

## Preface

The ability to live together in a democracy does not come naturally. The knowledge, skills and values that are the preconditions of living in a democracy should be learnt and nurtured throughout life. While key concepts of democracy and human rights should be understood by children, values such as dignity, tolerance and respect for others, and skills such as cooperation, critical thinking and standing up for one's rights cannot be taught in traditional ways. They should be learnt through experience and practise, by living and acting in a democratic environment and from the earliest possible age. This is what human rights education is about and this is what 'COMPASITO – manual on human rights education for children' is for.

The Council of Europe's commitment to human rights dates back to its very foundation. The Europe we want to build, based on a culture of peace and human rights, can only be pursued with everyone being actively involved.

Since the adoption of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, a fundamental change in paradigm has taken place in working with children, and this is the right for children to be consulted and to be heard on decisions concerning them. However, a meaningful participation of children is only possible if adults accept children as partners in issues that concern them. Making this a reality, and thus safeguarding the dignity of children, however, is a real challenge for adults; and the way adults deal with children reflects how society sees the future. Human rights and human rights education is a common learning process that concerns not only children, but adults as well.

The Council of Europe has launched the project 'Building a Europe for and with children' to focus on the respect for children's dignity across Europe: to promote children's rights and eradicate violence against children. The participation of children is essential in both dimensions. COMPASITO has an important role to play in this process. Based on the experiences of the highly acclaimed Human Rights Education Youth Programme of the Council's youth sector, and the success of 'COMPASS, the manual on human rights education with young people', COMPASITO provides children, educators, teachers and parents with activities and methods to introduce children to human rights in creative and attractive ways. This manual is a starting point: COMPASITO provides directions, but it is up to the children and those working with them to use it, and to use it in the best ways possible.

It is by knowing their rights that children are able to best denounce and reject abuse; it is by committing themselves to human rights that children contribute to a better world, for today and tomorrow; and it is by working with children for human rights that adults become credible in children's eyes.

This manual is an invaluable contribution to supporting children and upholding children's human rights across Europe.

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