrete measures to promote citizenship and human rights education and 93% of them indicate that future activities are foreseen in this area. However, only 30% of the survey participants from youth organisations and other NGOs confirm that they are aware of measures taken or activities planned in their countries to



promote EDC/HRE, against 57% that responded 'I don't know/I don't answer' to this question. Similarly, 78% of the respondents from governments have confirmed that there is a shared working definition of EDC/HRE in their country but the majority of the respondents from civil society (51%) claims not to know it or declined to answer the question (3.6.).

Through the examples given above, the article aims to argue that the way in which the Report on the State of Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Europe has been put together by the Council of Europe is problematic. It seems, in fact, that the two responsible departments of the Council of Europe worked in silos and did not communicate to each other during the data analysis and writing of the Report. On the one hand, the Education Department collected data from governments and commissioned the writing of the analytical summary of replies to the questionnaire for governments. On the other hand, the Youth Department organised the collection and analysis of the data received from representatives of youth organisations and other NGOs working with young people. This approach is clearly limited because it provides two different snapshots of the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe, one from governments and the other from civil society organisations. This becomes even more problematic when answers received from different stakeholders are discrepant and give different insights on the same area of investigation, as this paper demonstrated. While the Report is an extremely useful source of information and provides lots of interesting data on the implementation of the Charter on EDC/HRE in the member states, the argument of this article is that the Council of Europe could have worked with more synergy to develop a stronger analysis. Indeed, in order to provide a broad and reliable picture on democratic citizenship and human rights education in Europe, the responses received from governments and civil society organisations should have been linked together, as this article tries to address in a preliminary form. This approach would be more accurate and allows to identify discrepancies among the responses which could be further investigated to understand whether, for example, governments have overestimated their record, civil society organisations have been too critical and negative about the implementation of the Charter in their country, or different perceptions are simply due to the different roles of the respondents in society. As already demonstrated in the literature, the analysis of state-civil society perspectives on human rights implementation can be usefully related to theory on collaborative policy implementation and, instead of the synergies predicted by complementarity theory, the disjuncture in state and civil society might show that governments are not affording NGOs sufficient opportunities to input their views on rights implementation, as well as public decision-making more generally (Chaney, 2017a).

With this in mind, the article concludes that the Council of Europe should have pushed further the analysis of the responses received from governments and civil society organisations to make them dialogue, and do not limit itself to provide two unrelated summaries on the state of citizenship and human rights education in Europe without merging analogies and questioning discrepancies between the responses received from different stakeholders. Such an endeavour would also be aligned with one of the measurement criteria set by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in his 2018 annual report: 'There is a mandatory provision of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education, both online and offline, and reduced discrepancy in perceptions between government and civil society with respect to the effectiveness of this provision.' (Council of Europe, 2018).

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Endnotes

¹ The 50 comprise the 47 member states of the Council of Europe plus Belarus, Holy See and Kazakhstan.

² The coordinators for Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE coordinators) are officially appointed contact persons whose main tasks are to ensure that Council of Europe information on this topic is disseminated in the member states and to keep international partners (CoE, network of coordinators, other international organisations when appropriate) informed of EDC/HRE developments in their own countries. Most of the coordinators are representatives of Ministries of Education or similar professional bodies.

Matteo Tracchi is a final year PhD candidate in "Human Rights, Society and Multi-level Governance" at the Human Rights Centre of the University of Padova, Italy. Prior to starting his PhD, he worked for the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London, where he gained extensive experience in conducting human rights research, as well as campaigning, policy, advocacy and capacity building activities with a variety of constituencies at local, national, regional and international level. More recently, he also worked for a range of civil society organisations, local authorities and universities. His main areas of interest are human rights education, education for democratic citizenship, children's rights and youth participation.

