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# HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN BULGARIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## **Summary**

The Master thesis is structured in four parts:

Part A International sources – This part examines the international instruments that have had biggest impact on the development of human rights education. It gives an idea about the contents of the right to human rights education and of the respective obligations of the states. It also gives prominence to the crucial role, reiterated in these instruments, of the constant reviewing of the school curriculum and textbooks. Given that today examination of state reports is the most effective method available to international organizations to monitor the implementation of the right to human rights education, this chapter also includes two reports of the Republic of Bulgaria on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Framework Convention of National Minorities and the opinions of the respective monitoring bodies. Finally, the chapter analyses the goals and objectives of the Plan of Action for the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, including their realization in Bulgaria.

Part B Domestic law – This part lists the Bulgarian acts and regulations that guarantee the right to human rights education for every Bulgarian child at all school levels. It further examines the implementation of this legislation by the competent executive body: the Ministry of Education and Science. More specifically, the paper comments on the recently adopted Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Schoolchildren from Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria, as well as on the curriculum approved for the academic year 2006/2007.

Part C Textbooks – The main part of the Master Thesis analyses the contents of some Bulgarian textbooks for first, second and third grade. These are the textbooks approved for this academic year on the subjects “Bulgarian language and Literature”, “Home land”, “World around” and “Man and society”. These are the only subjects in Bulgarian curriculum for primary stage of education that include human rights lessons and messages. The curriculum does not include “Human rights” as a separate subject. The chapter compares the content of the textbooks in the same subject written by different authors (the Ministry of Education and Science approves minimum three textbooks of different authors for every subject) and their level of compliance with the international and domestic standards for human rights education. Finally, the paper distinguishes “the favourite” in each subject and examines its real application through a statistic of the number of students in Sofia city that are taught in each one of the approved textbooks in the same subject.

Part D Survey – The last part of the paper resumes the results of a survey I have conducted in 12 schools in Sofia. I have prepared three types of questionnaires for teachers in, respectively, first, second and third grade. I have asked them to indicate which of the approved textbooks in “Bulgarian language and Literature”, “Home land”, “World around” and

“Man and society” have chosen to teach for the academic 2006/2007. More importantly, I have asked them to state their main arguments in favour of their choice or why did they prefer this particular textbook to the others in the same subject.

## Preface

*“That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed;”*

The Constitution of the UNESCO

What is system of values? To know good from evil. How do we learn what is good and what is evil? The answer for many people, since many centuries has been – religion. Since the end of the Second World War, the answer is - human rights. Human rights is, at present, the only universally recognised system of values. Knowing good from evil is not an instinct, we have to be taught in it. My parents learned that the First Commandment is “Do not kill” and that they must fear from committing sins. My heirs will learn that article 6 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights guarantees the right to life and that all people are equal. The aim of these lessons is the same – peace.

These simple ideas lie at the bottom of the promotion of human rights education. The ultimate aim of human rights education is the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes of human beings. In order to achieve this goal, governments were urged to formulate effective strategies for the furtherance of human rights education at all school levels, in vocational training and in formal as well as non-formal learning. Among these strategies, special role has the school curriculum. Considering the importance of proper education, the states must, inter alia, initiate and support measures, attitudes and activities that promote healthy behaviour by including relevant topics in school curricula.

Human rights education has many purposes. Above all, it aims to improve racial, ethnic and religious relations and to strengthen international and internal peace and stability. The mutual links that exist between human rights education and equal enjoyment of all human rights are intended to contribute to mutual understanding, tolerance, friendship and harmony between nations and ethnic groups. Ignorance is certainly a major reason behind racial, ethnic and religious intolerance and human rights education constitutes one way of overcoming this problem. This approach is clearly recognized in the provisions of international and regional instruments that repeatedly emphasize the need for majorities to know the history, traditions, languages and cultures of minorities and vice versa.

## **Abbreviations**

HRE	Human rights education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations

## Introduction

The purpose of the Master Thesis is to examine the human rights education component of the content of primary education in Bulgaria. It evades the right to education, which concerns some similar issues but is a different right with different content directed mainly to the access to education. Human rights education is a specialized branch of education prompted by the profound change which human rights movements around the world had instigated. The term “human rights education” is often used as a synonym of “values education”, which generally denotes curricular contents that reflects common human values.

As will be further seen, many international instruments recognize education as a means to overcome some of the major handicaps of modern world. On first place, education can be a tool to retain and eliminate inequality. Ensuring that children attend school is only one component of the rights to education. What children are taught in school about themselves and others can amount to advocacy of racism or sexism or propaganda of war. This threat has urged the introducing of requirements upon the orientation and contents of education aiming at conformity with human rights values. Those requirements open the floor for balancing the conventional prohibitory approach of the international human rights instruments with a constructive one: reviewing curricula, re-writing textbooks. Among the challenges, in this respect, is to convey positive images of discriminated persons rather than merely prohibiting the perpetuation of negative representations. The emphasis of teaching and learning about human rights should be positive. Otherwise, pupils may be led to feelings of powerlessness and discouragement when confronted with many examples of violations and negations of human rights. Instances of progress and success should be used. Teaching manuals should routinely avoid mentioning the word “violation” let alone describing violations so that learners could understand what human rights protection entails.

There are, however scholars, for example Ian Lister, who think that the time of peace education might have passed and the time of environmental-ecological education is now with us.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the time of human rights education is yet to come and we must be aware both of what has been achieved and what still needs to be achieved when we consider the present challenge of human rights education.

The process of reviewing the school curricula is never-ending. The educational system should become and remain adaptable.<sup>2</sup> This is a consequence of the requirement always to be observed the best interest of the child, as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The adaptability of the education system has two dimensions. First, it should respond to the local needs and affirmations of specific ethnic, linguistic or religious identities. Second, it should respond to protection against arbitrariness. The power, which is exercised by the authorities that decide on

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<sup>1</sup> See Lister, Ian; “The Challenge of Human Rights for Education”, *The Challenge of Human Rights Education*, Council of Europe, 1991

<sup>2</sup> See Tomasevski, K; Human rights in education as prerequisite for human rights education

the values and contents of education, ought to be subject to human rights safeguards lest it may be abused with impunity.

On second place, education is a tool to promote effectively friendship and tolerance among individuals and peoples. In 1978, UNESCO introduced the concept of a right of the people to be different, to consider themselves as different and to be regarded as such.<sup>3</sup> Educational systems which are officially committed to respecting human rights in education, including such a right to be different, are continuously forced to examine the boundaries for recognizing, accepting and accommodating diversity. The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century outlines more profoundly the main goal of qualitative education: “learning to live together by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values”. At any age, it is important for students to get to know each other and value each other as unique individuals, each with much to contribute. It is important that students have opportunity to explore and share their own, and each other’s, background and cultural traditions. Themes chosen for study should emphasize similarities at a general level whilst exploring differences at a particular level. Festivals, for instance, implies similarity, whereas Diwali, Eid, Easter or Hanukkah are particular examples. Clearly, if children are accorded such an education, which allows them self-respect, respect for others and the possibility of personal growth then spectres of prejudice may conceivably fade or be disarmed.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has emphasized that the knowledge of human rights should become a priority throughout the process of education.<sup>4</sup> Because it is well known that children learn through observation rather than exhortation, the cognition of their rights in education would greatly facilitate human rights education. Schools should, thus, provide opportunities for pupils to experience affective involvement in human rights and to express their feelings through drama, art, music, creative writing and audiovisual media.

There are two human rights curriculum styles in use: as featuring components of different disciplines or as a self-contained interdisciplinary block. The pros and cons of each style are often nicely balanced. According to Derek Heater<sup>5</sup>, in the case of HRE, one consideration might tip the argument in favour of interdisciplinarity. It is that politics and law, central to the very concept and enjoyment of human rights and in many countries only recently introduced into schools, may be squeezed out by the consolidation of core disciplines like history, geography, literature and languages. Political theory and law, even if too abstract and difficult for school purposes, provide the essential positive face of human rights discussed above: it is these subjects which deal with their designation and protection. Conventionally, history teaches about their violations. On the other hand, Ian Lister launches the two most obvious means of providing human rights lessons for all school students: first,

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Declaration on race and racial prejudice

<sup>4</sup> Commission on Human Rights – UN Decade for HRE, resolution 2000/71 of 26 April 2000, preamble.

<sup>5</sup> See Heater, D; “The curriculum jigsaw and human rights education”, *The Challenge of Human Rights Education*, Council of Europe, 1991



through history (a foundation subject in the national curriculum) and, secondly, through civic education (a cross-curricular theme).<sup>6</sup> It is also worth mentioning the opinion of Manfred Nowak who was training Austrian school teachers for more than 20 years in HRE as one component of a cross-curricular civic education principle. He admits that “a mere cross-curricular approach, based on the voluntary participation of interested teachers, has only a fairly limited effect on the human rights awareness raising process. A cross-curricula approach can never substitute, but only complement, the recommendation of the Vienna Programme of Action to include human rights as a special subject in the curricula of all learning institutions.”<sup>7</sup> This opinion is also shared by Esbjorn Eide who believes that “for the long-range prevention of ethnic or religious hatred and intolerance, human rights education should be made a core curriculum subject in primary ... education”.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of their choice of curriculum style, governments should guarantee that all students have an awareness of the related notions of basic rights/fundamental freedoms and fair treatment/due process. These are the essence of human rights and all selection of content should relate to them. An important guideline for review of the curriculum, in this connection, gives Ian Lister. He believes that there are some major human rights documents which students ought to be aware of but that those documents are often dry and dusty and that HRE needs to be kept *human* and that there are admirable human rights *people* (Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela) and moving human rights situations and stories.<sup>9</sup> In addition, he had collected the following arguments *for* and *against* teaching and learning about human rights in schools.

#### **AGAINST**

1. Human rights are too complex for immature minds.
2. Human rights overstress rights and understress responsibilities.
3. To teach human rights is a form of indoctrination.
4. Human rights is a culture-bound conception, born in western Europe and North America, foisted on the world in 1948.
5. There is no consensus about human rights in general.
6. Group rights, collective rights and the importance of the public domain are underrepresented.
7. If we arrogate to ourselves the right to pass judgement upon, and seek to interfere it, the internal administration of justice in other countries we are in effect according the same right of judgement and interference in our own. There is no good so great that it is worth purchasing it at the price of national independence. (Extract

<sup>6</sup> See Lister, Ian; “The Challenge of Human Rights for Education”, *The Challenge of Human Rights Education*, Council of Europe

<sup>7</sup> See Nowak, M. Prioritising human rights education and training, , E.H.R.L.R. 2004,3

<sup>8</sup> See Eide, A. Multicultural education and group accomodation in the light of minority rights, *Human rights education: Achievements and challenges*

<sup>9</sup> See Lister, Ian; “The Challenge of Human Rights for Education”, *The Challenge of Human Rights Education*, Council of Europe

from a letter of a politician to a schoolteacher who had invited the politician to make a statement in support of a human rights exhibition mounted by students in a comprehensive school.)

8. Teachers of human rights go too far. Some even talk about “the rights of trees”. Ordinary citizens will not support this.
9. Teachers are usually more interested in social change (or in subversion) than in maintaining the fabric of society.

#### **PRO**

1. To know about basic rights and fundamental freedoms is part of the birthright, and should be part of the entitlement curriculum, of all young people.
2. Human rights cases and issues are human and can interest, and encourage, the humanity of students.
3. Human rights offer a value framework suitable for modern society.
4. Human rights offer to young people something positive to believe in and support.
5. No man or woman is an island. We are all our brother’s and sister’sd keepers and helpers.
6. Young people have rights and responsibilities and developing an awareness of them is a proper part of education in citizenship.
7. Important organizations – such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and some national human rights commissions – support the teaching of human rights in schools.
8. The facilitation of non-violent change is the most urgent task today – both within societies and between societies.
9. Teaching and learning about human rights can contribute to a political education, which is over and above party politics.

Finally, I would like briefly to state my arguments to restrict the research with regard to the level of education and my reasons to believe that education in human rights is compulsory for children since early age.

Education in general is more than “one lesson right after another”. It educates personalities, discovers talents, develops skills. This is more true for kindergartens and primary schools where the first contact of the children with specialists and professional trainers takes place. In the primary sector, there is always an understanding of the need for all adults involved with pupils to be carers, supporters, nurturers and developers. For many reasons, the primary school is a fertile base for the building of human rights education.

First, the basis, consisted of first lessons, knowledge and impressions, is the most important part of the overall education of the person as it leaves lasting tracks and it is very unlikely to be changed. As of the Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, the first years of education are of pivotal importance in a child’s development. The possibility of changing the views of people, as distinct from the processes and practices, which they follow, seems to recede as people get older.

