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BACKGROUND INFORMATION MAPPING OF PRACTICES AND INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION THAT AIM TO COMBAT INTOLERANCE AGAINST MUSLIMS IN THE OSCE REGION

Related OSCE Commitments

The OSCE has emphasized the importance of education in combating all forms of intolerance, including against Muslims, in a number of decisions taken by the Ministerial and Permanent Councils of the OSCE. On those occasions, the OSCE has highlighted the need to prevent racism, xenophobia and discrimination through awareness-raising and educational programmes, as well as fostering tolerance and mutual understanding.¹ In 2005 the Ministerial Council also tasked the ODIHR to assist the participating States in developing methods and curricula for tolerance education in general, including fighting prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against, *inter alia*, Muslims.² These political commitments have given clear guidance to the ODIHR to act within the field of education.

Moving towards concrete implementation tools

Since 2006, the ODIHR has been supporting the development of country-specific resource guides on Muslims in the OSCE regions, as practical reference and educational tools. Moreover, in 2007 the ODIHR's Advisory Panel on Freedom of Religion published the Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion and Belief in Public Schools (TGP). Recently, the ODIHR cooperated with UNESCO, Council of Europe and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a Compendium of Good Practices in Human Rights Education and Tolerance Education.

As a follow-up to these initiatives, experts from around the OSCE region met in Warsaw on 3-4 June 2008 to discuss educational approaches to dealing with intolerance against Muslims. The experts came from a variety of backgrounds, including policy officials, leading NGOs, scholars, religious leaders, university researchers, school officials and leading IGOs. Several issues became evident during the discussions:

- Various governments, local authorities, and NGOs have recently developed practical educational initiatives to address intolerance against Muslims
- The participants were not aware of each other's work for a variety of reasons

¹ See, Budapest Ministerial Council Decision No. 5 (MC(9).DEC/5); Porto Ministerial Council Decision No. 6 (MC (10). DEC/6); Sofia Ministerial Council Decision No. 12/4 (MC.DEC/12/04).Permanent Council Decision No. 621 (PC.DEC/621);

² Ljubljana Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/05 (MC.DEC/10/05)

- Many participants were either looking for useful and effective practices themselves or worked with schools, institutions and civil society initiatives that were seeking examples of practical tools that could be used in their daily activities.

Mapping exercise on educational responses to intolerance against Muslims

Due to the needs identified during the meeting in June 2008, a majority of participants voiced the opinion that a mapping of educational practices and initiatives across the OSCE region would provide much needed support for the efforts of the participating States, education world and civil society organizations in confronting intolerance in general and against Muslims in particular.

Participants also felt that it was important to include a wide variety of approaches, focusing on knowledge, attitudes, skills, and civic activities, including (but not limited to):

- confronting stereotypes and prejudices
- anti-bias education
- human rights approaches
- anti-bullying initiatives
- inclusive education
- inter-faith education
- intercultural and multi-cultural education

The mapping exercise will lead to the publication of a directory, scheduled for publication in early 2010, that will consist of:

- Key recommendations, guidelines and tools developed by inter-governmental organizations in order to address intolerance against Muslims
- A detailed description of practices and initiatives –including policies- developed by participating States and civil society across the OSCE region
- A list of key organizations working to combat intolerance against Muslims, especially through education
- A list of key articles and books as well as key websites, with short descriptions and/or reviews.