

## INTRODUCTION

*The States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be 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...*

Article 29, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

## Welcome to COMPASITO – a manual on human rights education for children!

We hope that this manual will provide you with ideas, inspiration and practical help to explore human rights with children. Living among other people in their families, communities and society, children become aware from a very early age of questions related to justice and seek for the meaning of the world. By fostering an understanding of human rights, shaping opinions and developing attitudes, human rights education strongly supports this natural interest and learning process.

Children are often considered people who are 'not yet adult' and therefore dependent, inexperienced, undisciplined and in need of order or guidance. COMPASITO builds on another concept explained well by Lothar Krappmann, German sociologist and educationalist: children live 'here and now', "they generate their views on problems and construct competent solutions".<sup>1</sup> COMPASITO looks at children as young citizens of the present and as rights-holders who are competent in many issues related to their life. It builds on children's motivations, experiences and search for solutions.

Children are strong, rich and capable. All children have preparedness, potential, curiosity, and interest in constructing their learning, negotiating with everything their environment brings to them.

*Loris Malaguzzi*

COMPASITO was inspired by 'COMPASS – a manual on human rights education with young people', which was developed by the Council of Europe in 2002. More than expected, 'COMPASS' is used with younger people of secondary school age and in school environments in many European countries. The expectations of users of 'COMPASS' for a training manual directed specifically at children matched our own convictions that human rights education should start at the earliest possible age.

COMPASITO builds on the philosophy and educational approaches of 'COMPASS'. As with 'COMPASS', it uses a non-formal educational methodology and a structure that provides theoretical and practical support to users of the manual. However, while 'COMPASS' addresses young people themselves, COMPASITO addresses adult educators who work with children. It provides them with theoretical and methodological information and substantial discussion of the book's human rights themes. COMPASITO also encourages educators to adapt material to reflect their own and their children's reality. Although the practical activities are designed to play with children, most activities need the proper facilitation of an educational expert.

## What is human rights education with children?

Human rights education is a process that aims to establish a culture of human rights. The educational process builds on children's active participation by which they learn about human rights and under-



stand human rights issues, acquire skills and abilities to be able to defend human rights and develop attitudes of respect of equality and dignity.

Human rights education, therefore, should have a key role in any educational processes. The United Nations **Convention of the Rights of the Child** (CRC) provides an invaluable tool to introduce human rights for children. The CRC specifies those human rights that are relevant to children. Learning and experiencing children's rights therefore help children to understand what human rights are about, to understand that they are rights-holders themselves and to adapt and apply these rights in their specific context. This is the key aim of human rights education with children. In COMPASITO, moreover, children's rights are presented within the wider picture of human rights as a whole. Thus, universal human rights and children's rights are jointly elaborated to provide opportunities in such a way that while understanding their own rights children also understand that all human beings have human rights.

The States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to ... (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.

*Article 29, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989*

## Human rights education and education for democratic citizenship

Human rights are essential to democratic development and to citizenship education. Several recent social and political developments both in Europe and in other places of the world, such as economic interdependence, racism, terrorism, political apathy, growing social gaps or the mediatisation of politics, challenge the foundations of a culture of peace and human rights and thus, endanger democratic stability. This is why human rights education and education for democratic citizenship have become key priorities of governments and even more non-governmental organisations in the last decade.

Human rights education and education for democratic citizenship go hand in hand as both aim at education for democracy. Both forms of education lead young people to acquire knowledge, set core values and develop skills. Education for democratic citizenship puts the 'child citizen' into the focus and aims to educate children to be active and responsible members of their communities. Human rights education, on the other hand, emphasizes the human being promoting equality, human dignity, participation and empowerment for everyone. Human rights education includes citizenship as one of its key themes, and education for democratic citizenship builds on human rights values. Whatever their differences, both approaches serve the development of democracy, human rights and peace.

### Whom is COMPASITO for?

COMPASITO primarily was designed for educators and trainers working with children, teachers, care-takers and parents as well, especially those who are interested in human rights education with children and who are looking for practical tools to discuss values and social issues with children. The activities are designed for children from six to thirteen years.

COMPASITO builds on both the child and the facilitator's existing knowledge and experience. The activities can be used with children wherever they spend the greatest part of their daily life: in schools, in childcare centres, afternoon-schools, leisure centres, children's organisations, or children's camps, and some of them even in the family environment. While children do not need to have any special skills to participate in most of the activities, facilitators do have to possess experience and skills in using non-formal educational methodology to run the activities successfully.



## What is in COMPASITO?

In the last decade several high-quality, child-related training materials on human rights and children's rights have been produced in Europe and internationally. The COMPASITO development team built on these experiences and tried to complement them in a European context. The manual provides specific content on human rights education, a non-formal educational methodology and an intercultural approach.

### Themes related to human rights

COMPASITO is based on the same philosophical and educational approaches as 'COMPASS', and several parts, especially on conceptual topics, are drawn directly from the text of 'COMPASS'. The core of the manual is its educational activities designed for children. The activities in COMPASITO are organised around thirteen selected themes: Citizenship, Democracy, Discrimination, Education and leisure, Environment, Family and alternative care, Gender equality, Health and welfare, Media and Internet, Participation, Peace and conflict, Poverty and social exclusion, Violence. In order to bring human rights issues closer to everyday reality and children's personal experiences, these themes focus broadly on values and social issues rather than on formal rights as laid down in conventions. The development team selected them carefully from dozens of ideas in the belief that they cover human rights fields of key importance for children, even if this manual doesn't have the means to list all important subjects. Some themes also address issues that are relevant but seldom elaborated in other manuals, such as Education, Health, or Gender Equality. In addition to these selected themes, a category of general human rights was also introduced to provide children with an understanding of the concept of rights and how to adapt and apply them in their daily context.

