

# Conflict Resolution in Schools

Learning to Live Together

*An international conference*

September 15 and 16, 2003, Soesterberg,  
the Netherlands



Netherlands  
National Commission  
for UNESCO



## Rationale

Over the past few years, interest in the field of conflict resolution in schools has grown considerably. Several recent instances of extreme violence in schools and among youngsters have opened many eyes to the importance of establishing conflict resolution programmes in schools in order to further respect, understanding and a more peaceful environment among pupils. Important new research outcomes have shown the benefits for pupils and teachers, as well as for academic achievement and a more positive school climate in general. Pupils benefit not only from better results and a more positive attitude towards school, but also gain increased assertiveness, communication skills and self-control. Teachers find that their work is more rewarding in an enjoyable classroom climate with healthy interpersonal relations, and claim that this significantly reduces the dropout rate. Furthermore, conflict resolution skills learned at school can also be used in out-of-school situations, and the institutionalised teaching of these skills thus has a positive impact on societal problems as a whole.

In 2000, the ECCP organised a successful international seminar on this subject. The conclusions of this meeting pointed to the importance of an integrated, whole-school approach and an institutionalised teaching of conflict resolution skills. These conclusions can be seen as an elaboration of insights of the European and American peace education tradition, which, responding to UN and UNESCO demands, currently propagates the teaching of non-violent practices for the building of a *culture of peace and non-violence*. It is also in line with the conclusions of the Commission-Delors in its report, *Learning the Treasure Within*. In this report, *learning to live together* is identified as one of the four main pillars for education in the twenty-first century alongside learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. Learning to live together is about developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values. Important challenges to this new type of education lie in the field of developing a school curriculum for social cohesion and improving the competencies of all school staff. How do the content and processes of current formal education relate to processes of social exclusion and violence? And further, how can we create alternatives which can stop these practices and contribute to a more cohesive society and a culture of peace and non-violence?

Taking note of:

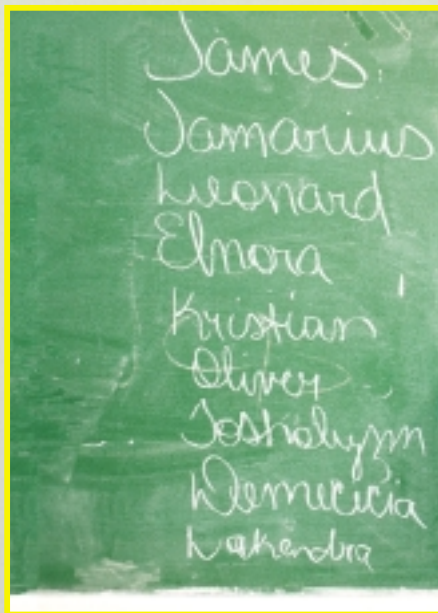
- a. the recent increase of violence in schools, the clear and telling outcomes of the latest research on conflict resolution programs;
  - b. the increasing interest in the relation between curriculum change and the promotion of social cohesion and inclusion;
  - c. the efforts of the UN, UNESCO and teachers' organisations and NGOs world-wide to develop peace education in the unstable world of the twenty-first century;
  - d. the fact that, despite the relations between these three themes, there is hardly any discussion and co-operation between the proponents of these developments;
- we feel that the time is ripe to organise a second and larger international conference on the subjects of conflict resolution, peace education, and education for social cohesion and their possible relations.

## Goals and objectives of the conference

- To **stimulate the exchange** of strategies for co-operation between proponents of the themes of conflict resolution, peace education, and education for social cohesion.
- To bring together participants from different countries to **learn** about meaningful approaches and best practices in those countries in the field of conflict resolution in schools; to exchange experiences and good practices, to learn what works, for whom and why, and to encourage shared ownership of existing problems.
- To reflect on the relations between education, social cohesion and conflict, to **discuss** meaningful changes of curriculum that contribute to social cohesion and inclusion and to analyse the internal (pedagogical and organisational) and external (socio-economic and cultural and political) factors that can promote such changes.
- To **develop building blocks** for an approach that integrates different existing approaches and views. To discuss the issue of quality control as one of those building blocks.
- To identify the possible resistance as well as facilitating factors in the implementation process and to **share arguments** and materials to convince others as to why conflict resolution in schools and a curriculum for social cohesion are worthwhile and effective.
- To **inspire** schools and others to develop and implement programs that are appropriate for their specific educational and cultural situation.
- To **disseminate** the conclusions of the conference, to promote this field in Europe and to make it better known among policy-makers, educational authorities and schools.
- To **stimulate networking** within Europe and with the US and, if possible, establish a European Network, linking professionals, NGOs, researchers and civil servants from local and national governments and institutions such as the European Union and UNESCO.
- To **identify** and interest potential funders, both public and private.

