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Multicultural Education and the Education of Minority Pupils

Policy Paper

Draft!

This policy paper is presented for OSI Board for consideration and approval. The paper describes the background to the problem the process of policy development, and the main policy lines, which – if approved – will be the guidance to Foundations and network programs in the field of minority and multicultural education.

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The development of the policy

This policy paper from the Institute of Educational Policy (IEP) focusses on the education of minority children and multicultural education. It is the first contribution to the evolution of an overall framework of educational policy for the OSI network. The matters considered in that paper overlap with other important issues; for example, equity, gender, community education, democracy in education, textbook design or teacher training. All these related issues will be addressed later by other discussion papers. The resultant policies (like this policy on the education of pupils with minority affiliation) will be developed through a similar discussion process. The whole process is intended to produce a suite of policy documents which, taken together, will offer a framework of ideas to guide and support the relevant activity of the Foundations. The process of development of this present paper, the first in the series, is set out in Annex A.

Multicultural Education and the Education of Minority Pupils

Policy Paper for the Soros Network

The primary aim of policy development in the Soros network is to ensure that programs relate directly and effectively to the overall mission of promoting open societies. This involves the identification of key issues, their exploration and analysis, and the formulation of ways in which the needs might be met and the problems overcome. This policy paper will provide guidelines for Foundations and network programs in relation to the education of children with minority affiliation.

1. Background

Regardless of their provenance, minorities all over Central-Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (CEE and NIS) have suffered considerably in the past: many of them continue to suffer. Especially in this region, nationalism has throughout the years, consistently overridden principles of international solidarity, political universalism, and cultural pluralism, and has repeatedly caused people to disregard others' claims to justice, or reason, or a common morality. As a result of this, the region periodically experiences examples of disturbing resurgence of xenophobia, ethnic bias, and racism - often resulting in violence. Present circumstances bear witness to the truth of this assertion.

Ethnic conflicts and racism are, in part, a consequence of the division of societies along ethnic group lines, to form new nation-states - for example at the end of the First World War). However, a number of other factors are also important. For example, the enduring and profound economic problems which have followed the end of Soviet political and military domination in the region had, as one consequence, intensification of competition for scarce commodities and the rescinding of restrictions of free speech and association. It is also possible argue that it has resulted in widespread public tendencies to seek scapegoats in difficult periods.

The importance of the field of education to this topics well illustrated by a range of considerations. For example:

- The existence and treatment of minorities are highly politicized issues; in more than a few countries this topic is one of the central issues of politics. Importantly, state's treatment of minorities often influences inter-state relations and the chances of these countries of being integrated into the political and economic structures of Europe and the developed world. As a consequence, the education of minority students has become one of the most sensitive questions in the region.
- The treatment of minorities is a "litmus test" by which the openness of a society can be measured. In the long term, education and the public media are the most effective devices by which the acceptance of minority rights and tolerance toward minorities can be strengthened.

- Education is one of the most important vehicles by which the integration of minorities into mainstream society can be promoted. It has a special importance in cases such as Roma when exclusion from society is a major cause of the spiral of social deprivation.

Genuine ethnic problems in the education of pupils belonging to minorities manifest themselves in three main areas: *language*, *culture*, and *discrimination*. Beyond that, another major set of problems are raised by failures in the processes of education of the majority in regard to minority issues. In this regard the understanding and valuing of cultural diversity is a key issue.

In relation to *language*, national legal frameworks, which restrict mother tongue and bilingual instruction in schools, can present a serious obstacles. Even where the law allows minorities education in the mother tongue, there is often no knowledge or infrastructure for mother tongue or bilingual instruction. Sometimes, too, implementation is impeded for other, more political, reasons. Further, where the willingness to pursue positive policies exists, technical problems remain. For example, when learning in a second language, minorities are often at a disadvantage if methods training, a revised curriculum and appropriate textbooks have not been provided. And there are other, frequently experienced, obstacles to proper language acquisition. Amongst these are a lack of resources for materials development: a lack of skilled teachers able to teach in minority languages; the low prestige of minority language in many cultures; and an inadequate provision of space in the curriculum for everyday and formal language usage in the minority language; In addition, good practice in this field is often impeded by poor opportunities for cultural exchange among host and mother countries.