Secondly, children since early age are able to see the physical differences between the two genders, the races and the ethnic groups. It is clear that, for sure, the equality which one can expect pupils to have in their own experience is that of gender equality or inequality. Therefore, since early age they should be educated that these characteristics are not a basis for different treatment.

Finally, for part of the Bulgarian children the primary education is the only one they get in their lives. For example, the primary to secondary transition rate shows that in 2001 7% of all Bulgarian children did not complete primary education. Even more, in 42% of the Roma families there are children who have not complete their primary education.

In addition, the Master Thesis concentrates only on the following aspects of the right to HRE:

1. the introduction of HRE in school curricula;
2. the HRE component of the textbooks.

The Master Thesis does not examine the non-formal human rights education as provided by the non-governmental organizations, the mass media and the family nor with the so-called “hidden curriculum” or the human rights-friendly atmosphere in class. It also excludes the issues of the teaching methods and the initial training of the teachers for their future contribution to teaching about human rights in their schools.

## A. INTERNATIONAL SOURCES

### *A.1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Recommendation R (85)7*

Human rights education has developed gradually and since the end of the Second World War has been codified in a broad variety of binding and non-binding international and regional instruments. The drafters of these instruments were unanimous that human rights education can make a difference in facilitating the process of moving from war to peace. This conviction was firstly forged as early as 1948 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

*Art.26(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace.*

The School Education Division of the Council of Europe 30 years after the Universal Declaration saw the need for help for teachers beyond copies of official texts. In 1978 following a Resolution 78 (41) of the Committee of Ministers on the “teaching of human rights”, a five year program of research and consultation was initiated. The final symposium of this project held in Vienna in 1983 brought together experts from both sides of the Atlantic and representatives of the member states. Their deliberation resulted in a series of recommendations which were then submitted to governments for modification. A revised draft was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 14 May 1985.

This text known as Recommendation R (85)7 on “Teaching and Learning about Human Rights in Schools” has been widely disseminated by governments and non-governmental groups. The text and its appendix express agreed positions about what school could and should be doing to promote knowledge and awareness in human rights issues. The challenge is to make this text a basis on which teachers can act and to enlist further support from governments for its full implementation. The Ministers express their faith in the potential of the school itself to be a microcosm of a society based on the principles of human rights.

The appendix of the Recommendation R (85)7 is entitled “Suggestions for teaching and learning about human rights in schools”. It is divided into six main sections as follows: Human rights in the school curriculum; Skills; Knowledge to be acquired in the study of human rights; The climate of the school; Teacher training; International Human Rights Day.

The drafters stress at the very beginning of the appendix that “human rights can and should be acquired at an early stage”. For example, the non-violent resolution of conflict and respect for others can be successfully acquired by students of primary class.

The Ministers further suggest that the topics to be covered in learning about human rights could include: main categories of human rights

found in the International Bill of Human Rights; forms of injustice, inequality and discrimination; people, movements and key events, both successes and failures, in the historical and continuing struggle for human rights and main international declarations and conventions on human rights.

Under the Recommendation R (85)7, the study of human rights in schools shall be approached in different ways according to the age and circumstances of the pupils. For instance, according to Mrs Pauline Lyseight-Jones, primary phase inspector in London with a long teaching career, with younger children it is not appropriate to have a human rights lesson.<sup>10</sup> The issues have to be presented through many different activities. The broad nature of HRE predisposes teacher towards choosing the best elements of many different disciplines. For example, help children to handle both winning and losing; use fairy tales, myths and legends to try to help children to manage justice and equality; encourage individual responsibility using a class council as a forum to discuss class matters openly. In addition, looking back to the time of the children's grandparents may be a way of showing what children have achieved as rights, which were not seen to be applicable 40 or 50 years ago. Free speech and freedom from certain types of punishment are possibilities. Mrs Lyseight-Jones believe that rather than memorizing texts of the International Bill of Rights, students should be asked to list what they feel are their rights as children. Only then, they could compare their findings with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and discuss the similarities and the anomalies.

### *A.2. Combating discrimination through education*

The Box below reproduces excerpts from the principal global human rights treaties and declarations which address the most prevalent pattern of discrimination world-wide and specify how its elimination should be approached within education. As will be seen, among the means for combating prejudices is the elimination of explicit and implicit discriminatory messages in curricula and textbooks.

**International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)**

*Art. 7 States parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching [and] education with a view to combat prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations, racial or ethnical groups.*

**Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)**

*Art. 5 Family education shall lead to a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of*

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<sup>10</sup> See Lyseight-Jones, Pauline; "Human rights in primary school", *The Challenge of Human Rights Education*, London : Cassell, 1991

*men and women in the upbringing of their children.*

*Art. 10 The states parties agree to eliminate any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels ... of education ... by the revision of textbooks and school programs and the adaptation of teaching methods.*

**ILO Convention (No 169) Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989)**

*Art. 31 Educational measures shall be taken among all sections of the national community ... with the object of eliminating prejudices. To this end, efforts shall be made to ensure that history textbooks and other educational materials provide a fair, accurate and informative portrayal of the societies and cultures of these peoples.*

**UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice (1978)**

*Art. 5(2) States ... and the entire teaching profession have a responsibility to see that the educational resources of all countries are used to combat racism, more especially by ensuring that curricula and textbooks include scientific and ethical considerations concerning human unity and diversity and that no individual distinctions are made with regard to any people; by training teachers to achieve these ends...*

**A.3. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**

Article 29(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (“the Convention”) outlines the aims of education, which the States parties shall strive to achieve. Only a policy that includes a human rights education in the curriculum of all levels of formal education can ensure that education is in fact directed to:

*(a) the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;*

*(b) the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the UN;*

*(c) the development of respect for the child’s parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;*

*(d) the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.*

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (“the Committee”) has had the chance to explicitly comment on the aims of education as stated

in Article 29(1) of the Convention.<sup>11</sup> The Committee defines human rights education as one designed “to strengthen the child’s capacity to enjoy the full range of human rights and to promote a culture which is infused by appropriate human rights values”. It stresses that every child has a right to such education. An education with its content firmly rooted in the values of Article 29 (1) is for every child an indispensable tool for her/his efforts to achieve in the course of her/his life a balanced, human rights friendly response to the challenges of modern world.

Article 29 (1) states that the States parties agree that education should be directed to a wide range of values. This agreement overcomes the boundaries of religion, nation and culture built across many parts of the world. Part of the importance of this provision lies precisely in its recognition of the need for a balanced approach to education and one which succeeds in reconciling diverse values through dialogue and respect for difference. Moreover, as the Committee points out, “children are capable of playing a unique role in bridging many of the differences that have historically separated groups of people from one another”.

The article also attaches importance to the process by which the right to education is to be promoted in which primary role has the content of the curriculum.

As to the content of the right under Article 29(1), while Article 28 focuses upon the obligations of State parties in relation to the establishment of educational systems and in ensuring access thereto, article 29(1) underlines the individual and subjective right to a specific quality of education. This article emphasizes the message of child-centered education: that the key goal of education is the development of the individual child’s personality, talents and abilities, and learning needs. Thus, the curriculum must be of direct relevance to the child’s social, cultural, environmental and economic context and take full account of the child’s evolving capacities. The Committee stresses that education must be aimed at ensuring that essential life skills are learnt by every child and gives as examples: the ability to make well-balanced decisions; to resolve conflicts in a non-violent manner; to develop good social relationships and responsibility and critical thinking. In this connection, the Committee points out that discriminatory practices, such as for example a curriculum which is inconsistent with the principles of gender equality, are in direct contradiction with the requirements in article 29(1)(a) that education be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Further, the Committee highlights the links between article 29(1) and the struggle against discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. A reliable and enduring antidote to these phenomena is the provision of education which promotes an understanding and appreciation of the values reflected in article 29 (1), including respect for differences. The Committee’s conclusion is that “education should be accorded one of the highest priorities in all campaigns against the evils of racism and related phenomena”.

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<sup>11</sup> See General Comment No 1 of 17/04/2001 on [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(symbol\)/CRC.GC.2001.1.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(symbol)/CRC.GC.2001.1.En?OpenDocument)

Article 29(1) can also be seen as a foundation stone for the various programmes of HRE promoted by international agencies. HRE should provide information on the content of human rights treaties. But children should also learn about human rights by seeing human rights standards implemented in practice, including in school.

As to the implementation, the Committee finds that the aims and values reflected in this article are stated in quite general terms and their implications are potentially very wide ranging. Therefore it calls upon all States parties to take the necessary steps to formally incorporate the relevant principles into their education policies and legislation at all levels. The effective promotion of article 29(1) requires the fundamental reworking of curricula to include the various aims of education and the systematic revision of textbooks and other teaching materials. More importantly, “approaches which do no more than seek to superimpose the aims and values of the article on the existing system without encouraging any deeper changes are clearly inadequate”. The relevant values cannot be effectively integrated into a broader curriculum unless those who are expected to teach and exemplify the values have themselves been convinced of their importance. The design and implementation of programs to promote the values reflected in this article should become part of the standard response by Governments to almost all situations in which patterns of human rights violations have occurred. States parties should also consider establishing a review procedure which responds to complaints that existing policies or practices are not consistent with article 29(1).

In another document, the Committee on the Rights of the Child paid special attention to the inequality between sexes. It urged a changed image of woman “in school textbooks by adopting suitable messages to combat inequalities, stereotypes and social apathy”.<sup>12</sup>

In 1995 Bulgaria filed its initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In respect with aims of education, the State party alleged that there were no substantial differences between Bulgaria’s current legislation and the Convention. The Regulation for the Application of the Public Education Act set the following basic goals of education: mastering the basics and laws of human knowledge, learning human and national values, virtues and culture, encouraging the child’s creativity, spiritual, physical and social development.

In 1997 the Committee published its concluding observations on the initial report of Bulgaria. It expressed its concern about the insufficiency of measures taken to inform and educate all parts of society, adults and children alike, on the provisions and principles of the Convention. With regard to the full implementation of article 29(1) and despite the existence of international cooperation in this field, the Committee was also concerned about the insufficient measures taken to ensure that the school curricula are guided by the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially with regard to HRE.

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<sup>12</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child – Report on the eighth session (Geneva, 9-27 January 1995), UN Doc. CRC/C/38, 20 February 1995, General debate on the girl child, 21 January 1995, Annex V, para. 3 (a), p. 72.



The Committee recommended that Bulgaria launch a systematic information campaign for children on the Convention. It also pointed out that the school curriculum should be reviewed to promote respect for the Convention. Finally, the Committee recommended that the initial report and written replies submitted by Bulgaria be made widely available to the public at large

*A.4. Framework convention for the protection of national minorities (1994)*

Education is today considered as a goal in its own right as well as a forceful tool for transmitting knowledge, attitudes and values. No other issue is given such space in the Framework Convention, with three specific provisions (out of sixteen operative provisions in its Section II), Articles 12-14, as well as explicit references to education in general provisions concerning equality and intercultural dialogue (Article 6).

*Article 6*

*The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.*

*Article 12*

*The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority. In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.*

The aims of education in diverse societies allow us to look at education within the Framework Convention as having multiple and occasionally contradictory aims which need to be reconciled and balanced. There are many different stakeholders in education: those educated, the educators, parents, minority groups, local, regional and central authorities. Their needs and aspirations may vary and need to be constantly assessed and accommodated to the extent possible. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has placed in a paramount position the needs and wishes of the child, a dimension which was lacking in earlier documents. This is of great importance in the field of education where other international documents have earlier given preference to the interests and options of parents or educators at the expense of the views of the child.

The Framework Convention presupposes that States actively pursue the goals embodied in the Convention. A passive attitude may amount to a violation of the obligations provided for under the Convention. Examples of this are the absence of legislation guaranteeing rights to and in

education for persons belonging to national minorities, or minority policies that are of an ad hoc and unsystematic character.

Article 6 of the Framework Convention requires that State Parties encourage tolerance, dialogue and mutual understanding among different groups living within the state. In the field of education, this poses demands both as regards the content of education and the choice of form, educators, structures and institutions of education. The link between Article 6 and Article 12 is strong in that both provisions support the core ethos of the Framework Convention as one of intercultural dialogue, integration of minorities in the wider society and social cohesion. State Parties need to review regularly the curricula and textbooks of subjects such as history, religion and literature, but such reviews should also cover the entire curriculum in order to ensure that the diversity of cultures and identities is reflected and that tolerance and intercultural communication are promoted.

With regard to the teaching of history, the Advisory Committee recalls the long lasting efforts of the Council of Europe in this field. These efforts focus on eliminating stereotypes and prejudices in history textbooks and on the potentials of critical thinking through history. The introduction of elements of intercultural knowledge and dialogue in curricula as well as the need to review curricula, especially in the field of history and religion, have often been included in the Opinions of the Advisory Committee.

