



Council of Europe
The Secretary General

It has become almost commonplace to speak about the world as a global village. Globalisation is generally associated with increased possibilities and risks, for trade, co-operation and communication. But the true challenge of globalisation remains the development of a universal conscience that puts human rights, pluralist democracy and the equality of all human beings as the most important values that we may share.

The Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights were created as a response to some of the worst forms of war and barbarity that humankind has ever experienced. The Convention and other instruments that were subsequently developed – against torture, for social rights, etc. – provided inspiration and support to individuals and non-governmental organisations who have fought injustice, oppression and discrimination. Much has been achieved. But much progress remains to be made; too many rights of too many people in Europe are still violated, ignored or suppressed.

The conventions on human rights are achievements that we share as Europeans; they orient us in times of uncertainty and change. Preserving and honouring them is the highest duty for every state in Europe.

However, human rights cannot be defended by legal texts only. They need to be protected and taken care of by everyone, young people included. This manual provides young people with opportunities to understand and speak human rights. It also provides youth leaders, teachers, educators, professionals and volunteers with concrete ideas to motivate, engage and involve young people to take action for human rights in their own way, in their own community.

This manual does not provide solutions. There are no ready-made solutions to poverty, discrimination, violence or intolerance. It does not contain answers to all questions about human rights either. What the manual does provide is an opportunity for those venturing into human rights education to explore these themes in a manner that is creative, involves young people and is, in itself, human rights education.

Like a *COMPASS*, this manual indicates different ways and directions in a journey through human rights. Like a *COMPASS*, it can and should be used anywhere in Europe by anybody interested in human rights, democracy or citizenship.

If it is true that we seem to have entered the 21st century through a gate of fire, it is reassuring that many young people and youth organisations, teachers and educators, are ready to take up the challenge of education for and through human rights.

This manual is a contribution and tribute to their action.

Walter Schwimmer