The *culture* of minorities is very often not respected in most countries of CEE and NIS. Minority children frequently have no access to their history, culture and traditions within existing educational programs. Nor do majority children receive information or knowledge about minority culture. The result is a mutual lack of knowledge, and too often, prejudices in the majority group persist. (The above problems refer to the content of education, extra-curricular activities, how education can build on the services of cultural institutions, and the lack of multicultural and intercultural programs.)

Discrimination is a problem that all minorities face. In our Region, educational discrimination is most acute for the Roma community. It is manifest in several forms such as *segregation*, *detrimental pedagogies*, and *racist behavior*. The *segregation* of Roma students in the educational system is very often the result of a “ghettoization” of Roma in settlements and neighborhoods of cities and towns. Schools in these settlements are often considered “Roma” schools and have poorer conditions and quality than other schools. In other cases, Roma pupils are segregated to the schools for mentally handicapped, so called “special schools.” Within the existing school systems, Roma pupils are placed in “special classes,” or Roma children are placed in the back of the room and forgotten there. These examples do not refer to the separation of the children justified by Romany language mother tongue instruction. *Detrimental pedagogies* have a rich, and frequently powerful, set of techniques such as different

standards for assessment, lowering of expectations and requirements, different treatment of the children, etc. Finally, *racist behavior* can be both powerful and insidious. It is very often not the result of overt racism, however, it can be caused by the low level of consciousness of ethnic problems. or by the lack of knowledge or practice of effective conflict resolution techniques.

Of the problems which exist in a society's majority population, and which have negative consequences on minorities, the most serious are: negative attitudes (lack of tolerance, prejudice, racism and anti-Semitism); a lack of basic information about minorities, discrimination (segregation or assimilating policies) the low prestige of minority languages in mainstream culture; and a lack of preparation in teacher training and materials in combating racism. In many countries, the content of mainstream education is far from being multicultural and intercultural learning programs are seldom used.

An effective policy for equity and equal opportunity must recognise and deal with all of the above issues.

2. The outlines of the policy

The role of this policy paper is to summarize those guiding principles to which network strategies, Foundation strategies and individual programs in relation to the education of children with minority affiliation and multicultural education should adjust. Bearing in mind the complexity of these problems, this policy paper is considered as the first contribution to the entire policy framework. Separate policies will be developed on interrelated issues, such as equity in education, language policy and positive discrimination and affirmative action in general and higher education.

2.1. The mission of the network

At the heart of the Open Society's Mission is a commitment to develop the structural elements of an open society including a democratic state under the rule of law, a vital and thriving civil society, and a business community that is not corrupt and independent of the state.; We are also committed to support and develop citizens who have an ethical commitment to the values of an open society in their beliefs and their practices.

It is impossible to conceive of any process for supporting and developing open democratic societies, which is not based on an education system, which mirrors and exemplifies the same values. Equal rights and equal opportunities in education for minority pupils in terms of access, treatment and learning outcomes are at the core of that democratic vision.

This analysis indicates the vital importance of education – and in particular to the state processes of education - to this central aspect of our mission. The question then becomes one of developing ways to ensure that this main goal is reflected not only

in the rhetoric of our mission, but in the details and objectives of our everyday work. This paper addresses this issue.

2.2. The main principles of the policy

Taking into account the values of the open society mission, the international norms in regard of the treatment of minorities, and the experiences accumulated in the field of the education of minorities in the last few decades, several principles can be laid down. These principles apply equally to government policies and to the policies of development agencies.