Article 12(1) makes clear that State obligations concern not only education available for minorities but also that of majorities. The wording of Article 12(1) is close to that of Article 4(4) in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities (1992).

*Art. 4(4) States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing on their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as a whole.*

According to the Commentary to the Declaration<sup>13</sup>, “multicultural education involves educational policies and practices which meet the separate educational needs of groups in society belonging to different cultural traditions, while intercultural education involves educational policies and practices whereby persons belonging to different cultures, whether in a majority or minority position, learn to interact constructively with each other.” As a minimum, it requires that majorities learn about the minorities and similarly that minorities learn about other minorities in the same society and about majorities. Intercultural education requires something more than this – mutual tolerance. Crucial fields of action for State Parties are that of school curriculum and the provision and revision of textbooks with multicultural and intercultural content and form.

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<sup>13</sup> A. Eide, Commentary to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2001/2 (2001), paragraphs 64-70.

Measures should not be limited to the geographical areas where national minorities live.

The core task is to organise the education system in a way which allows for interaction between persons from various groups in order to encourage mutual understanding and tolerance, while at the same time ensuring the successful maintenance and development of the elements of the identities of members belonging to various groups. The principle position of the Advisory Committee has been that all aspects and elements of education should ensure ‘a climate of tolerance and dialogue’. Such tolerance is hardly possible if majorities and minorities know nothing about the everyday experiences and about the elements of identities of each other.<sup>14</sup>

### *Report of Bulgaria*

In 2003 Bulgaria filed its initial Report on the implementation of the Framework Convention.<sup>15</sup> In regards with article 6 the state party reiterated that many documents of the Ministry of Education and Science stressed the necessity of introducing intercultural upbringing as part of the study of social sciences and civic education. The Ministry laid down as a requirement the formation of tolerance, understanding and mutual respect among representatives of different ethnic and cultural communities. This was also one of the criteria by which teachers’ results would be judged. At the same time, the government pointed out that, as a whole, Bulgarian schools did not devote enough time to teach minority cultures and their contribution to the development of the Bulgarian culture, and to forming a spirit of tolerance and understanding among different cultures. These subjects were mainly discussed in teachers’ class hours and as extra curricula activities, financed by non-governmental organisations. Currently, new curriculum was being prepared, which would include such subject as “my country”, history, literature, music and singing, to help pupils get acquainted with traditional ethnic minorities in Bulgaria. The new curricula will include also excerpts from literature and arts by eminent writers and artists from these minorities.

In 1999, the Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation drafted a project on intercultural education, designed for all children between 7 and 11 years of age. It introduced subject such as the history of the settlement of Bulgarian lands, the culture, customs, livelihood, religion and positive experience in the communication among different ethnic communities, such as Bulgarians, Turks, Roma, Armenians, Karakachans, Jews, Aromanians, Wallachians, Tatars, Gagaouz and Russians. Three textbooks were produced for pupils and teachers under the new Programme for the Promotion of Intercultural Experience. The

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<sup>14</sup> See Commentary on Education under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Ms Athanasia Spiliopoulou Akermark, Second Vice-President of the Advisory Committee

<sup>15</sup> For full text see [http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/minorities/2.\\_framework\\_convention\\_%28monitoring%29/2.\\_monitoring\\_mechanism/3.\\_state\\_reports\\_and\\_unmik\\_kosovo\\_report/1.\\_first\\_cycle/1st\\_SR\\_Bulgaria.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_%28monitoring%29/2._monitoring_mechanism/3._state_reports_and_unmik_kosovo_report/1._first_cycle/1st_SR_Bulgaria.asp#TopOfPage)

Ministry of Education and Science approved the textbooks. In 2000 the pilot project started with the training of teaching staff from 37 schools in 5 regions with mixed population. This project also included inspectors from the Ministry of Education and Science and administration experts in education from the respective regions. Thereafter, the project was transferred to the classrooms of the respective schools. The Ministry ought to monitor the project for a period of two years. Afterwards, it was expected that it will be introduced throughout the country as part of the training in civic education for children of the first to the fourth grades.

As to the article 12, the State party pointed out that after decades of underestimating and seriously hampering scientific research of Bulgaria's minority communities and their culture, history, languages and religion, in the past 12 years of democratic changes, the latter were placed in the focus of increased attention by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) institutes and the universities. The "St. Kliment Ohridsky" Sofia University, the BAS Institute of Ethnography, the BAS Institute of Sociology, the BAS Institute of History, the BAS Institute of Folklore, the Nov Bulgarski Universitet ("New Bulgarian University"), and the Universities in Plovdiv and Shoumen, are leading in scientific research of culture, history, language and religion of minorities. In the future, the teaching in history and culture of the larger minority communities should be intensified at the teacher-training faculties, and special attention should be paid to training young specialists in education, so that they can work in a multicultural environment, taking into account the cultural peculiarities of this country's big minorities.

Further, Bulgaria noted that in mother-tongue classes, the Turkish children have acquired more knowledge of the history and culture of their community. In Armenian and Jewish schools or separate classes, instruction is given on the history and culture of the respective communities as well. The problem is that this knowledge remains within the minority communities, and is taught to a lesser degree under the general education curricula. Owing to the lack of sufficient instructors and textbooks, a number of obstacles of organisational and financial character, and insufficient interest on the part of parents, no Romani is taught in schools to Roma pupils as their mother tongue.

In addition, non-governmental organizations have actively aided the publication of dictionaries, grammars and teaching aids on the history and culture of minorities in Bulgaria. They have also supported the training of schoolteachers to give instruction in the history and culture of minorities. The "Interethnic Initiative for Human Rights" Foundation has issued 11 appendices on Roma history and culture to the textbooks on mother tongue, literature, history and music, intended for first-to-eleventh-grade pupils, and five methodical instruction books for teachers of those subjects. The Ministry of Education and Sciences has approved them as regular school aids. With funding from the Council of Europe, the Foundation has trained instructors from 35 schools to work with these school aids. It has also carried out a pilot project on their approbation in schools where Roma and Bulgarian pupils are educated. In order to continue, the project needs further assistance from the Ministry of Education

and Science. The circulation of teaching aids has already been fully exhausted. Now the project continues in some 25 schools without any funding.

### *Opinion of the Advisory Committee*

In 2004 the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention published its Opinion on Bulgaria's initial report.<sup>16</sup>

The Advisory Committee acknowledged that an overall spirit of tolerance prevails in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, it noted that the Bulgarian education system lacks a tradition of promoting knowledge of minorities' culture, history, language and religion. At the present stage the curriculum and teaching resources contain few elements that would reflect the diversity of Bulgarian society and help the system open up to multiculturalism, an emphasis being placed more on the culture, values and history of the majority. Although minorities' culture and history are studied in Bulgarian universities and research institute, this cannot suffice to give an intercultural perspective to the entire Bulgarian education system, including at primary and secondary levels, so as to enable pupils to develop a spirit of tolerance and receptiveness to diversity. As to the Roma, their history, culture and traditions are virtually missing from the schoolbooks in current use.

The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to revise history and literature textbooks and any other teaching instruments capable of conveying a damaging image of minorities and their culture, and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies observed. It notes with interest the recent preparation, with active participation of nongovernmental organizations, of educational instruments reflecting the history and culture of minorities, Roma included. Most of these instruments have been approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, and tested under pilot schemes. The advisory Committee encourages the authorities to support reproduction and the distribution of these instruments in Bulgarian schools, and also to ensure the intercultural perspective in the training of future teachers.

The Advisory Committee notes that while Bulgarian legislation provides for the teaching of the languages of persons belonging to minorities (art 36 (2) of the Constitution and the Education Act) it does not contain any provisions authorizing their use as languages of instruction. However, the Advisory Committee notes with concern that the authorities were unable to supply sufficient information on the application of the new provisions. In practice, it would appear that the process has incurred delay and that learning of the mother tongue remains limited. Although the new provisions were applied during the 2002/2003 school year for teaching Turkish, a reduction of the number of children taking part in such teaching has been observed<sup>17</sup>, particularly at the primary school. The Advisory

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<sup>16</sup>[http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/minorities/2.\\_framework\\_convention\\_%28monitoring\\_mechanism/4.\\_opinions\\_of\\_the\\_advisory\\_committee/1.\\_country\\_specific\\_opinions/1.\\_first\\_cycle/1st\\_OP\\_Bulgaria\\_eng.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_%28monitoring_mechanism/4._opinions_of_the_advisory_committee/1._country_specific_opinions/1._first_cycle/1st_OP_Bulgaria_eng.asp#TopOfPage)

<sup>17</sup> According to non-governmental sources, whereas in 2001/2002 Turkish was studied by 34 860 pupils at 520 schools, in 2002/2003 this instruction was given to 31 349 pupils at

Committee notes in this respect that there are deficiencies as regards Turkish language teaching material, including lack of suitable textbooks and lack of a unified course syllabus. The Advisory Committee is pleased to note that the Bulgarian education system seems to be staffed at present with teachers qualified to teach Turkish. It notes the existence of schools or classes providing teaching of Armenian, Hebrew, Greek and Romanian. It notes with concern that Romani is hardly taught at all due to the current absence of qualified experts and teachers and of suitable teaching material. The Advisory Committee does observe though, that specialized training to teach Romani, taking in specific element of Roma culture and history and suitable instructional techniques, was introduced for the first time at university level in 2003. Two Bulgarian universities, Veliko Tarnovo and Stara Zagora, have begun training teachers for that purpose. Furthermore, summer-schools for teachers of Romani have been organized by the State with co-operation of non-governmental organizations. The Advisory Committee welcomes the undergoing examination of measures to establish a unified Romani curriculum and the preparation of suitable textbooks.

The Advisory Committee concluded that there were deficiencies in the promotion of knowledge of culture, history and traditions of minorities in Bulgarian education, and considered that the authorities should take positive measures to give the Bulgarian education system a genuine intercultural perspective conducive to tolerance and openness to dialogue and diversity.

#### *Comments of Bulgaria*

In 2005 the Bulgarian Government filed its Comments on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee. The State party argued that the principle of inter-cultural education is emphasized in the curriculum developed according to Government Regulation №2 of 18.05.2000 on the Curriculum Content. New textbooks and notebooks covering the new state regulations on curriculum in the field have been produced for the preparatory, first, second and third grade.

In the 2003/2004 school year the University of Veliko Turnovo introduced a new subject for training teachers in Roma language. At the same time the Thracian University has extended the subject “Elementary Teaching on Western Language” with qualifying teachers in Roma and Turkish language.

Throughout the 2003/04 school year the Amalipe Foundation continued to implement the pilot project funded by the Ministry of Education and Science, Open Society and NCEDI to teach Roma culture as an optional subject in 40 schools in the Northern Bulgaria.

In order to support the integration of Roma children and improve their school attendance, 300 school master teachers were trained to work in a multicultural environment, together with 100 young Roma

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420 schools; the number of teachers also reportedly dropped from some 700 to slightly below 600 from one year to the next.

trainees, who were certified to work as assistant-teachers in integrated classes.<sup>18</sup>

At the end of 2003 the project Fairy "Path" of the Ministry of Education and Science and the "Theatre for our Children" Foundation resulted in the development of bilingual audio products about Roma stories, which were distributed in 200 kindergartens and schools.

In addition, after the submission of the initial report, the following minority language school appliances were published: "A Concise Grammar of the Kalderashi Roma Dialect In Bulgaria", Hristo Kyuchukov, Zlatko Mladenov, Sofia, Delfi publishing House, 2004; "A Concise Description of Roma language in Bulgaria", Hristo Kyuchukov, Sofia, Delfi, 2003; Roma Grammar (Romani Gramatika), Kiril Kostov, Dimiter Iliev, Sofia, Tilia, 2004.

The Bulgarian Government concluded that it followed from the above that the findings and comments of the Advisory Committee in regards with article 12 (found in paragraph 133 of the Opinion) did not accurately reflected the situation in this sphere.

#### *A.5. Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)*

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is an exceptionally important document. It provides the opportunity to further elaborate the human rights linkages outlined above. Paragraphs 78 through 82 of the Vienna Declaration are worth quoting as they reinforce the work done and promote the importance of education.

*"The World Conference on Human Rights considers human rights education, training and public information essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.*

*... The World Conference on Human Rights calls on all States and institutions to include human rights, humanitarian law, democracy and rule of law as subjects in the curricula of all learning institutions in formal and non-formal settings.*

*Human rights education should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, as set forth in international and regional human rights instruments, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights.*

In brief, the international instruments provide for the implementation in the school curricula of topics including equal rights and opportunities across the spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, political and social right, namely, dignity, identity, liberty, the human rights of women, elimination of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, life in a free and democratic society, the rights of the child, sense of moral and social

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<sup>18</sup> Comments of the government of Bulgaria on the opinion of the advisory committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Bulgaria, received on 14 March 2005

responsibility, the rights of disabled persons, self-determination, decolonization, human rights in the development process, peace, and so on. The instruments attach special importance to the teaching about different civilizations, cultures and languages for the purpose of improving ethnic and religious relations. The right to human rights education is thus a major component in the realization of the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples. States should strive to provide HRE at all school levels, including the primary education. At the different levels, human rights should be incorporated in a variety of subject matters, such as literature, history and the social sciences, and also taught in courses specially designed for this purpose. Teachers in general deserve special attention as a target group for receiving HRE.

