



*Citizenship Foundation*

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# ***The Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE): and its Implementation***

**David Kerr**  
**Citizenship Foundation/ University of Bristol**

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## 1. Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE)

On 11 May 2010, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and representatives of the 47 Council of Europe member states adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 on the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) at the 120th Session of the Committee of Ministers. The Charter is an important reference point for all of Europe and provides the basis for the Council of Europe's work in this field.

The Charter reflects the Council of Europe's understanding of the importance of the role of education in the promotion of the Council's core values - democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and in the prevention of human rights violations. It also builds from the Council's development of a broad range of co-operation programmes in the field of citizenship and human rights education, both in formal and non-formal education from 1997 to the present. This has been marked by the various phases of the Council's flagship Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education Project (EDC/HRE) and has included the designation of 2005 as the European Year of Citizenship through Education.

The Charter sets out 16 specific articles concerning education for democratic citizenship and human rights education under four main headings. These are:

### *Section I General Provisions*

Article 1. Scope

Article 2. Definitions

Article 3. Relationships between EDC and HRE

Article 4. Constitutional structures and member state priorities

### *Section II Objectives and Principles*

Article 5. Objectives and principles

### *Section III Policies*

Article 6. Formal general and vocational education

Article 7. Higher education

Article 8. Democratic government

Article 9. Training

Article 10. Role of NGOs, youth organisations and other stakeholders

Article 11. Criteria for evaluation

Article 12. Research

Article 13. Skills for promoting social cohesion, valuing diversity and handling differences and conflicts

*Section IV Evaluation and Cooperation*

Article 14. Evaluation and review

Article 15. Cooperation in follow up activities

Article 16. International and European co-operation

Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 recommends that the governments of member states:

- implement measures based on the provisions of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education
- ensure that the Charter is widely disseminated to their authorities responsible for education and youth

and instructs the Secretary General to transmit the recommendation to:

- the governments of States Parties to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18) which are not member states of the Council of Europe
- to international organisations

## **2. Scope of the Charter and Definitions of EDC and HRE**

The definitions of “**Education for democratic citizenship**” (EDC) and “**Human rights education**” (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.

Education for democratic citizenship and human rights education are closely inter-related and mutually supportive. They differ in focus and scope rather than in goals and practices. Education for democratic citizenship 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 human rights education is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people's lives.

It should also be noted that the Charter "does not deal explicitly with related areas such as intercultural education, equality education, education for sustainable development and peace education, except where they overlap and interact with education for democratic citizenship and human rights education".

The full text is available on-line at:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Links/charter\\_adopted\\_en.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Links/charter_adopted_en.asp#TopOfPage)

### 3. Charter Evaluation and Key Conclusions

An evaluation was carried out in 2011 that sought to gather information about the implementation and dissemination of the Charter in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe. It has 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. Such information is valuable to the Council of Europe and its partners in taking Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) and the development of the Charter forward in the coming years. The full evaluation report was published in 2012 and can be accessed at:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/conference2012/Source/DGIIEDUCDPPE\\_B\\_U201217\\_ITEM8\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/conference2012/Source/DGIIEDUCDPPE_B_U201217_ITEM8_EN.pdf)

#### **Evaluation Conclusions**

The evaluation of the CoE EDC/HRE Charter found that two and a half years after its implementation that:

- There is evidence of **considerable levels** of activity concerning EDC/HRE in many Cultural Convention States. However, there remain a **minority of countries** where there is a lack of detailed information available about what is happening in relation to EDC/HRE and the Charter.
- There is evidence that **one-third of Cultural Convention States** still have a considerable way to go in terms of a shared understanding of and common approaches to EDC/HRE and in their awareness and promotion of the Charter. This raises the

question of how best to develop such understanding and approaches in these countries.

- Promotion and implementation of the Charter has been much stronger in relation to **certain EDC/HRE areas** over others. The strongest promotion in terms of objectives, principles and practices has been in formal education (primary, lower and upper secondary) and in vocational education and training. There has been less strong promotion in higher education and youth and non-formal education to date.
- It is of **concern** that Cultural Convention States suggest that the review cycle should focus going forward on EDC/HRE areas where promotion and implementation is **already strong** at the expense of areas where promotion and implementation remains weaker. This suggests a focus on formal education, vocational education and training and training, rather than on research, evaluation and monitoring and the role of NGOs, youth organisations and other stakeholders.

### **Final Comment**

A promising start has been made to the implementation of the Council Charter on EDC/HRE, however, as the key findings show, it is only a start. There is still a considerable way to go if the Charter is to fulfil its aims and ambition to be a benchmark for EDC/HRE in and beyond Europe.

The Charter on EDC/HRE has begun its journey but the nature of that journey has yet to be fully mapped out. Much will depend on what is decided about EDC/HRE in Cultural Convention States in partnership with the Council between now and the next Charter review in 2017.