- ***In the case of socially marginalized and discriminated minorities affirmative measures and programs based on “positive discrimination” might be necessary.*** These provisions should be carefully designed according to the situation of the individual minority groups and to the context of their problems.
- ***All problems faced by minorities in terms of social positions, human rights, interethnic relations and the autonomy of minority groups should be considered.*** All minority education strategies should be based on a holistic approach, which takes into account all aspects of their “problem world”.
- ***A clear distinction should be made between genuine ethnic problems, which are addressed by special school provisions and not ethnic problems, which are addressed by quality education.*** Genuine ethnic problems in education are language, culture and discrimination. In order to assure the internationally accepted rights of minorities in relation to language and culture positive action is required. Non ethnic problems in relation to the education of minorities refer to the quality of the teaching-learning process in general. Children belonging to minorities should have access to the same quality education as their peers belonging to the majority.
- ***Discrimination (exclusion, segregation, detrimental treatment) in education should be prohibited and terminated.*** In order to fight all kinds of discrimination positive action is required. However, this doesn’t mean only that support of such programs and schools should be avoided or, where existing, should be brought to an end, but also requires active support of reintegration of minority children into the mainstream education.
- ***A certain level of separation in education based on the agreement of the parents and the children and on mother tongue or bilingual instruction is not against the overall goal of integration.*** However, maintaining and supporting separate minority schools should not lead to the “ghettoisation” of the problems of minority and multicultural education. When it is possible, (for example, when it doesn’t decrease the intensity of mother tongue instruction) minority and majority children should learn together. In these cases intercultural learning might serve the integration of minority children and the incorporation of minority culture into the content of education, as well. Integration is understood as access to equal opportunities without being forced to assimilate to the majority.
- ***Children belonging to minorities should have access to their cultural heritage as well as to the culture of the majority.*** The opportunity to learn about the children’s

own cultural heritage is crucial not only from the point of view of minority rights in education, but also from the point of view of the pedagogical effectiveness of the entire teaching-learning process. At the same time, access to the language and culture of the majority is an important condition for the equal opportunities of pupils with minority affiliation.

- ***In order to foster the integration of minorities the multicultural content of mainstream education should be strengthened.*** In addition separate multicultural programs are important, because they provide models, produce valuable content and are able to raise the level of awareness of ethnic problems. They therefore feedback into mainstream education. Nevertheless, the sustainable solution to the problem is to influence the content of in- and pre-service teacher training and textbook publishing for mainstream education.
- ***An inclusive environment that is provided by the schools, which are educating children belonging to minorities, should be strengthened.*** It refers to the relationship between teachers and students, teachers and parents and to the treatment of the children in schools.

3. Implementation of the policy

Since this policy paper contains only the main principles and policy guidelines, their implementation to the educational practice of the countries, where Foundations are operating, require positive action. The whole range of programs and initiatives aiming at serving the implementation should be based on a network strategy, which will be developed in harmony with this policy paper.

3.1. Implications for Foundation and network programs

All Foundation and network programs, when planning projects, should take into consideration the implications of the above mentioned principles. These implications include:

- Educational programs should be based on a better understanding of the specific context of the problems of the targeted minority group. Programs should be based on reliable results of an assessment of needs.
- Programs addressing educational provisions for pupils with minority affiliation should serve the goals of the overall educational strategy of the Foundations.
- All educational development programs should target minority children, too, and should address and incorporate institutions and educational provisions in general, which target children with minority affiliation.
- In cases, when the low absorption capacity of targeted educational institutions is an obstacle to high quality program delivering, Foundation programs should operate in a proactive, operational way.

- Programs should meet the quality requirements of any other kind of educational development. Evaluation criteria should be linked to the principles of this policy.
- The involvement of minorities in decision-making procedures – and if possible in the implementation of programs - should be made possible and encouraged.
- Programs should respect and strengthen the cultural identity of minorities.
- Programs should foster the improvement of interethnic relations.
- The targets of programs should be primarily the educational provisions for children with minority affiliation and not the minority communities themselves.
- Separate programs for minorities are reasonable if they address genuine ethnic problems, like language, culture and discrimination.