#### *A.6. UN Decade for HRE 1995-2004*

The international instrument providing the most comprehensive definition of HRE and the most concrete operational activities for “the implementation by member states of their obligation to promote HRE” is the Plan of Action for the UN Decade for HRE 1995-2004: HRE – lessons for life (“the Plan”)<sup>19</sup>. According to Article 2 of the Plan, HRE shall be defined as “training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes and directed to:

- (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society;
- (e) The furtherance of the activities of the UN for the maintenance of peace.”

The Decade understands education to be a consonant factor in the multidimensional life of individuals and of society of which human rights are an integral part. Under the Decade, the governments shall formulate effective strategies for the furtherance of HRE at all school levels by coordinating the development of HRE materials. They shall also build programs for HRE at national and local levels and introduce or strengthen national human rights curricula in their formal education systems. National human rights institutions, such as human rights commissions, should play a central role in the development, coordination and implementation of HRE programs at the national level.

The objectives of the Decade should concern as wide an audience as possible, as the Plan explicitly indicates. In particular, schools

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<sup>19</sup> For full text, see [www.unhchr.ch/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.51.506.Add.1.En](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.51.506.Add.1.En)



should be encouraged and assisted in developing human rights curricula and corresponding teaching and resource materials, with the help of governments, for incorporation into formal education at the early childhood and primary education levels. In the developing of the curricula, special emphasis shall be given to the human rights of minorities, persons in extreme poverty and other vulnerable groups.

Further, the plan recognizes the fact that action at the national and local level is crucial to the effective promotion of HRE. Therefore, national focal points for HRE should be designated in each state. They may consist of specially constituted commissions or of existing appropriate structures. The task of the national focal point should be to identify national HRE needs, to develop the national plan of action and to coordinate with regional and international bodies, including by reporting to the High Commissioner of Human Rights on needs, proposals and progress made towards the realization of the goals of the Decade.

The particular objectives of the Decade, the program of implementation for their realization and the means for follow-up and assessment of each program element are described in details in the Plan. Among these objectives, two are of importance for this research. The first one is to conduct in 1995 a preliminary survey and evaluation of existing HRE programs and initiatives at national level. The survey shall seek to identify, inter alia, the number and types of human rights educational materials available and the percentage of schools having adopted human rights curricula at the primary level. All national focal points will be requested to develop a five-year detailed national implementation plan for HRE.

The second one is to build and strengthen programs and capacities for HRE at the national level. Upon this objective, every state will be requested to draw up a national plan of action for HRE. It should be completed during 1995, in consultation with all relevant national and local actors and should be transmitted to the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Each national plan should contain specific objectives, strategies and programs for the enhancement of HRE in primary schools

The establishment of a national focal point and the adoption of a national plan of action for HRE do not guarantee any success in terms of human rights awareness rising but it can serve as a useful indicator for the commitment of governments towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Decade. Unfortunately, the Decade did not established a formal reporting obligation and monitoring mechanism for assessing the compliance of states with their respective undertakings. The plan of action only provides for a mid-term evaluation by the UN High Commissioner for human rights, "in co-operation with all other principal actors in the Decade", and for the preparation of a final report by the High Commissioner after conclusion of the Decade in 2005.

The mid-term evaluation of September 2000 is based on information received by the High Commissioner from governments and other actors in response to questionnaires in her report, the then High Commissioner Mary Robinson commented on the willingness of states to provided relevant information like that: "owing to the limited number of

response to the questionnaires and the difficulties involved in verifying the information received, and being aware of the resulting incompleteness of the picture of the affords achievements and shortcomings in the various regions, the review does not name countries and national entities but focuses on a comparative and conceptual analysis of the information gathered<sup>20</sup>. Although the High Commissioner noted that Europe was the region from which the most replies were received, she stressed that fewer than one third of the governments which responded had national committees for HRE, that very few national plans of action for HRE already existed, that only few countries in the region had an encompassing legislative framework for HRE, and that only one government reported integrated HRE at all levels: pre-school, primary and secondary. In conclusion, she recalled that the Decade “remains the sole mechanism for global mobilization of strategies for human rights education; that potential must be more effectively utilized in the remaining years of the Decade, thus laying the foundations for sustainability beyond the Decade.”

Unfortunately, towards the end of the Decade, the situation has not improved significantly. The website of the High Commissioner for Human Rights contains a summary of national initiatives undertaken within the Decade for HRE, which is updated as of October 2003.<sup>21</sup> These national initiatives are presented by countries, under five regions. Looking at the OSCE region, information has been provided by 36 out of the 55 participating states. Unfortunately, Bulgaria is not among them. Of these countries, only eight (Belarus, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Norway, Portugal, Romania and Turkey) have adopted a national plan of action for HRE. The only country where human rights seem to have been integrated in the curricula of all schools at all levels is Sweden. In the United Kingdom, HRE has recently been introduced in the framework of citizenship education as a statutory national curriculum subject in primary and secondary schools. Other countries, such as Croatia, treat human rights as a cross-curricular education principle, integrating human rights and civic education topics in all suitable school subjects.

On the basis of the information made available by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, incomplete as it may be, it could be concluded that the governments have not taken seriously the recommendations that they had unanimously agreed upon in the Vienna Programme of Action and in the UN Plan of Action for the Decade for HRE. As a minimum, every government should have established a national committee on HRE and adopted a national plan of action for HRE before the end of the Decade. Additionally, every school aged child has the human right to be provided with formal HRE at all levels of school education. With very few exceptions, no government seems to have complied with this obligation, which derives from binding international human rights treaties and which has been further elaborated in the Vienna Declaration and

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<sup>20</sup> See Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the mid-term global evaluation of the progress made towards the achievement of the objectives of the UN Decade for HRE (1995-2004), submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution 54/161 of December 17, 1999, UN Doc.A/55/360 of September 7, 2000, para. 23

<sup>21</sup> See [www.unhcr.ch/html/menu6/1/initiatives.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu6/1/initiatives.htm)

Programme of Action of 1993 and the Plan of Action of the Decade for HRE of 1994. Rather than establishing HRE, which “should include peace, democracy, development and social justice”<sup>22</sup>, as a separate subject in the curricula of all learning institutions, most governments include human rights, if at all, as a non-compulsory part of civic education, which might be taught by interested teachers on voluntary basis in the framework of a cross-curricula education principle. Since there is no domestic legal obligation to teach human rights in most countries, the training of teachers in HRE, if offered at all, is also based on voluntary participation. Such a soft approach certainly does not correspond to the legal obligation of states to ensure the human right to HRE. However, there may be limitations to the process, such as illiteracy, poverty, political resistance and ignorance.

Given the fact that the UN Decade for HRE 1995-2004 has been far from successful, the idea has been advocated of extending the Decade for another ten years. Some scholars, like Manfred Nowak and Berthram Ramcharam, would rather support the idea of creating an international convention on human rights education. After all, only international treaties create binding legal obligations, and the human right to HRE, although already existing under present international treaty law, obviously needs further elaboration in terms of detailed and comprehensive state obligations.

#### *A.7. Teaching and learning materials*

In the 1980s human rights education lacked support from national governments. There was little *educationl* literature in the field – nearly all the literature on human rights was legal and philosophical – and the groundwork of conceptual clarification still needed to be done. There was a lack of teaching materials, guides and handbooks. The contrast with today’s scene is striking. There are conceptual guidebooks and a number of teacher’s handbooks. Excellent teaching and learning materials have been produced by Amnesty International, the Jordanhill project and the Centre for Global Education, the Arab Institute for Human Rights.

### **B. DOMESTIC LAW**

Tolerance and intercultural dialogue are essential in multicultural societies such as is the Bulgarian society, in order to avoid discrimination and conflict. In Bulgaria, 15% of the population is minority (9,4% Turkish, 4,7% Roma and 0,9 other ethnic groups). Research conducted in 2005 shows that the attitudes of the majority towards the minorities and vice versa are very far from being friendly.<sup>23</sup> Around 86% of the Bulgarians think that the Roma are “lazy and irresponsible”, “inclined to crimes” and that “one cannot trust and count on them”. For what it is most alarming, these deeply rooted prejudices are not formed as a result of

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<sup>22</sup> See Vienna Programme of Action, para 80

<sup>23</sup> “Five years later: The nongovernmental projects for desegregation of the Roma education in Bulgaria”, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 2005, p. 41-54

personal experience but from the media. Three fourths of the Bulgarians never had Roma friend and the half never visited a home where Roma live. In general, almost two thirds (59%) of the Bulgarians feel antipathy towards the Roma.

On the other hand, 38% of the Roma think that “one cannot trust the Bulgarians”. Around half of them also think that the Bulgarians are hostile towards them and discriminate them.

As to the Turkish, 60% of the Bulgarians believe that they are “religious fanatics”. As a difference from the Roma, the level of negative ethnic prejudices towards the Turkish shows a progressive tolerance through the last years.

Measures intended to prevent discrimination and conflict in multicultural societies should be taken particularly in the field of education. What particular measures have been taken by the Bulgarian government for the fulfillment of its duties under the international human rights instruments will be the subject of the following chapter. It contains an analysis of the level of compliance of the Bulgarian legislation with the international instruments promoting HRE and mainly with article 29(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 7 of the Convention against Racial Discrimination. Under Article 5 (4) of the Bulgarian Constitution these international instruments shall be applied with priority before the domestic provisions, which contradict them.

The Preamble to the Constitution declares “humanism, equality, justice and tolerance” as “universal human values”, to which the elected people’s deputies pledge their allegiance. Article 37, paragraph 1 of the Constitution states: “The State shall assist the maintenance of tolerance and respect among the believers from different denominations, and among believers and non-believers.”

### *B.1. Legislation*

The primary education in Bulgaria has two stages: lower (I - IV grade) and upper (V – VIII grade).

According to the Public Education Act, there are public educational requirements and they shall determine the levels of the necessary educational instruction. They shall also create conditions for, *inter alia*, the development of free, moral and initiative person that, as a Bulgarian citizen, respects the laws, the rights of the others, their language, religion and culture.<sup>24</sup> The government has given this educational standard a primary importance putting it on the first place. Unfortunately, it has been adopted as late as in 2002. The public educational requirements shall also ensure the satisfaction of the individual interests and needs of the students as well as the acquisition of wide general knowledge.

In addition, the Act for Level of Education, Educational Minimum and Curriculum provides that the education in Bulgarian primary school shall aim at guaranteeing that every Bulgarian citizen has the

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<sup>24</sup> See Article 15 para 1 (1) of the Public Education Act

opportunity to develop her/his personality. The education shall be built on the principles of respect for:

- basic human rights;
- rights of the child;
- the traditions of the Bulgarian culture and education;
- the achievements of the international culture;
- the values of the civil society;
- the freedom of conscience and the freedom of thought.

This act also outlines the main goals of education in Bulgarian primary school:

- to contribute for the mental and physical development of the student, her/his successful orientation, adaptation, and realization in the society;
- to create conditions for moulding of values related with the sense of Bulgarian national identity, respect for the others, co-participation and civil responsibility;
- to create conditions for development of necessity, interests and attitudes for studying, education and self-perfection throughout life.

The public educational requirements determine the content of the textbooks. According to the Instruction for the Textbooks, the content of the textbooks shall meet three main requirements:

- 1) it shall pursue the aims of the respective cultural-educative field;
- 2) it shall pursue the aims of the respective school subject; and
- 3) it shall pursue compliance with the school curriculum of the respective school subject.

The Public Education Act provides for adoption of school curriculum in every school subject by the Ministry of Education and Science. The curriculum shall contain the educational aims, the expected results for the respective grade, the expected results for the respective topics, main concepts and interdisciplinary links.

Finally, the Public Education Act provides for compulsory preparatory training of the children one year before they start school. According to recently adopted amendment, this training shall include lessons in Bulgarian language for the children that do not speak it well.<sup>25</sup>

The Regulation for the Application of the Public Education Act contains two important amendments adopted in 2003. First, it has been introduced the right of the teacher to choose which particular textbook – among the officially approved for one subject – to teach in class. This right shall be exercised following assessment of the practical applicability of the textbook for the respective subject.