## Outcomes

One of the main aims of the conference is the publication of recommendations in the form of a report. This will be further distributed to, for example, the UNESCO General Conference in October 2003. Apart from this, and depending on funding, there will be a publication focusing on experiences and best practices, as well as a practical handbook for schools. These publications will help to make the subject more accessible for schools, influence decision-makers and inform and convince funders. And not least, we hope that this conference contributes to inspired networking in the years to come!



## Programme

Both conference days will start with plenary presentations. Afterwards, participants are divided into working groups of their choice. Working groups meet for 1.5 hours in the morning and continue for 1.5 hours in the afternoon. Thus, participants will attend a total of two different working groups, one on each day. Both days will end with plenary sessions and/or a panel debate.

### Invited key-note speakers or panel-participants include:

Arie de Ruijter, member of the Netherlands Commission for UNESCO, chairman of Management of Social Transformation Programme (MOST)  
Vibeke Thue, assistant director Norwegian Board of Education, on the National Programme on School Mediation  
Claude Moreau, director of Centre International de Résolution de Conflits et de Médiation (CIRCM), France and Canada  
Valerie Dovey, former Youth Project Coordinator, Centre for Conflict Resolution, South Africa, currently independent conflict resolution consultant  
Randy Compton, executive director of the School Mediation Centre, US  
Belinda Hopkins, director of Transforming Conflict, UK  
Ted Wachtel, president of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, US  
Jean-Pierre Titz, Council of Europe, project manager of Local Partnerships for Preventing and Combating Violence at School.  
James Tobin, formerly with the Resolving Conflict Creatively Programme, US

### Working groups

Participants can sign up for two of the following working groups.

#### 1 How to create a basis for support for conflict resolution projects in school

Teachers and other staff who are convinced of the benefits of conflict resolution projects, and want to make an effort to institutionalise them in the broader school programme, often find it difficult to get a broad basis of support. Yet, it is exactly this broad basis, and the integrated participation of all school staff that is needed for successfully changing a school approach. In this working group, practitioners will reflect on the difficulties of persuading school management and policy makers, sharing practical examples of how they succeeded.

*With input from James Tobin*

#### 2 Peer mediation

Peer mediation works. This is the conclusion of several recent studies, as well as of first-hand experiences of many enthusiastic teachers. In this working group, several peer mediation programmes will be presented. What are their benefits to teachers and pupils? How are they set up and what should be taken into account when starting such a programme? The different programmes will be compared in order to extract -and learn from- positive as well as negative experiences.

*Facilitated by practitioners from different countries, such as Norway, UK, US, Germany*

NB: We expect great interest in this workshop and will probably run it twice.

### 3 Teacher (in-service) training for peace and conflict resolution education

Teachers are at the centre of any significant and successful development in schools. Their understanding of present day youth and the worlds they live in, but also their knowledge, values, skills and teaching habits are decisive in creating the appropriate learning environment for their students. Their example will impress more than the textbooks. The credibility and sustainability of peace education and conflict resolution programs depends to a large degree on the teacher. This working group will present the European in-service peace-pedagogy course developed by EURED, compare it to other approaches and discuss possible ways for these programmes to grow and reach a wider audience.

*Facilitated by Anke Kooke (EURED), Lennart Vriens (Utrecht University) and Mireia Uranga Arakistain (EURED)*

### 4 Restorative practices

Restorative practices bring an important and entirely new approach to offending behaviour. Rather than focusing on what happened, who is to blame, and how to punish, the approach asks who is harmed and what can all those involved (meaning victims as well as offenders) do to resolve the situation and prevent it from happening again. Leading practitioners in this field present facts, figures and theory on the effectiveness of this approach, and give practical examples of how restorative practices are used and with what outcome.

*Facilitated by Belinda Hopkins (Transforming Conflict, UK) and Ted Wachtel (International Institute for Restorative Practices, US)*

### 5 Peaceable schools

A safe and peaceable school is a school where students are 'connected', where they consider themselves — and where they are taught to be — participating citizens in the community. This should be achieved by a whole-school approach in which the main objectives are improving the interpersonal relations and conflict resolution skills of children, teachers, principles and parents, improving the school and classroom climate, and an overall change of the school culture into a safe and non-violent community. With a special focus on projects set up by RCCP, New York, and School Advisory Centre, the Netherlands, highlighting the effects and results as well as the difficulties regarding the setting up of such programmes.

*Facilitated by James Tobin, formerly with the Resolving Conflict Creatively Programme, US, and Leo Pauw, School Advisory Centre, the Netherlands*

### 6 Conflict resolution in the (national) school curriculum

If conflict resolution education (CRE) is so important, how can it become a natural part of the school curriculum? Research shows that students embody the skills and principles of conflict resolution only when they are exposed to them throughout their educational life and not as a "one-shot" inoculation. However, many schools find it difficult to institutionalise CRE, not in the least due to time constraints. This working group will discuss ways to institutionalise and integrate CRE in the school curriculum based on existing research and diverse practices. Two main (national) examples are the National Curriculum Integration Project in the US and the National Programme on School Mediation in Norway.

