



Asia-Europe Meeting

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Human Rights Education & Training

19<sup>th</sup> Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights

4-6 NOVEMBER 2019 | TROMSØ, NORWAY



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 19th Informal ASEM Seminar on Human Rights looked at issues related to Human Rights Education (HRE) in Asia and Europe. Held in Tromsø, Norway, it was attended by more than 100 government officials and civil society experts.

## BACKGROUND

The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) outlines the rights and freedoms everyone is entitled to. People need to know they have these rights. They also need to understand why they must respect and protect the rights of others. This is why Human Rights Education, or HRE, is important.

In the last 30 to 40 years, there has been a growing recognition in Asia and Europe of the importance of HRE. In 2011 the United Nations adopted the *Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training*. This provides a framework for countries to develop and improve their HRE efforts.

## KEY MESSAGES

- A) Human rights is the backbone of democracy, and human rights and democracy form the basis for peace and stability of society.
- B) Human rights education is essential for creating a culture of human rights – that is, societies in which each of us is encouraged and empowered to take the initiative to respect, protect and promote the full spectrum of human rights for all.
- C) Access to education is an essential part of human rights education. Like human rights, HRE is universal, indivisible, and inalienable. It is not only a mission of governments and the whole society but represents a collective vision of a good society.
- D) Human rights education (HRE) will help people deal with intolerance and hatred. Human rights education, therefore, needs to start at an early age. It requires creative methods of teaching and learning, and it must reach those who are outside of formal education channels.
- E) There are various barriers that prevent some groups from accessing education and/or human rights education. These include children, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, refugees and asylum-seekers, members of the LGBTQI community, those working in the informal sector, and those living in remote areas.
- F) HRE is a process of learning about, through, and for human rights. It is not just about gaining knowledge and understanding of human rights. It is also about learning to respect the human rights of others. It is about empowering individuals to exercise their rights, which

includes respecting other people's rights. It contributes to fostering attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold human rights for all members of society.

- G) Human rights education and training must be framed in such a way that they are acceptable in different contexts whilst maintaining their universal character and value. While building national ownership of human rights education and training is recommended, multi-stakeholder engagement and regional and cross-regional cooperation is encouraged.
- H) Democratic space is a pre-condition for the promotion of human rights and human rights education. The current trend in Asia and Europe, however, is for a move away from democracy rather than to democracy. The world is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous . This is the world that HRE must respond to.
- I) It is important to invest in the human rights education infrastructure. This includes:
  - i. Strengthening supports for educators, trainers, university instructors and all who facilitate learning about human rights.
  - ii. Ensuring more coordination and coherence in legal and policy frameworks and guidance for actors involved in human rights education
  - iii. Sharing good practices and lessons learned
  - iv. Increasing research and evaluation in order to develop educational practices and build the evidence to support the case for human rights education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Human rights education requires academic freedom. University leaders and teaching staff should create an environment conducive to free expression and creativity.
2. Effective training needs institutional commitment, sufficient funding, proper methodology, a long-time perspective and good assessment plans. Experimental approaches should be encouraged, and their effectiveness assessed.
3. Adopt National Plans of Human Rights Education so that HRE efforts can be better coordinated.
4. Increase support for teachers to introduce the subject of human rights in classrooms.
5. Invest in capacity building for all involved in HRE – the national human rights organisations, civil society, government agencies, private sector, and the media.
6. Strengthen academic research of the practice of human rights education.
7. Make greater use of online teaching tools on human rights at universities, especially in Asia.
8. Ensure that at least one human rights course is offered to all students at higher education institutions, and that lecturers are equipped to teach these courses.
9. Academics from both Asia and Europe should collaborate on human rights teaching.

10. Governments should provide more support for HRE to be made available to people without access to formal schooling, such as girls who are not sent to school, migrant domestic workers, and refugees.
11. Set up formal exchange programmes so that European civil society organisations can learn from their Asian counterparts about how to bring HRE to marginalised groups.
12. States should double their efforts to ensure that all state officials have access to human rights training relevant to their responsibilities.
13. Develop more innovative ways, such as using Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), to reach and teach professionals about HRE.
14. Follow up on the Universal Periodic Review recommendations about HRE and open space for both civil society organisations and ASEM Member States to monitor their implementation.
15. Use the Sustainable Development Goals framework to develop and monitor HRE by States and national Human Rights organisations.
16. Consider the application of the innovative blended learning programmes by ASEM governments and professional associations (especially in Asia) to strengthen human rights knowledge of judges, lawyers, and prosecutors.
17. Develop an HRE knowledge hub and network so lessons and experiences can be shared.
18. Governments and civil society actors should strengthen existing, and establish, new Asian-European cooperation programmes in HRE.
19. Explore the development of quality standards, competencies, and certification for non-formal human rights actors.
20. Make human rights information available in language that is simple and clear.