Second, the list of things that the student does not have a right to do has been supplemented with one more: “the student does not have a right to humiliate the dignity of his/her classmates and to subject them to physical or mental violence”.

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<sup>25</sup> See Article 20 para 1 of 2002 and para 2 of 2003 of the Public Education Act

In 2003 the Minister of Education and Science adopted Instruction for Valuation and Approval of Textbooks and School Appliances. The procedure includes four stages: admission for valuation, valuation, classification and approval. Crucial role in the procedure have the teachers themselves as they are the only ones who are able to assess the practical application of given textbook in the classroom.

During the first stage, the projects for textbook are evaluated by two separate commissions. One evaluates the content and another evaluates the graphic design. The members of the commissions are appointed directly by the minister of education and science. The applicants for members meet some conditions that aim at guaranteeing their objectiveness. The commission that evaluates the content of the textbook includes five evaluators – one specialist in the correspondent science, experts in the correspondent school subject and teachers. In evaluating the content of the textbook, the commission observes the public educational requirements described above.

The projects of textbook that have received evaluation "Complies with the public educational requirements" are distributed by their authors in every school in Bulgaria where the respective subject is taught. The teachers that teach the respective subject consider the projects of textbook according to their applicability. They must choose three projects for textbook in one subject. The results of the vote of the teachers in every school is summarized by the director and the results of the vote of all schools in the region - by the respective regional inspectorate in education.

The classification of the projects of textbook is organized by the Ministry of Education and Science, according to the number of votes of the teachers.

The final stage of the procedure is the approval of the minister of education and science of the projects classified on the first three places.

As to the frequency for reviewing the curricula and the textbooks, the Bulgarian legislation provides that the conditions and the procedure for the inclusion of new elements in the school curricula and programmes, as well as their actualization, shall be regulated with instruction of the minister of education and science. The content of the educational minimum determined under this procedure can be actualized every four years. For every school subject the minister of education and science approves no more than three textbooks for a period no less than four years. When in the content of the approved textbook have been done changes, which were objectively necessary, it shall be approved one more time by the minister. New procedure for evaluation and approval of textbooks shall be also opened after confirmation of new school programmes.

*B.2. Implementation of the legislation by the Ministry of Education and Science*

*Strategy for Educational Integration*

On 11 June 2004 the Ministry of Education and Science adopted the Strategy for the Educational Integration of Children and Schoolchildren from Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria (“the Strategy”). The Strategy declares that the system of public education is called upon the moulding of respect for the rights and freedoms of every individual as a basic social value and to restrict any discrimination.

The Bulgarian government has to guarantee contemporary conditions in school that will allow children to get to know each other and will facilitate understanding among the different ethnic and religious groups. Sociological research, monitoring reports of specialized nongovernmental organizations and expert evaluations of the Ministry of Education and Science show that the Bulgarian education system has defects common for all minorities, as well as specific ones, which hamper the qualitative education, the equal integration and the development of cultural identity of the students.

Common problem is, most of all, that the history and culture of the minorities is insufficiently presented in the content of the textbooks. The basic elements of cultural identity, presented in the schoolbooks, are most often related with the traditional folklore, without rendering an account of all the cultural achievements of the ethnic minorities, and even less their contribution to the common national culture and the development of the society. This problem is additionally aggravated by shortage of qualified personnel and the lack of strategy for qualification and pre-qualification of teachers for work in multiethnic environment and particularly of the teachers working with bi-lingual children (children whose mother tongue is, for example, Roma or Turkish but who also speak the official Bulgarian language). A lot of Bulgarian municipalities characterize with their mixed population but it is indeed in their small village schools where conditions for human rights education lack. Finally, common issue is the lack of detailed legislation, financial and material sources.

The specific problems of the Roma and the Turkish students include unsatisfactory master of the school material due to insufficient knowledge of Bulgarian language, which for them is a foreign language. On the other hand, there is a shortage of qualified teachers that know Roma culture and language and, respectively, Turkish culture and language.

The Strategy assesses the need a balance to be guaranteed between the integration of children and students from ethnic minorities in the educational system and in the society, on one hand, and the preservation and the development of their cultural identity, on the other. The latter does not isolate them, but is a precondition for their quality education and their equal integration in school life and the society.

Finally, the Strategy stresses on the need of the children from the vulnerable minority groups of supplementary educational assistance. It should aim at equalizing their starting positions with the ones of the other children. The adoption of such positive measures complies with the international human rights standards and the protection of the minorities and does not constitute discrimination against the Bulgarians.

The Ministry of Education and Science identifies several common strategic aims with regard to the education and integration of children and schoolchildren from ethnic minorities. They are, *inter alia*:

- preservation and development of their cultural identity;
- transformation of the cultural diversity in source and factor for mutual knowing of each other and spiritual development of the children and for creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.

Further, the Strategy identifies the means that should be employed for the achievement of these aims. It provides for educational resources, including changes in school curricula and school content and programs for intercultural education, human rights, principles and values of the civil society.

The Strategy also indicates specific strategic aims for children and students from the respective ethnic minorities. For the Roma minority they are: introducing the position “teacher-assistant” in preparatory and first grade; **adoption** of legislation and educational conditions for quality education in mother Roma tongue; training of teachers in Roma language; qualification and pre-qualification of teachers for work in mixed classes.

The specific strategic aims for the Turkish minority are similar. Nevertheless, it has been taken into consideration that, as a difference from the Roma language, the Turkish language has a developed written culture. Therefore, the aims include: **improvement** of the legislation and educational conditions for quality education of Turkish language; publishing of modernized textbooks and school appliances in Turkish language; adoption of legislation and educational conditions for overcoming of negative stereotypes and hostile speech.

The time limit for the achievement of the aims of the Strategy is set in 2015. This period is in compliance with the Bulgarian Decade for Roma integration 2005-2015 and the UNESCO World Programme “Education for All”. Due to the pressing character of the priorities of the Strategy, the execution of its aims shall proceed immediately.

The first Plan of Action for the Strategy will be for a period of five years and will start at the beginning of the academic 2004/2005. It will contain concrete activities for the execution of every strategic aim, the time limits, the responsible institutions and the necessary funds. Indicators for assesment of the execution of the aims shall be determined as well. The execution of the Strategy will be assesed and modernized annually.

### *Curriculum*

In 2002 the Ministry of Education and Science adopted new national curriculum for education in primary stage which started at the beginnin of the academic 2002/2003. It introduced the brand new subjects ”World around” for second grade and ”Man and Society” for third and fourth grade. These disciplines provide the children with their first civic education, more profoundly developed in the upper grades. Never before in Bulgarian history students in primary school have studied as part of the



formal, compulsory curriculum, about the folkloric holidays of the ethnic minorities in the country. For the first time in Bulgaria and only since four years, little students at the age of 7-11 have been taught basic human rights values in accordance with the international standards for aims of education. This is a huge step in the national educational system that has come to fill a vacuum neglected during many decades of communist regime and years of transition. Happily, unlike me who was taught about human rights for the first time in second year in University<sup>26</sup>, the new Bulgarian generation have already learnt in school that people are equal and that children have some important rights and duties.

The new curriculum also amended the content and goals of the conventional subjects taught in primary school so that they correspond to the necessity of multicultural and intercultural education.

The Ministry of Education and Science adopted also new programs for every subject, which outline the expected educational results for each topic, the main new concepts, the context and the activity for the whole program and the cross-disciplinary links.<sup>27</sup>

### **C. TEXTBOOKS**

The following chapter contains an analysis of the content of the Bulgarian textbooks in "Bulgarian language and Literature", "Home Land", "World around" and "Man and society". The analysis covers the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and Science for the academic year 2006/2007. The effective curriculum for primary stage of education in Bulgaria does not include a separate subject "Human rights". The Bulgarian Government has implemented cross-curricular mode of human rights education. The disputed subjects are indeed the ones that include references to human rights issues and lessons in civil education. The analysis includes also a comparison between the textbooks in one subject written by different authors. Finally, the chapter comments on the level of compliance of the textbooks with the internationally recognized aims of education. Main priority in this task would have the principles of article 29(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 2 of the Plan of Action for the UN Decade for HRE 1995-2004 as they are most comprehensive. Therefore, I will use those international principles as a main criteria for my analysis.

#### *C.1. First grade*

One of the main tasks of the little students in first grade is to learn the alphabet. Therefore, the goal of the ABC books is to teach the children to write and read. As the little children do not recognize the letters,

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<sup>26</sup> It was in the process of writing the present paper, and more specifically, of examining the content of the spelling books for second grade, when I first learnt when the Roma celebrate their New Years Day.

<sup>27</sup> See the web site of the Ministry of Education and Sciences on [http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left\\_menu/documents/educational\\_programs/](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/opencms/left_menu/documents/educational_programs/)

crucial role in their first year in school have the drawings. The purpose of the drawings is to describe the meaning of those combinations of letters, what the words are for the 7 year old child. Finally, the drawings facilitate the students to read the short poems and texts and, in general, make the studies more entertaining. The drawings attract the attention of the yesterday babies to the hard for them reading and writing tasks. This is the official role of the drawings. In fact, the role of the drawings is much more than this – as will be further seen, they send to the children indirect messages. Therefore, the choice of the concrete drawings and examples, that shall be included in the ABC books, is extremely responsible task.

For the academic year 2006/2007, the Ministry of Education and Science has approved four ABC books for first grade written by the following authors: T. Borisova; V. Popov; T. Vladimirova and N. Ognyanova.<sup>28</sup> Mindfully the goals set for proper education of the child, there are several issues arising in these ABC books, namely, stereotyped roles of men and women; common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing of their children; respect for the national values of the country in which the child is living; friendship among different religious and ethnic groups and respect for different civilizations. Those issues are dealt by the different authors to a different extent of success. The following subchapter will distinguish the ABC book which has achieved the highest level of compliance with the HRE standards. Before that I would like to present an illustrative statistic<sup>29</sup> showing the number of the first grade students in Sofia for the academic 2006/2007 which are being taught in every single of the approved ABC books:

- V. Popov	3041 students
- T. Borisova	2379 students
- N. Ognyanova	2361 students
- T. Vladimirova	1558 students

Common weakness of all ABC books is the depicting of the mother as a housewife and the depicting of little girls doing house work. In a series of examples, the mother and the grandmother are depicted wearing cooking aprons, slippers, morning gowns and doing variety of house work, such as, cooking, needing, sewing, bathing the child, etc.<sup>30</sup> This is a highly negative message for the children, completely out of conformity with the HRE requirements. It leaves them with the impression that in the family only women must do the housework. On the other hand, men are also represented in classical situations: repairing the TV, helping the son to ride the bike, driving the car.<sup>31</sup> There is not a single drawing in four ABC books of a women-driver. It is worth mentioning that in the context of indirect messages implied by the discussed drawings, the ABC book of N. Ognyanova has even more negative impact by including direct messages.

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<sup>28</sup> All schoolbooks discussed in the Master thesis are written by panels of authors. For simplicity I identify them by the name of the first author in the panel.

<sup>29</sup> The stistic is taken from the Inspectorate of Education in Sofia

<sup>30</sup> See ABC book of V. Popov, pages 31,34, 49; ABC book of T. Borisova, p 5, ABC book of N. Ognyanova, pages 23, 83

<sup>31</sup> See ABC book of V. Popov, pages 33, 87; ABC book of N. Ognyanova, p. 83, 94; ABC book of T. Borisova, p 5

On page 83 there are two drawings - one of a woman wearing a morning gown and sewing and another one of a man helping a small boy to ride a bike. They are accompanied below by the following comments: “GOOD MOTHER” and “GOOD FATHER”.

Nevertheless, there are some positive exceptions. In the ABC book of T. Borisova, on page 70, there is a good example of the daily life of one boy, which includes studying, playing and mopping the floor. Additionally, on page 55 of the ABC book of N. Ognyanova there is a short story, illustrated with a drawing. The text tells of a girl that goes visiting a boy. The boy is covered with white spots because he is making a pastry. They both start making small figures from the pastry. Unfortunately, these simple lessons on equality between men and women, particularly with regards to the house work, show up incidentally, in different ABC books.

The next issue is closely related with the first one. As Article 5 of the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination against Women requires, the family education should lead to “the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing of their children”. This message is not implemented consecutively, in a way that the respective obligation of Bulgaria under this convention to be considered fulfilled. In each ABC book there are drawings in this sense. The ones of T. Borisova and V. Popov show drawings of the mother reading story tells and giving a bath to her child<sup>32</sup>. I consider these drawings inappropriate, given the lack of similar ones of the father. There is only one good example with regard to this issue and it is in the ABC book of N. Ognyanova. It contains a drawing of both the mother and the father taking care of their sick child.<sup>33</sup>

Respect for the national values of the country in which the child is living is the only human rights lesson that our ABC books firmly upheld. There are numbers of drawings and pictures of men and women wearing Bulgarian traditional costumes in all ABC books. There are also inevitably images of the Christmas tree, the Christmas table and the traditional Christmas dishes. In the ABC book of N. Ognyanova there is even a praiseworthy drawing of three persons from different nationalities wearing their traditional costumes – a Mexican, a Chinese and a Bulgarian.<sup>34</sup> They all have respective names – Nemo, Li and Manol. This drawing is not only teaching the Bulgarian students in their national values, but also gives an illustrative example of different cultures and civilizations. Therefore, I think it is an excellent example of human rights education.