3.2. Implications for cooperation with governments

The role of government is central to both the problems identified in this paper, and to their solution. Thus the establishment of links, and of co-operation, with governments and other state organisations on these issues should, where such is possible, be a priority for Foundations. State policies might be influenced in several ways, such as:

- Providing examples and models.
- Generating public discussion and shaping the discourse on the matter.
- Strengthening minority involvement and building the capacity of minority organizations.
- Building policy, development and management capacity in the countries.

3.3. Implications for schools

Both grant-giving and operational programs that address the problems of children with minority affiliation should have an inherent component of evaluation based on sound quality indicators. Indicators can be developed in relation to:

- The set of objectives of individual school projects.
- The set of objectives of Foundation or network programs.
- The criteria used to measure the effectiveness of educational programs in general.
- The principles of this policy.

3.4. Implications for IEP

In order to promote the points of this policy, the cooperation and information exchange among Foundations and network programs should be fostered. IEP should play a key role in this process by:

- Fostering strategy development.
- Providing technical support to Foundations.
- Supporting needs assessment by consulting and by dissemination of information.
- Helping the Foundations with evaluation and monitoring.
- Creating opportunities for information exchange inside of the network.

4. Conclusion

The treatment of ethnic and other minority groups within our Region is a matter of which we who live in the Region have cause to be ashamed. It is also a significant, and growing, cause of dysfunction in our societies. It is central to our ethical, and our operational, goals in the Open Society network of institutions to set right these injustices and to build open, honest, caring, and democratic societies. This paper identifies and explores the problems to be overcome by such a process and offers guidance on ways in which this might be carried forward. It is to be hoped that the quality of the guidance and support offered within it match the importance and magnitude of the problems addressed.

Annex

The purpose of this present paper is to describe the process of the development of the policy paper on “Multicultural Education and Education of Minority Children”.

1. The purpose of the policy

The network delivers a large number of different Network Programs and national Foundation Programs that are directly or indirectly relate to the problem. Since there is a growing emphasis on sustainability and scalability, educational development in the Soros network appears to be too fragmented. This generates a bigger demand for strategic thinking at both the Foundation and the network levels. One way to foster and support strategic planning is to develop policies, that:

- supports decision-making procedures in the network;
- supports the Foundations in selecting among the needs and problems and identify those which are key to the mission of the network;
- respond to the key policy issues of the countries of the network;
- are based on the similarities of the countries of the region but allow space for adjustments to the diversity of country contexts;
- contribute to the development of shared values and norms in the network;
- are developed by a process which models open society values inside the network.

2. The process of policy development

Based on the experience accumulated by the Foundation network and taking into account the mission of the Soros network in education, IEP has identified the problems of the education of minorities as one of the key issues which should be given special attention. The growing emphasis on this issue (especially the growing focus on the problems of Roma communities) in the network make it obvious that one of the first domains of educational development requiring clear policy background is multicultural and minority education.

The policy development process began with the preparation of a discussion paper, which is based on the empirical research and academic work of the staff of IEP. The discussion paper *Multicultural education and the Education of Minority Pupils* was written by Christina McDonald, senior development officer, Péter Radó and Hristo Kyuchukov, both fellows, in May 1998. The paper was discussed at the Network Education Conference in June 1998. After the Conference eight Foundations provided written comments on the paper. In September 1998 IEP organized one day Seminars on the paper in six countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic and Estonia). The participants in the Seminars were the representatives of minorities and governments, experts, practitioners and the staff of the Foundations. The seminars discussed the paper and provided recommendations for its further improvement.

After summarizing the comments and recommendations, IEP took out the most important policy points in terms of principles and program issues and developed a draft

policy framework for educational development and support in the network in relation to the issue.

