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## **OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM AND OTHER FORMS OF INTOLERANCE CORDOBA, 08/09 JUNE 2005**

### **Introduction by Beate Winkler to Session 2 “Education on the Holocaust and on anti-Semitism”**

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I am honoured to speak in this distinguished forum of government officials and highly respected experts on the subject of education on the Holocaust and antisemitism.

The Shoah is the traumatic experience of Europe’s violent past. It has driven the EU’s founders to build a united and peaceful Europe and thus been at the very root of the European integration project. It was therefore clear for the EU to explicitly mention the fight against antisemitism in the core of the mandate of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.

The founding regulation of the EUMC specifies that its prime objective is to provide the European Union with objective, reliable and comparable data on the phenomena of racism, xenophobia and antisemitism. Purpose of our work is to help the EU institutions and Member States to take measures or formulate courses of action to fight these phenomena. In this context, education plays a pivotal role in fighting antisemitism as well as other forms of racially, culturally or religiously motivated intolerance. The EUMC has just recently published an analysis of Eurobarometer survey data which indicated that the level of education is positively related to openness towards cultural and ethnic diversity.

In recent years, the European Union has been very concerned with the rise in antisemitism in some of its Member States. Also thanks to the reporting and work of the EUMC, there is increased awareness of and debate on, the persistence of antisemitic behaviour and attitudes in parts of the EU.

The EUMC collects data on racism, xenophobia and antisemitism including data on education through its RAXEN network of National Focal Points in all EU Member States. In March 2004, we presented the first major EU report on antisemitism containing data collected systematically and based on common guidelines for all Member States.

In parallel, the EUMC conducted interviews with members of the Jewish communities in order to make their personal experience and perception known. The report and some of the discussions around its publication initiated a broad public debate and raised awareness about the development of antisemitism in Europe, generating pressure for clear and strong measures against antisemitism in all its manifestations.

In our antisemitism report, we have stressed that education and training measures are of paramount importance in combating antisemitism.

In this context, we have put forward two main proposals for action:

1. EU countries should undertake in depth reviews of school textbooks in order to ensure that history is presented in a balanced way free of bias and that the history and message of the Holocaust is properly conveyed.
2. The EUMC has encouraged the Member States to introduce into teacher training a compulsory component that raises awareness, understanding and respect of the diverse cultures, religions and traditions in the European Union.

In order to gain support for implementing its proposals for action against antisemitism by the European institutions or Member State governments, the EUMC has organised and participated in, many round tables and discussions, initiated hearings and gave expert presentations.

We have put a strong effort on implementation of the EUMC's sensitive and challenging mandate. As in other areas, antisemitism is a field in which good intentions are easily formulated but often hard to implement – or they remain without follow up.

We therefore developed a specific working method to facilitate the process of turning words into action.

We have distributed here a preliminary analysis of an exercise to monitor the implementation of the proposals from the EUMC reports on antisemitism. The responses which we have so far received from EU Member States testify to the effectiveness of the approach we have chosen; which is to address responsible institutions and offices directly in all the 25 Member States of the EU with as concrete proposals as possible. With this ongoing exercise, it is our intention to generate renewed interest in examining antisemitism and its proposals for combating it, but also to initiate interaction and discussion in other organisations on these suggestions.

In the report which we distributed to you regarding the implementation of our proposals, we find that in many EU Member States the review of textbooks is obligatory either directly as a mandate of the Ministries for Education on the national (for instance: Czech Republic) or regional level (Spain). Sometimes it is also delegated to external experts. In Belgium in 2005 a specific resource centre developing pedagogical concepts especially for a Jewish/Arabic dialogue was established.

Several of the Member States (e.g. Poland and Italy) have referred in their responses to their cooperation with the “Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research”.

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Not the least through the work of the EUMC, the European Union has made it extensively clear that it will not tolerate antisemitism and combat any of its manifestations. I can name here only a few of the recent initiatives that highlight the importance given by the European Parliament and Commission to this subject. At the level of the Commission, an inter-service group has been established to discuss antisemitism. Two high-level meetings (June 2004, March 2005) were held together with representatives of Jewish organisations. The EUMC participated in the last meeting and supported it strongly. As first Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso received the whole Board of the World Jewish Congress in January 2005. Dialogue meetings are being held with members of the Jewish communities to build trust and confidence.

The European Parliament hosted the presentation of the EUMC report on antisemitism in March 2004. There is a cross-party Anti-Racism Intergroup of MEPs that among other issues discusses antisemitism and recently held a meeting with Jewish organisations. On 27 January 2005, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, antisemitism and racism.