Respect for different civilizations is, unfortunately, weakly implemented in the other ABC books. Those of V. Popov and T. Borisova do not contain such examples at all. However, big plus of the ABC book of N. Ognyanova is that it is the only one that contains drawings of persons belonging to different races, in particular, it shows an African man wearing his traditional tribal adornment, an Eskimo men fishing and his ice-house.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> See ABC book of T. Borisova, p 35 and ABC book of V. Popov, p 31

<sup>33</sup> See page 69

<sup>34</sup> See page 34

<sup>35</sup> See pages 31, 71

As to the requirement that proper education should promote friendship among different religious, national and ethnic groups, the approved ABC books lag behind considerably. This requirement has a primary importance. First, because, as already pointed out, the promotion of tolerance towards different religions and ethnos has a crucial role in the peace-keeping campaign. Second, because Bulgarian population consist of 9,4% Turkish, 4,7% Roma and 0,9 other ethnic groups, or 15% minority group in total. From them, all Turkish and part of the Bulgarians and Roma are Muslims. Therefore, the implementation of respect and tolerance towards different religious, national and ethnic group in the schoolbooks since early age should have been a priority task for the Bulgarian Government.

In the Bulgarian ABC books for first grade there are many texts, poems and short stories. All the characters in them, with no exception, wear Bulgarian names. There is not a single character that has a typical Turkish or typical Roma name. Moreover, there is not a single drawing of representative of the minorities either. In this connection, the ABC book of T. Borisova bears a special criticism. This ABC book differs from the rest by its design. It is the only one that use as examples mainly pictures of real objects and persons, instead of drawings. Therefore, given the technical difficulties to draw Turkish and Roma children, as they differ from the Bulgarian ones just for their slightly darker skin, the use of pictures should eliminate these difficulties and facilitate the fulfilment of the disputed requirement. Unfortunately, even in these conditions, this ABC book fails to comply with the HRE standards – it contains pictures of children belonging to the white race only.

The ABC book of T. Vladimirova has not been mentioned yet. It was left to be discussed at the end because, for different reasons, I consider this book to have reached the best compliance with the aims of HRE. I have tried hard to found any negative element in it but I could not. The lack of negative messages itself would be the first argument in favor of my opinion. On the contrary, the ABC book contains excellent examples of gender equality, namely, two drawings, next to each other, of a men-school teacher and a women-school teacher, as well as a drawing of a kitchen where the mother is nether cleaning nor cooking but playing with her child. She is dressed with nice short skirt and red gym shoes, which in any way suggests that she is doing house work.

Further, the ABC book teaches the students about different civilizations with its drawings of American Indians wearing their tribal costumes, of a yogi sited in a pose “lotus”, of the Arabic character Aladdin wearing his traditional turban, as well as with its story about China, the dragon Godzilla and the men named Dzuan Dza.<sup>36</sup> The drawing of Aladdin would be as well the first interaction of the non-muslim children with the Islam and would give the teacher the opportunity to explain them how this “strange hat” of him is called and why is he wearing it.

Probably the strongest argument in favor of this ABC book is that it is the only one that contains the words “Rom” and “Roma” (“Rom” in

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<sup>36</sup> See pages 98, 35, 61 and 87

plural).<sup>37</sup> They are given as examples of the letter “R” with several other words. Even more, below them there is a comparison between the Roma man name “Roman” and the Bulgarian man name “Rumen”. The choice of exactly these words as examples is not casual. It aims to open the floor for further questions of the students about this ethnic group and its similarities with Bulgarian people and to pursue one of the goals of HRE – friendship among different national and ethnic groups.

Unfortunately, the representative statistic for the capital city stated above shows that this is the ABC book that the least part of the teachers in Sofia have chosen – only 17% of the first-grade students in Sofia are being educated through the ABC Book of T. Vladimirova.

### *“Home land”*

Another subject in the school curriculum for first grade that deals with human rights issues is the so called “Home land”. For the academic year 2006/2007 the Ministry of Education and Science has approved four textbooks on this subject of the following authors: L. Vladova, E. Vasileva, I. Mircheva and D. Getova. One of them complies completely with all human rights education standards and it is the textbook of L. Vladova. According to the statistic, this textbook indeed is the one that teaches most of the students in first grade in Sofia for this academic year–3063. However, these are only 29% of all students in first grade in Sofia.

The textbook of L. Vladova implements all the values that the proper education should teach the little children: respect for human rights, development of human personality and sense of dignity, promotion of understanding among different ethnic groups and respect for Bulgarian national values. The textbook contains several relative chapters: “The child in school”, “The child in the family” and “My childhood”. All of these chapters contain respective lessons on “My rights and responsibilities”. In addition, there is a chapter “Our country Bulgaria” showing in a manner accessible for the children the most famous national sights and the different ethnic groups living in Bulgaria.

The “Home land” of L. Vladova contains a number of direct messages to the children that aim at strengthening respect for human rights and full development of human personality. For example, the lessons teach the children to keep their own live and health, as well as the live and health of the other students during the outdoor games; to be polite and to help to each other during the breaks; to respect the persons who take care of them in school, such as the nurses.

Nevertheless, the including of human rights lessons in the textbooks is only half of the task when it comes to children of small age. The other half is to choose the right approach, so that the lessons can be accessible for them. I believe both task have the same level of importance. In this connection, it is worth mention that L. Vladova not only has managed to put the content of her manual in compliance with the international and domestic educational requirements, but she has also

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<sup>37</sup> See page 46

chosen an excellent approach to do it, approach which cannot be found in any other approved textbook for first grade. The author asks the readers questions. For example, “Are you ready to help your friend in need? Why?”, “Do you say “Good morning” to your teachers?” or “How do you help the house work?”. By escaping from the commanding tone of the lessons (for instance, “You must help your friend in need!”) the author upholds the development of the sense of dignity of the children and provokes their thinking and imagination. At the same time, the content of the questions directs the students to particular attitudes and knowledge, which they must acquire.

The lesson “My rights and responsibilities in school”<sup>38</sup> teaches the children, with direct statements, that they have “the right of good education” and “the responsibility to respect and learn from their teachers”, as well as “the right to enjoy clean environment” and “the responsibility not to pollute it”. The so-called “third generation” human right of clean environment is further developed in the notebook, which is part of the textbook. On page 7 there is an exercise requiring from the students to distribute different types of trash in a paper refuse bin and a plastic refuse bin. The division of refuse, unfortunately, is a new “phenomenon” in Bulgarian life and L. Vladova correctly has assessed the need of its promotion since early childhood.

The author has also included another pair of right-duty, which, even if simple, is crucial for the development of children’s sense of dignity and has to be taught at the very beginning of their education. It is the children’s right to make mistakes and their responsibility to learn from them.

Finally, the right of the children to participate in games and competitions irrespective of their abilities has been pointed out, as well as their responsibility to respect the others, even if they are different from them. There is an illustrative example of what the difference might be. It is a drawing of three boys - one of them is in wheelchair and passes a ball to the second one, and the third one is standing behind the wheelchair holding it.

Further, there is a lesson on “My rights and responsibilities in the family”<sup>39</sup> that lists the following rights of the children: to be with their parents, to be loved and protected, to have security and comfort in their homes, to be well fed and to be taken in serious.

Finally, there is also a lesson on some children’s rights and responsibilities in general.<sup>40</sup> These the author has chosen to express in first person: “I have the right ...”. Those rights and duties are among the most important, on one hand, and easy for the children to apply in their own experience, on the other. Therefore, I completely uphold the choice of the author. The rights are to have their own name and to respect the names of the others; to receive medical assistance when they feel sick and to protect their life and health as well as the life and health of the others. The mutual respect for those rights is indeed the key to understanding and tolerance. In addition, the author stresses that the children are responsible to act good to

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<sup>38</sup> See pages 10 and 11

<sup>39</sup> See pages 18 and 19

<sup>40</sup> See pages 26 and 27

the others and that “No one has the right to hit me, to insult me or to make fun of me.”

In conclusion, the discussed lessons implement, in a manner easy to be acquired by the children, with simple words, all the values as of the definition of HRE in Article 2 of the Plan of Action for the UN Decade for HRE 1995-2004:

- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- full development of the human personality and the sense of dignity;
- promotion of understanding and tolerance;
- enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society.

Even more, the manual of L. Vladova do not fail to promote friendship among different national, religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. On pages 56 and 57 there is a beautiful drawing of a chain-dance of nine children wearing their traditional costumes. The heading is “I am a citizen of Bulgaria” and the text – “We are all citizens of Bulgaria: Bulgarians, Turkish, Roma, Armenians, Greeks and others.” The notebook further elaborates this issue. On page 29 there is a copy of the chain-dance and the children are invited to point out the costumes of the Bulgarian child and the costumes of the two biggest minority groups in Bulgaria – Roma and Turkish. Below there is a comparative illustration of representatives of these three ethnic groups and their most popular holidays: Easter, Bairam and the Roma New Years Day – Vasil Day. The children learn which are the typical dishes served on these holidays. They also learn that in addition to the national holidays, there are also holidays of the minorities. Another exercise that promotes friendship among different ethnic groups is on page 16 of the notebook. It shows children and their names, among which typical Bulgarian, Turkish and Roma names (Katia, Boris; Ismie; Malvina, Aishe).

The other three manuals in “Home land” have some positive aspects but, in the overall, they are out of comparison with the manual of L. Vladova. The human rights values that are incidentally promoted in these manuals are:

- tolerance towards different races<sup>41</sup>
- tolerance towards disabled persons<sup>42</sup>
- respect for the right of clean environment<sup>43</sup>

The drawings and the pictures predominate considerably in these manuals. Where ever there is a text, it is a short poem (E. Vasileva) or some exercise instructions written in a complex for the children language (I. Mircheva). References to some concrete rights of the children or explicit statements about their duties cannot be found.

## *C.2. Second grade*

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<sup>41</sup> See pictures of a girl from the Afro-American race in a group of children from the white race on pages 1 and 4 in the manual of I. Mircheva

<sup>42</sup> See drawing of children playing with a boy in a wheelchair on p 9 of the manual of E. Vasileva

<sup>43</sup> See pages 24 and 25 of the manual of E. Vasileva

Human rights are also partly taught in second grade. Human rights issues appear in the subjects “Bulgarian language and Literature” and “World around”.

*“World around”*

The subject “World around” is part of the cultural-educative field “Natural science and ecology”. It also includes some standards from the civil education field and from the subject “Man and society”. According to the guidelines approved by the Ministry of Education and Science<sup>44</sup>, the aim of the education in “World around” is to meet the child’s need to orientate in the surrounding social environment and to continue the development of the student’s personality by, inter alia, the acquiring of knowledge about the society.

The guidelines also indicate the expected results that the education in “World around” would achieve. Students are expected to learn, among other things, how to find their place in the relationships in school; how to defend their rights without infringing the rights of the others as well as to learn the holidays and customs of the different ethnic communities in Bulgaria.

For the academic year 2006/2007 the Ministry of Education and Science has approved three manuals in “World around” of the following authors: I. Mircheva, E. Vasileva and M. Kabasanova. Among them, two textbooks distinguish with their excellent extent of compliance with the aims of HRE. However, the advantages of one textbook to another would have been pointless if in the end it is not used in classroom. Fortunately, these two textbooks indeed are mostly preferred by the teachers in Sofia:

- M. Kabasanova	997 students
- E. Vasileva	834 students
- I. Mircheva	640 students

The textbook of E. Vasileva contains special lessons where some human rights are directly stated and their content clarified to the little children in a manner accessible for them.

On page 10 there is a lesson “My rights and duties at school” where the text teaches the children that they have the right of proper education and the right to express their opinion. Accordingly, they also have respective obligations, which are to study and to respect their teachers and to respect the opinion of the others.

Further, in the lesson “Bulgaria – home land of all Bulgarian citizens” the students learn that in Bulgaria people are free to celebrate their holidays and to observe different customs. All Bulgarian citizens – Bulgarians, Turkish, Roma, Jews, Armenians etc, celebrate our official holidays. The lesson is also illustrated with photos of children that belong to the different national and ethnic groups in Bulgaria, in their traditional costumes or typical outfit. Each of them wears characteristic name: Georgi, Rebecca, Yashar, Mehmed and Vartanush, and tells about some of their

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<sup>44</sup> Web site



most famous holidays. Through this lesson the children learn that some of them have different traditions and culture but they are all equal because they are citizens of the same country. Getting to know each other is indeed the way to mutual understanding and friendship. This lesson is particularly valuable for ethnically integrated classes where representatives of the minorities could tell personally about their holidays and answer questions that the textbook cannot.

