



Speech outline of Ambassador Mr. Jean Maurice RIPERT's, Head of the EU Delegation Turkey

Launching Conference of the Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education Project

12 April 2012, Rixos Hotel, Ankara

Speech outline of the Head of the EU Delegation

Your Excellency Minister Dinçer,
Dear President of the Board of Education,
Dear Deputy Undersecretary,
Dear Director Bergan,
Dear Directors,
Dear civil society representatives,
Dear media representatives,
Dear teachers, parents, students,
Distinguished guests,

- It is an honour for me to be here today on the occasion of the launching conference of the "**Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education**" project. This € 9.1 million EU funded project aims at fostering a more democratic society in Turkey by strengthening democratic citizenship and human rights education that corresponds with European core values.
- Such a large project is thus key to **fulfilling and sustainably anchoring in the medium to long term the Copenhagen political criteria in Turkey, which is, as you all know the** "stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protecting of minorities".
- **Teaching democracy and human rights in schools is indispensable.** The promotion of democracy and human rights is indeed an essential element of any education system in a democratic society. This is true for Turkey, for the EU and for any other country in the world. Education for human rights and fundamental freedoms plays a **crucial role in creating and sustaining democratic societies, something which must be guaranteed to all generations from pre-school age onwards for the whole society, including most particularly disadvantaged groups.**
- Teaching democracy and human rights in schools is indispensable, but yet **not enough.** Individuals shall also experience democracy and human rights through their own actions in their own life space, from the classroom, the school, the family, the communities, the workplace etc. However, for this to happen, **a climate conducive to these universal values must be provided starting from the schools.** Ensuring inclusive involvement of teachers as well as non-teaching staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders at local as well as national level is hence necessary. In this context, for example, for high schools in particular, the role of youth associations, students clubs, parents association, teachers and trade unions are also very important.

- Turkey has made **important commitments** to promote democratic citizenship and human rights education not only in international and regional declarations and conventions but also in its national legislation. For instance, internationally, Turkey has carried out various activities during the United Nations' Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Turkey is also party to related Council of Europe political agreements, including Recommendation 12 (2002) of the Committee of Ministers and Recommendation 1849 (2008) of the Parliamentary Assembly. Nationally, the National Education Basic Act directly refers to respect for human rights among the general aims of education. Furthermore, National Council of Education have highlighted time and again in its recommendation documents the importance of the development of democratic behaviour, free thinking and tolerance through curriculum and extra curricular activities.
- **This project builds on these commitments** and on the recent curriculum reform and ongoing teacher training efforts through a comprehensive approach that expands the focus beyond the classroom environment to the school and the community.
- Therefore, we hope that in 36 months time, upon its completion this project will have achieved a number of important results:
- **(firstly) Human rights and democratic values in schools (from pre-schools to secondary level) will be made more sustainable:**
 - through the **analysis of education legislation and the present curriculum** and their strengthening based upon the principles of Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education,
 - through the **development of new educational materials** and its piloting in various schools in Turkey,
 - through the planned **training of hundreds of teachers, inspectors and deputy inspectors**, etc. from all over Turkey and in particular from 10 pilot provinces; altogether approx. 2,200 professionals will be trained thanks to the project.
- (then) More importantly, we expect that these teachers, inspectors and deputy inspectors will be ready to **go back to their provinces and share their experience and knowledge not only with other teachers and students, but also with parents and their communities at large.**
- (Finally), **awareness-raising of civil society** on the importance of these issues is another concrete achievable that can be delivered by this project. Indeed, in parallel, a grant scheme will be launched and will help involving a large number of beneficiaries, including parents associations, local decision makers, education NGOs, universities and human rights activists in awareness raising and training activities.

- I would therefore like to **thank the dedication and commitment of the Ministry of Education to this project and the efforts of the Council of Europe in supporting its implementation.**
- Before concluding, I would like to address myself specifically to the **teachers**. Teachers have an extremely important function as educators. And education means development, progress, and opening people's horizons, helping them to become better aware of their rights and how to use and protect them. I would like therefore to thank them already for their involvement in this project and for the good work that they will continue to do in the classroom, in the schools and in their communities to spread the core values of a democratic society.
- Let me take this opportunity to thank again the organisers of the event: the Ministry of National Education and the Council of Europe team. I wish all of you a very fruitful project. Thank you very much for your attention.