### Non-formal educational methodology

COMPASITO follows non-formal educational methodologies, building on the active participation and personal experiences of children. Participation and cooperation of children helps to build group cohesion and reduce biases between group members. It furthers understanding of complex concepts, improves problem solving skills and facilitates creativity and practicality: all important aims of human rights education. Adults should not fall into the trap of assuming that we, the educators, possess the ultimate truth. Children will bring to the educational process their experiences, which must be actively drawn upon to ensure their interest and effective development. Questions and even conflicts should be regarded as fundamental educational resources, which can be assessed in a positive manner.

### An intercultural and participatory approach

While children are very much engaged in their own neighbourhood, cultures and friendship groups, they are curious of the world: other cultures, regions and people. COMPASITO uses stories and situations from various regions and cultural backgrounds. This rich variety offers children an opportunity to reflect on various cultures and build a stable identity on these reflections. As Reva Klein, a British educationalist, explains, children do not simply learn about other children's lives, but they form empathy and solidarity and understand their role in taking action on a more global scale.<sup>2</sup>

COMPASITO supports this context and approach through an intercultural and inclusive development process. In late 2005 a consultative meeting of practitioners working directly with children outlined the concept of the manual, which was then closely followed by the international development team, which came together as a result of an open call. This international team found it essential to produce COMPASITO in close cooperation with potential users and children themselves. For this purpose an international reference group of practitioners was established and consulted during the development process. This reference group tested and evaluated the activities proposed to be included in COMPASITO and provided feedback on the theoretical parts.



## The organisation of COMPASITO

**Chapter I.** familiarizes the reader with what we mean by human rights and children's rights and describes the main international human rights mechanisms.

**Chapter II.** explains the aims and outcomes of human rights education and puts it into both European and international perspectives.

**Chapter III.** gives information and practical tips on how COMPASITO can be used in various formal and non-formal educational settings and how to get the best out of its educational approaches. The tips for facilitators provides ideas on how to start human rights activities with children and how to follow them up including concrete actions.

**Chapter IV.** collects 42 practical activities for different age groups and at different levels of complexity related to the selected themes of human rights. Children do not need to have any special skills to be involved in most COMPASITO activities. Users of the manual are encouraged to use the activities in a creative way either in a sequence or individually.

**Chapter V.** provides essential background information on the thirteen selected themes. Facilitators are encouraged to read the relevant themes before starting an activity. Questions included in these texts are intended to help readers to reflect on their own knowledge and attitudes and to be able to put the themes in a personal or local context.

The **Appendices** contain essential information on legal documents that have key relevance for children in a European context. The text of the European Convention of Human Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child can be found here also in child-friendly format. The Human Rights Glossary contains the explanation of the key legal terms appearing in the manual. The terms in the glossary are found in bold in the text of COMPASITO.

## COMPASITO in the framework of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme

COMPASITO is published in the framework of the Council of Europe's Youth Programme on Human Rights Education and Intercultural Dialogue. The Programme seeks to involve young people in human rights issues, reaching beyond those already active and motivated to reach a wider public and bring human rights closer to their daily reality. Since being launched in 2000 the Programme has reached thousands of young people and resulted in a cascading effect in the development of human rights educational programmes and human rights projects all over Europe. An important educational resource of the Council of Europe's Youth Programme on Human Rights Education and Intercultural Dialogue is 'COMPASS – a manual on human rights education with young people', which has been translated into more than twenty different languages since its publication in 2002. This very successful manual has motivated and guided young people and their organisations to deal with issues such as democracy, social justice or gender equality.

The Council of Europe's Youth Programme on Human Rights Education and Intercultural Dialogue reflects and supports the United Nation's World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005 ongoing). This worldwide Programme seeks to help make human rights a reality in every community by promoting a common understanding of the basic principles and methodologies of human rights education. The Action Plan of the World Programme for 2005-2007 focuses on primary and secondary education systems and proposes a concrete strategy and practical ideas for implementing human rights education nationally.



.....

### Useful resources

Gandini, Lella, Edward, Carolyn, Forman, George, eds., *The Hundred Languages of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach Advanced Reflections*: Ablex/Greenwood, 1998.

Kein, Reva, *Citizens by Right, Citizenship education in primary schools*: Trentham Books and Save the Children, 2001.

Krappmann, Lothar, "The Rights of the Child as a Challenge to Human Rights Education" in *Journal of Social Science Education*: Bielefeld, 2006: [www.jsse.org/2006-1/krappmann\\_child-rights.htm](http://www.jsse.org/2006-1/krappmann_child-rights.htm)

.....

### References

- 1 Krappmann, Lothar, "The Rights of the Child as a Challenge to Human Rights Education" in *Journal of Social Science Education*: Bielefeld, 2006: [www.jsse.org/2006-1/krappmann\\_child-rights.htm](http://www.jsse.org/2006-1/krappmann_child-rights.htm)
- 2 Kein, Reva, *Citizens by Right, Citizenship education in primary schools*: Trentham Books and Save the Children, 2001, p. 53.