The textbook contains another important lesson titled “People – equal and different”.<sup>45</sup> It teaches that people have different color of the skin, the hair and the eyes, but they are alike because they are human beings. According to the text, it does not matter how do we look because each of us has his/her own feelings and experience and our friends become not people that look like us, but who like the same things as us and think like us. The sentence containing the main concept is bold: “**All people have equal rights.**” The lesson is also illustrated with drawings of different children playing together: tall, short, fat, with dark skin, with red hair etc. For best perception of the message, there are also pictures of people with different physical features – Indian girl, Arab man, red hair baby. In conclusion, the lesson adds that it is not enough to judge people only by their outfit - we must talk to them and we must get to know them.

The textbook in “World around” of M. Kabasanova also complies to a very good extent with the HRE standards. It is consisted of two main chapters: “The world we live in” and “People and nature”. The first chapter gives the students knowledge about the social environment, which they know – the family, the school, the towns they live in and the home country. The detailed view of the texts in this chapter, leads to the satisfactory finding that their cornerstone is the word “*together*”. For example, one lesson teaches that all members of the family clean the home *together*. Remarkably, this is the only textbook for primary school in Bulgaria, in which one can see a drawing of a daddy, and not a mommy, cleaning with the vacuum machine. In addition, another lesson teaches that all Bulgarian citizens – Bulgarians, Roma, Turkish, Armenians – work *together* in order our life to become better. This lesson contains the story of a little girl telling about her class. In class she is sitting next to Armenian girl named Anuhi and she also has a new classmate named Erol, who is Turkish. Her teacher explained to the class that they all, as well as their parents, are born in Bulgaria and are Bulgarian citizens. The textbook reiterates the use of typical names of some minority groups in Bulgaria in a lesson concerning the labor in different parts of Bulgaria. More specifically, it tells about two brothers – Selim and Yumer, that live in a small mountain village and their faith is different from the one of the Bulgarians. Further the text tells about the occupation of each brother. It is worth pointing out that this is the only textbook in civil education for primary school that uses typical minority names in independent lesson, lesson which is apparently out of any context concerning the history or the ethnic structure of Bulgaria. Another lesson do not fail to teach about the official and non-official

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<sup>45</sup> See pages 48 and 49

holidays of the country, including Vasil Day (or Vasilitza), Ramazan Bairam and Pasha.

The lesson “Life in school” teaches that the class is like a big family. It contains a demonstrative tables that list the rights and the obligations of the student: to express his/her own opinion; to choose the school, in which s/he shall study; to choose who shall represent his/her interests to the pedagogical council, on one hand, and to attend classes and to study regularly; to be polite with the elderly people and with his/her friends, on the other. Moreover, there is a table with some essential rights that every child – no matter student or not - has. First, children have the right to express their opinion in regards with questions that concern them and it shall be taken into consideration. Second, children have right to education and school shall be accessible for every child.

### *“Bulgarian language and Literature”*

The spelling books also partly educate the children in human rights. There are three spelling books approved for this academic year. These are the books of V. Popov, I. Tzanev and T. Borisova. Their common feature is that they contain Roma fairy tales and comparisons between the Bulgarian and the Roma New Years Day. At the same time, each of them includes some important human rights lessons that cannot be found in the rest.

Traditional Roma fairy tale is titled “The garden of peoples”. It relates about a king who decided to extinct all the Roma in his kingdom but finally understood that the nation is like the flowers in the garden – in its diversity is its beauty. This fairy tale is included in the spelling books of I. Tzanev and T. Borisova (pages 33 and 63, respectively). T. Borisova even goes further separating special chapter titled “Meet the fairy tales of other people”. This chapter contains traditional tales of all minority groups in Bulgaria: Roma, Turkish, Armenian and Russian fairy tales.

The spelling book of V. Popov contains, on pages 54 to 59, a comparison between Christmas and Vasilitza. After teaching the children, with series of poems, tale and Christmas song, about one of the biggest national Christian holidays, the manual tells them a legend about the establishment of the Roma New Years Day – Vasilitza. The text teaches the children that Vasilitza is celebrated on 14 January. It also explains at the bottom of the page the meaning of the word “gypsy camp” (каруи).

In conclusion, one can notice the praiseworthy tendency that the spelling books for second grade give the necessary information about the culture of the minorities in Bulgaria. This information is smoothly implemented among the lessons teaching about the national traditions. I believe that this way the authors have successfully avoided the possibility the cultural differences to be perceived by the children as something that discriminate and alienate them from each other. On the contrary, the impression is that the cultural features of the minority groups only enrich the culture of the nation as a whole.

I would like to point out one remarkable poem in the spelling book of V. Popov. It is one of the scarce texts in the textbooks for primary

education that promote friendship among racial groups, as required by the definition of HRE. On page 76 there is a poem by M. Ganchev titled “Brothers”. It refers to the small reader telling him that the black boy from the country Chad is his brother. Even if the reader does not see any similarities with this boy, they are still brothers in bird songs. The poem further relates that the same birds sing in front of the reader’s house during our summer and in front of the African boy’s house during our winter. The poem concludes that this makes both characters brothers in blood because “the Song is the sister of the Blood”. The text is also illustrated with a drawing of the two boys from the poem which, sited on the grass, enjoy in the same manner the bird songs.

In the end, all spelling books promote respect for other civilizations as required under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They achieve that by including traditional songs and folklore tales of other civilizations, as well as fragments from popular child novels of famous international authors. For example, there are Swedish and German child songs; Ancient Greek fables; Japanese, English and Croatian folklore tales and fragments from works of the Grim brothers, Charle Paireau, Astrid Lindgren, Gianni Rodari, etc.

### *C.3. Third grade*

#### *“Bulgarian language and Literature”*

The school curriculum for the course of “Bulgarian language and Literature” in third grade, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, outlines the following aims and objectives. Through this discipline the children develop their abilities to interpret literature works.<sup>46</sup> The spelling books shall contain texts with variety of topics, close to the child’s perception of the world and consistent with the Bulgarian holidays and with the common human values. The learning of literature and folklore works shall aim at forming a feeling of national self-determination and tolerance towards the Bulgarian citizens with different ethnic origin.

The curriculum also provides for teaching the children how to understand the main ethic opposition GOOD-EVIL and to explain it in concrete situations. The students shall be given the chance to express their attitude towards the characters – symbols of good and evil.

Another expected result is the student to find in the studied literature works the main features of his/her national identity. Directly connected with this task are the following ones: to understand the cultural difference and to treat the Bulgarian citizens with different ethnic origin with tolerance and correctness. The students can discuss with the help of the teacher literature studied in class and read independently and, therefore, to realize the cultural pluralism and the multiethnicity. The children are given the chance to read scientific texts about the traditions and customs of Roma, Turkish, Armenians, Jews, Tatars, Greeks, etc.

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<sup>46</sup> For full text see

[http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left\\_menu/documents/educational\\_programs/3klas/bl\\_3kl.pdf](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/educational_programs/3klas/bl_3kl.pdf)

The curriculum provides that the subject “Bulgarian language and Literature” should pursue one special aim concerning the minorities. The teacher shall strive to form sense of national self-determination in the Bulgarian citizens with different ethnic origin through discussions of literature and folkloric works that contain features of the Bulgarian national identity. The students shall have the opportunity to read additional scientific information about the holidays and the customs of the Bulgarians and about the rituals of concrete holidays or customs. They shall be also urged to say greetings on the occasion of a given holiday.

### *“Man and Society”*

In third grade, children start learning the subject “Man and society”. According to the school curriculum of the Ministry of Education and Science<sup>47</sup>, this subject aims at making children realize certain rules concerning the social environment. It also aims at forming of sense of national belonging in the social context of ethnic diversity and at moulding of tolerance among all Bulgarian citizens.

According to the curriculum, one of the expected educational results is the children to be able to distinguish folkloric from official holidays and to give examples of folkloric holidays of different ethnic communities. Further, after completion of third grade, children are expected to understand the difference between people, based on language, religion and customs. They should learn the concept “civil rights” and to understand the content of basic rights and duties of the Bulgarian citizens.

For this academic year the Ministry of Education and Science has approved the textbooks in “Man and society” of M. Radeva, S. Stoyanova and R. Kusheva. All of them achieve high level of compliance with the domestic and international standards for HRE. They contain special lessons concerning the national holidays and the customs of the different minority groups. In addition, some history lessons point out the ethnic diversity of Bulgaria, characteristic for the country as early as the end of eighteenth century. The preferences of the Sofia teachers to each of the textbooks in “Man and society” are as follows:

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| - R. Kusheva   | 3994 students |
| - S. Stoyanova | 2205 students |
| - M. Radeva    | 2179 students |

Compulsory lesson in the subject “Man and society” in all textbooks is the lesson in national and folkloric holidays. The manuals pay attention to the children that some of the holidays in Bulgaria are national and, thus, are celebrated by all citizens of the country. Apart from them, there are also holidays which are celebrated by the different ethnic groups in the country.

The textbooks give beautiful and detailed description of the content of the customs accomplished on Vasilitza, Ramazan Bairam, Kurban Bairam, Hanukah, Rosh Ananah and Vartanantz. They are also very well illustrated with pictures.

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<sup>47</sup>[http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left\\_menu/documents/educational\\_programs/3klas/obshtestvo\\_3kl.pdf](http://www.minedu.government.bg/opencms/export/sites/mon/left_menu/documents/educational_programs/3klas/obshtestvo_3kl.pdf)

The description of the holidays gives interesting information to the children. Nevertheless, important human rights lessons are also implemented. The textbooks stress that the different communities have the right to celebrate free their folkloric holidays. In addition, they teach that the joy from the holiday makes different people come together and that the folkloric holidays of the different communities are the cultural treasure of Bulgaria. On the other hand, the national holidays unite us as Bulgarian citizens.<sup>48</sup>

It makes good impression when the authors prefer words, such as “unite” and “come together” instead of stressing on what distinguish us from each other. In this connection, it is worth mentioning the textbook of S. Stoyanova. Describing the folkloric holidays, the author pays special attention to that aspect of the holiday that involves the common participation of people from different ethnic groups. This is the only author that has used this remarkable approach to the description of the holidays. For example, the textbook teaches that the big Christian holiday George Day is celebrated as the Day of the herds not only by Bulgarians but also by Roma and Turkish. Further, the textbook of S. Stoyanova is the only one to describe, apart from the conventionally presented festivals, the holiday Todor Day. The text tells that on this day the good horse riders – Roma and Bulgarians – show their abilities. In addition, the book describes the Muslim holiday Ramazan Bairam as the holiday when “the Turkish give banitza<sup>49</sup> and baklava to their Bulgarian neighbors”.<sup>50</sup>

Another compulsory lesson in this subject concerns the role of the person in the society. Children are taught that there are big communities of people with the same profession, mother tongue or religion. Life in communities is not possible without rules and therefore everyone must observe his/her duties, to show tolerance and respect towards the others and to respect their rights. Children also learn that all Bulgarian citizens: Bulgarians, Turkish, Roma, Jews, Armenians, etc, have equal rights and obligations and live in understanding and respect for the differences between them.

Common feature of the structure of all three textbooks in “Man and society” is the vocabulary of new words that is part of each lesson. The vocabulary contains important mini-lessons, which make possible the complete perception of the general idea of the main text. Importantly, the vocabularies explain the meaning of the words “tolerance”, “Muslim” and “Islam”.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, in case s/he has not learnt it earlier in a non-formal environment, it is at the age of 9 when the Bulgarian student hears for a first time these words and understands their meaning. According to the UN Guidelines for National Plans of Action for HRE children at ages 8 to 11 are able to acquire key concepts, such as “tolerance”, “culture”, “religion” and “equality”. Therefore, by this criteria Bulgarian primary education complies

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<sup>48</sup> See page 86 of “Man and society” of M. Radeva and page 88 of “Man and society” of S. Stoyanova

<sup>49</sup> Home made cheese pastry

<sup>50</sup> See page 88

<sup>51</sup> See pages 10 and 54 of “Man and society” of S. Stoyanova; p. 55 of “Man and society” of M. Radeva and p. 32 of “Man and society” of R. Kusheva

perfectly with HRE requirements, despite that the Bulgarian government has not adopted National Plan of Action for HRE. The Guidelines also provide for practices applicable for the later childhood (8 to 11). Among them there is valuing diversity with which the content of the Bulgarian textbook also complies perfectly.