Education on the Holocaust is a crucial theme in all these discussions, initiatives and arising measures against antisemitism. As an example, the European Parliament resolution calls for “making Holocaust Education and European citizenship standard elements in school curricula throughout the EU” and for teaching Second World War history with “utmost rigour”.

At EU level, much Community action is underway to foster intercultural education. The promotion of intercultural understanding is a basic rationale underlying many of the Commission’s instruments including the mobility actions of the Leonardo, Socrates and Comenius programmes. The fight against antisemitism is alongside with the fight against racism and xenophobia one of the priorities of the YOUTH Community Action Programme.

Directly linked to education on the Holocaust is the Community action to support the preservation of the main sites associated with the deportations and the memorials which have been raised on the former camps and other places of mass-civilian extermination. The EU provides financial assistance to organisations that implement projects explaining why, how and what happened in the former camps in order to keep alive the memory of victims at these sites. In 2005, the programme has allocated aid to projects commemorating the 60th anniversaries of the liberation of the camps at Ravensbrück (30 April), Terezín (3 May) and Mauthausen (5 May).<sup>1</sup> Schools can receive financial assistance through the Socrates programme to adopt such memorials and implement related educational history projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Other examples of supported projects include: Designing web sites and other materials (DVD, printed documentation, exhibitions, etc.) dedicated to extend the knowledge of the Holocaust (Museum of the Radogoszcz in Poland, Hollandsche Schouwburg Museum in Norderland, ...); building Memorial sites (Für das Erinnern - Kz Gedenkstätte Muhldorfer - Germany, Gemeinde Sandbostel - Germany, ...); Preserving archives by using digitalisation (Musée Juif de la déportation et de la Résistance - Belgium, ...); educating the new generation (Youthstart, United Kingdom, ...)

Undoubtedly, lasting peace in Europe must be based on remembrance of its history, including its darkest chapter. I may refer to the recent public opinion survey of the American Jewish Committee (*Thinking about the Holocaust 60 Year later*) showing that this conviction is widely shared by the European population. The vast majority of people answered that teaching about the Holocaust should be mandatory in schools – Germany: 79%; Austria: 92%; France: 86% and Poland: 69%.

As morally legitimate and socially desirable Holocaust education is, finding the right method to reach out to the new generation of pupils seems to be a challenge.

In Austria, the government-funded project *National Socialism and the Holocaust: Memory and Present* starts from the following basic assumptions:

- Teaching on National Socialism and Holocaust quite often does not reach its intended cognitive, ethical and affective goals;
- Knowledge deficits are obvious and learners repeatedly express a feeling of overfeed;
- Phenomena of rejection appear.

In response, the education project formulated as its goal

- to present the study of the Holocaust and National Socialism as relevant for learners in their present environments without the topic being made pedagogically pleasing or left to individual interests.

Learners should be addressed as active and thinking subjects who independently acquire an understanding of history. It is only through this approach that they can also critically reflect their value system.

This approach reflects the old paradigm that memory of the Shoah needs sound historic knowledge embedded in a firm set of moral and ethical values.

What does this mean for memorial pedagogy? How can remembrance contribute to a culture of healing involving the new generations in the countries of victims and perpetrators?

I leave it to the experienced experts who are here today to contribute their ideas on this particular subject. I very much welcome the comprehensive overview on educational approaches, compiled by the ODIHR for this conference. I believe that the OSCE participating States will find plenty of inspiration in the examples of good practice and recommendations developed.

I would like to conclude on a more general note, and share with you my conviction that Holocaust education and remembrance are key elements in the effective combat against present-day antisemitism.

For that, the statement “Never Again” needs to go hand in hand with accepting the reality that manifestations of the same old antisemitism still exist. Only then will we be harnessed against the historical possibility of a reoccurrence of the enormous horror and tragedy of the Holocaust.

At the same time, one must not take Holocaust education to be sufficient to combat present-day antisemitism in all its forms. Today's manifestations of antisemitism require distinct responses including most importantly an analysis of the social and political context in which they arise. In this context, intercultural education approaches are particularly apt to promote community cohesion and diffuse prejudices and stereotypes that underlie antisemitic and other acts fuelled by racial hatred.

Looking at some of the other important issues that this Conference will address, I may add that this is of relevance not only for the Jewish communities but also for other minorities. While clearly pointing to its specificities and context, education on the Holocaust can convey wider lessons about victimising people on the basis of race, ethnic origin, religion and/or belief.

Education is crucial in combating antisemitism and all forms of intolerance – but it is not all. A different approach in our societies is necessary: an approach of inclusion, value, respect of difference; an approach, which includes the past and our memory; a memory, which enables us to work for a culture of respect, dignity and justice, for a culture of healing; a healing, which celebrates diversity in its different shadows and tones and brings together a colourful picture of Europe.