The preliminary assessment of the policy development process proves, that:

- the discussion paper addressed an issue that has real relevance in the countries of the network;
- Foundations are open to participate in and contribute to network policies;
- the discussion generated by such papers is an effective means of policy formulation, a process which can also serve as a model in other areas;
- the discussion of the paper in several countries provided opportunity for the representatives of minorities to articulate their concerns and claims to policy makers, especially in countries where public discussion on the topic is lacking;
- the results of the discussion clearly demonstrated that it is essential to complement the wisdom and expertise of specialists with the contribution of those who have a stake in the targeted area.

3. The discussion

In general the discussion of the paper among Foundations and stakeholders provided positive feedback in terms of the approach and main underlying policy points. The comments and recommendations can be grouped in four categories: (1) the context of the problem, (2) the overview of the background of the problems, (3) principles and program issues, and (4) comments which are against the principles of the discussion paper.

1. In relation to the context of the issue that addressed by the discussion paper, the observations refer to the state of different minority groups within the different countries, to the links between educational problems and other social spheres and to the overall educational policies. In terms of minorities in general, it was mentioned several times that the paper is too general and that it does not give proper emphasis to questions which of great importance in several countries. On the other hand, there were comments stating that some issues (like segregation) that are over-emphasized taking into account the context of several countries; for example the problems of ethnic Russians in the former soviet countries, the problems related to language policies and the lack of state minority policies (the lack of implementation of minority rights). In the case of minorities with low socio-economic status (like Roma communities) several comments stressed the importance of welfare policies, which are sine qua non conditions of solving educational problems. In terms of overall educational policy the lack of equity of the educational systems of the countries of the region was raised several times.

2. The discussion paper attempted to list the most important obstacles and needs in the educational systems of the region in relation to the education of children with minority affiliation. The discussion contributed to a much more detailed description of the problems and proved, that the relative weight of these problems varies from country to country and from minority group to minority group. It emphasis the importance of

completing a preliminary need assessment in each case and the importance of the involvement of the minorities themselves.

3. During the discussion a wide range of policy or program related recommendations were formulated. Most of these recommendations suggest paying more attention to the different obstacles to school success of minority children; for example, the lack of involvement of parents and minority communities, the lack of information available for schools on the lingual and cultural background of the pupils, the lack of representatives of minorities in the teaching staff, the lack of capacity of teachers to deal with ethnic elements of education, the lack of an integrated approach, and the lack of technical and pedagogical support to schools.

4. It should be mentioned that not all of the hidden or overt policy considerations of the discussion paper were totally agreed upon. Although sporadically, there were some comments that are against the values of an open society approach to the education of minorities. These are comments, such as “the integration of minorities should be resolved by minorities themselves,” or the denial of relevance of minority related problems in countries, in which there were (or still are) violent ethnic conflicts. Another example is the use of the term “integration” in order to justify assimilationist or nationalistic approaches (especially in the cases of Roma and ethnic Russians).

5. The draft of the policy paper was discussed by the ESB. The members of ESB raised several questions in relation to the role and the implementation of the policy. The discussion enriched the scope of the entire policy framework with interrelated issues, such as language policy and positive discrimination. Additional discussion papers will address these issues, as well as the problem of equity in education. The problem of positive discrimination and affirmative action in general and higher education will be explored and discussed by a paper, which will be developed in cooperation of IEP, HESP and the Nationalism Studies Program of CEU.

6. ESB suggested further clarification of terms used in the policy paper, like integration. Among other concrete suggestions it was incorporated to the new version of the paper. According to the recommendation of ESB, in the process of the development of network strategies aiming at serve the implementation of this policy, existing programs will be evaluated.

7. According the suggestion of the chair of ESB Dimitrina Petrova, the director of ERRC and the Nationalism Studies Program of CEU was asked to revise the draft policy paper. The remarks of Mária M. Kovács, the head of Nationalism Studies Program, contributed to the conceptual framework of the policy. She drove our attention to the policy implications of the diverse situation of different minorities. She also highlighted the “pros and contras” of positive discrimination and affirmative action. (To date we haven’t received comments from Dimitrina Petrova.)