In “Man and society” of M. Radeva there is a lesson titled “Citizens of Bulgaria – rights and duties”.<sup>52</sup> It teaches the students that freedom, equality and tolerance are the bases of life in society. It also teaches that our Constitution declares the fundamental rights – peace, freedom, equality and tolerance – to be leading in our society and that the respect for human rights ensures the development of every individual in the society. The manual even cites texts of the Constitution according to which “all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. All citizens are equal to the law... Religions are free...”.

Finally, the approved textbooks of “Man and society” have history lessons telling about the Bulgarian society in the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> These lessons points out the diverse ethnic structure of the newly liberated Bulgarian nation and even show, next to each other, black-and-white pictures from that period of Bulgarian village family, Roma women and children and Jewish women.<sup>54</sup> These lessons aim at teaching the students that ethnic minorities have been living in Bulgaria since centuries, they participated in the development of our society and are part of our history. This should further confirm the childrens’ conviction that Bulgarians, Turkish, Roma and Jews are equal in rights citizens of one country.

#### **D. SURVEY OF TEXTBOOK SELECTION**

It is well obvious that, even though the general level of compliance of the content of Bulgarian textbooks for primary school with the internationally recognized aims of education is relatively high, particular manuals lag behind others in the same subject. Main issue is, therefore, the question not which one are the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, but which one, from the approved, the teachers choose to teach. It is of particular interest to find out what were the motives of the teachers in preferring one textbook to another. Is it the presence of human rights lessons in it? Curious to see to what extent Bulgarian teachers are concerned about the teaching of human rights, I have decided to conduct a research. I have composed three types of short questionnaires for teachers respectively in first, second and third grade. I have asked the teachers to indicate the authors whose textbooks have chosen to teach for the 2006/2007 academic year and, more importantly, what were their arguments in favor of their choice. The survey covered only the subjects discussed in Part C as they are the only ones in Bulgarian primary education system to

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<sup>52</sup> See page 74

<sup>53</sup> This is the period after the liberation from the Turkish invasion

<sup>54</sup> See p. 82 of “Man and society” of S. Stoyanova

include elements of education in human rights. The survey was conducted in 12 primary schools in Sofia city

The results from the survey confirmed, unfortunately, some expectations. On one hand, they have reflected the ungrateful situation of Bulgarian teachers to have irreplaceable social role of nurturers and developers that mould the child's personality and to receive one of the lowest salaries in the state sector. On the other hand, this discrepancy has initiated the sad tendency the teachers to abandon their role of nurturers and developers and to aim at fulfilling only the minimal content of their professional obligations – covering the norm of lessons.

As stated above, the procedure of evaluation of textbooks includes a compulsory voting of every teacher in Bulgaria for three of the projects presented to them. The teachers I have talk to with explained that when the publishers distribute their projects in the schools, they made the teachers special offers in order to “encourage” their vote. For example, they offer certain percentage of discount of the price of the textbooks<sup>55</sup> or they offer, for example, to give them for free different educational boards for the walls of the classroom. The teachers shared with regret that they would want to have such boards in the classroom because they help the study process. However, the budgets of the schools, especially primary schools, are limited and are not enough for such “luxuries”. The alternative way to have them is to collect money from the students in the class or to buy them with their own funds. The sad conclusion of the teachers that “The Bulgarian teacher is poor.” makes it reasonable, to a certain extent, to understand why they consider such factors in their choice of particular publisher. The bright side of the things is that the publisher that has the oldest traditions in Bulgaria for printing schoolbooks and that most of the teachers choose – “Prosveta” – publishes not only one textbook for one subject but usually two or more, of different authors.

The majority of the teachers I have spoken with are guided in their choice of textbooks by the following criteria. Firstly, the content of the textbooks must ensure the acquiring of the compulsory minimum of knowledge in certain logical and systematic succession. The teachers examine factors such as if the manual is well ordered, if the structure of the topics is simple and facilitates the self-preparation of the pupils. The teachers value when the textbooks provide enough exercises and gradation of the difficulties and develop the logical thinking of the children.

Secondly, most often one of the first reactions of the teachers to the question “Why did you choose this textbook?” concerns the illustrations and the picture material. The teachers care if the drawings are beautiful and if they correctly clarify the content of the texts. For some subjects, such as “The world around”, the illustrations have crucial importance.

Thirdly, main criterion of most of the teachers is the ability of the textbook to draw and to keep the attention of the children. For the teachers it is important when the information given agrees with the

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<sup>55</sup> The textbooks for first, second, third and fourth grade the children receive for free by the Ministry of Education and Science. The textbooks for fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade the children purchase themselves.

intellectual level of the children at the correspondent age and when the language used is accessible for them. According to the teachers, it would be always a plus if the textbook contains absorbing stories and interesting games through which the children could study having fun. Simple and understandable texts are definitely a priority for the teachers, especially for the teaching of history. Unlike the lessons related with the nature and the social environment, the history lessons present information that the children have not lived in their own experience and hear for a first time.

Despite this general criterion, some teachers point out the need the content of the textbook to be consistent with the overall speed of the class in acquiring the knowledge. Teacher of fourth grade in 46<sup>th</sup> Primary School “Constantin Fotinov” explained that her class included many bilingual students, representatives of Bulgarian, Turkish and Roma ethnic groups. She explained that the process of acquiring knowledge in this class was considerably hampered by the need to explain the meaning of many Bulgarian words, such as “asylum” for example. Therefore, her main criterion in choosing textbooks would be their level of accessibility for the children. She would always prefer the textbook with the simplest wording. On the contrary, she gave as an example the next class composed of Bulgarians only, where the level of receptivity was considerably higher. Respectively, the teacher of this class chose textbooks with more texts, less drawings and with language that is more complex. Unfortunately, one of the defects of the education system is that usually the classes in the same grade in the same school cannot use different textbooks for one subject. Right before the beginning of the school year, the teachers that teach to different classes in the same grade normally have a meeting whereby they take a decision which textbook for a particular subject they are going to use for the following year.

Another defect of the educational system, from which some teachers in the upper classes of primary school complain of, is that they often do not have a choice. They have to continue using the textbook of that author chosen by the teacher of the same class in first grade.

In making their choice of particular textbook, the teachers also pay attention to the so-called “Book for the teacher” that is in a package with some textbooks. They also take into consideration the advantages of this school appliance and the extent to which it could facilitate their work. If they approve the “Book for the teacher”, it is very likely to choose the textbook that goes with it.

In addition, according to the information the teachers gave me, sometimes the publisher cannot supply the textbooks they have chosen because the copies are over. In this case, the publisher gives them other textbooks, of different authors.

Finally, in motivating their choice of particular textbook, some teachers consider the values, which children should have learnt after completion of the grade. Unfortunately, their references to the very content of the texts in the schoolbooks and their sense are merged among many other factors. It could be concluded that, definitely, the education of the children in a friendly human rights spirit is not the first priority for Bulgarian teachers. It is true that some of them value the fairy tales that



teach about the “traditions of our people” and “the national values of other peoples”; the fairy tales where ‘the characters have beautiful Bulgarian names’ because the children like them; that in the selection of the texts “the authors strive to show “good” in all its forms”; that the texts are “educative”, of “high artistic value” and even that “have sense”.<sup>56</sup> These comments, unfortunately, come at one of the rearmost places of the teachers’ “Top” of advantages of a textbook. They are not discussed in details, like other factors, and leave the impression that they just supplement the list of the main criteria. They appear incidentally somewhere in the end of the statements of the teachers.

Among the dozens of interviewed teachers, only one gave the answer I wanted to hear. She answered straight that the textbooks must educate the children to know good from evil. In this meaning, she had chosen the textbooks that were “the least evil”. She explained that none of the approved by the Ministry of Education and Science textbooks was suitable for the children because they could not teach them “good” and “evil”. This woman had 34 years of experience as a teacher in primary school. She was clearly disappointed of the content of modern textbooks in comparing them with those in which I was taught.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In my judgement, Bulgaria has only partly fulfilled its obligation to introduce HRE in the curriculum and the content of the textbooks for primary school. The measures that the Bulgarian government has taken in this respect are not effective. They do not guarantee to every child in the lower stage of primary school her/his right to HRE. The reasons for this are several.

First, the new curriculum of 2002 does not include separate subject in human rights. The curriculum of the subject “Man and society” provides for only one lesson in civil rights. The curriculum of the subject “Bulgarian language and Literature” does not provide for any explicit human rights messages. The curricula of the subjects “Home land” and “World around” are not publicly available. Unlike the rest of the subjects for primary education, they are not published on the web page of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Secondly, the Ministry of Education and Science has approved some textbooks in “Bulgarian language and Literature”, “Home land”, “World around” and “Man and society” which imply negative patterns of attitude or do not promote human rights or promote them hardly visible. The basic elements of cultural identity of the minority groups, presented in the schoolbooks, are most often related with the traditional folklore, without rendering an account of all the cultural achievements of the ethnic minorities, and even less their contribution to the common national culture and the development of the society. Under the law, the projects for textbooks should correspond to the public educational requirements, which

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<sup>56</sup> These are extracts from the answers of the teachers given in the questionnaires I have distributed in 12 primary schools in Sofia city.

include promotion of tolerance and respect for human rights. In reality, as obvious from the analysis of the content of the approved textbooks, some of them have “slided” around this requirement. The responsibility for this is of the minister of education and science because, first, he appoints the members of the evaluation commission, and, second, he gives the final approval of the projects for textbooks.

Thirdly, there is no guarantee that the approved textbooks, which in fact comply with all public educational requirements, would be chosen by the teachers. Once approved, the textbooks are chosen on an equal basis. In addition to that, the effective legislation sets as the only criterion for the choice of approved textbook its applicability.

Those findings determine the following recommendations to the national educational policy.

The international instruments on HRE grant the states with a wide margin of appreciation as to the manner in which human rights education should be included in the curricula. They do not go further the requirement for “reviewing the curricula”. Despite this, it seems, as of the opinion of the majority of scholars, that teaching human rights as a separate subject is the most effective measure for achieving the aims of education, as stated in article 29(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, the first recommendation would be the inclusion in the curriculum for primary education of subject “Human rights”. This is the most effective measure for protection of the right to HRE. Unfortunately, instead of acting in this direction, the Bulgarian Government is considering the introduction of separate subject “Religion”, which it obviously regards to be more important for “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential”.

Secondly, HRE would be guaranteed to all students if the Ministry of Education and Science makes sure that all of the approved textbooks have the required specific content. Only this way the subsequent choice of the teachers of textbooks would become irrelevant. For example, if all three textbooks in “Man and society” approved by the Ministry had included human rights messages to the same extent, 100% of the students in third grade would have received proper education, no matter if their teachers had chosen the author X, the author Y or the author Z.

Alternatively, through legal amendment it should be introduced another criterion for the teachers’ choice of approved textbook – its consistence with the aims of HRE. However, this would not be effective measure because the choice of the teachers is not subject to any control by the state authorities. What the schools do at the beginning of the school year is to send to the regional inspectorates of education applications about the particular authors and textbooks chosen for every grade. Those applications are not intended to examine the reasons of the teachers for their choice but only have statistic purposes.

Third, the Regulation for the Application of the Public Education Act could include an explicit prohibition of the practice the same textbook to be used in different classes of the same grade. The need of such

provision is particularly urgent in schools with integrated (ethnically mixed) classes.

Fourth, the composition of the commission that evaluates the content of the textbooks in the first stage of the evaluation procedure<sup>57</sup> could include representative of non-governmental organization involved in the promotion and protection of human rights, such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee.

Fifth, the Ministry of Education and Science could introduce legal requirement regarding the composition of the panels of authors that apply for evaluation of their projects of textbooks in “Bulgarian language and Literature”, “Home land”, “World around” and “Man and society”. For example, only panel of authors, which include one trained specialist in the culture and history of the minority groups in Bulgaria, could have the right to apply for evaluation of project.

Of course, the last four recommended measures would become useful if there were interdisciplinary subject “Human Rights” introduced.

Finally, the government could consider a decrease of the minimal time limit for revision of the curriculum and the textbooks. The period set of four years is too long, given the defects and shortages of our educational system at the present moment. Longer period for revision would be more appropriate in states, such as Sweden, where human rights education is successfully implemented at all school levels. In addition to that, the only exception that can initiate preliminary revision of textbook – “objective necessity”<sup>58</sup> – is too vague.

In conclusion, despite the imperfections of the human rights education in Bulgarian primary school, it is important that the first steps have been made. The students in third grade know now much more about their human rights than I did at their age. Isn't that a clear sign that the world is getting better?

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<sup>57</sup> See subchapter *B.I. Legislation* on p. 26

<sup>58</sup> See the Instruction for Valuation and Approval of Textbooks

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