*Facilitated by Randy Compton (executive director of the School Mediation Centre, US) and Vibeke Thue (assistant-director Norwegian Board of Education).*

## 7 Curriculum change and social cohesion in conflict affected societies

The goal of this workshop is to gain better understanding of the possibilities of processes of curriculum change in education as a contribution to the promotion of social inclusion and to a better school climate. The discussion will be on a 'curriculum for social cohesion', its principles, contents, methods and practice, and conditions for implementation.

Special attention will be given to conflict affected societies where the education system is often part of the problem as it is biased towards certain groups or does not take the needs of disadvantaged groups into account. The central questions is how curriculum development and educational management can contribute to rebuilding social cohesion, particularly in the wake of societal violence.

*Facilitated by Sobhi Tawil of UNESCO's International Bureau of Education, Geneva, and 2 representatives from country-specific case studies*

## 8 Tolerance and co-existence education (especially in multi-cultural settings)

This working group will explore ways in which educational policy and curriculum help promote attitudes and practises of tolerance. While tolerance may be limited to cold or passive acceptance, the working group hopes to explore ways in which the embrace of difference can actively enrich the learning process for students.

Perspectives from different cultural settings will be provided to facilitate a multicultural discussion.

*Facilitated by Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, Coalition for Peace in Africa, policy and learning advisor (Kenya) and board member of The Coexistence Initiative (TCI), USA, and a representative of the Tolerance Network*

## 9 Evaluation of lessons learned, important research findings

Over the years, much research has been done on the efficacy of conflict resolution education. While more needs to be done in certain areas, we have enough to reflect on our progress to date. This working group will review the research results from the field and highlight best practices and recent trends so that educators and practitioners can implement programs and practices that will achieve the best results. A portion of the discussion will take place on the tension between 'programs' vs. 'practices'.

*Facilitated by Randy Compton (Executive director School Mediation Centre, US) and Mark Bitel (president of the UK Evaluation Society and senior evaluation partner, Partners in Evaluation, UK)*

## 10 The need for a gender dimension in education

The socialisation processes of boys and girls are very different. Masculinity is commonly associated with the capacity of controlling others, whereas the feminine role is seen as more caring. In all cultures, female and male roles in conflict situations are different. Security management is mostly in the hands of men. Girls and women can easily be disempowered and even victimised if insufficient attention is given to the gender element in the contents and methods of conflict education. This workshop focuses on the need for attention to the causes and situations of violence against women in different cultures, attention to empowerment and strengthening the negotiating capacities of both girls and boys, and the training of teachers in dealing with gender issues.

Other subjects are being discussed.

## Dates and venue

Participants are invited to arrive on the afternoon of September 14 for a welcome, introduction and dinner. The main programme will start at 09.00 am on September 15 and continues through to 5.00 pm on September 16. The conference and accommodation are in conference centre Kontakt der Kontinenten in a quiet forest area in Soesterberg, close to Utrecht in the heart of the Netherlands.

## Conference fees

Conference fees including all meals and hotel accommodation (3 nights) € 475,- if paid before June 15, 2003, € 550,- if paid later. (Cheaper for those who stay for only 2 nights)

## Participants

We expect approximately 200 participants from all over Europe, as well as some experts from further afield. The majority of the participants will be school professionals (teachers, middle management, school leaders). Others will mainly be professionals of the governmental and non-governmental education system (including researchers and support staff for schools, such as school inspection, teacher training institutes, curriculum development), and policy-makers from national and local governments and international organisations such as the EU, CoE, UNESCO.

## Members of the preparatory group are:

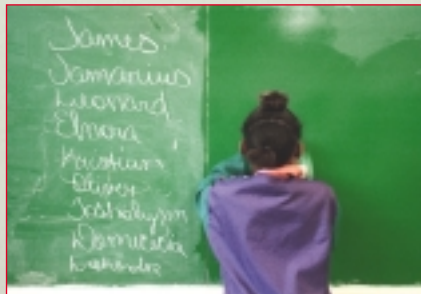
- Anke Kooke, Netherlands Expertise Centre Alternatives to Violence (NEAG), a network of experts, trainers and partner organisations interested in conflict management and transformation. The centre aims to contribute to the prevention and reduction of the use of violence and to bring about fundamental cultural change.
- Lennart Vriens, former professor in Peace Education at the University of Utrecht.
- Jan Ooijens, lecturer at the University of Utrecht, member of the working group on education of the Netherlands Commission for UNESCO and involved in various programmes on curriculum change in Central America.
- Paul van Tongeren and Emmy Toonen, European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP).

## Participating organisations

Some of our international partners for this conference are UNESCO; the Association for Conflict Resolution (ACR), USA; Education for Europe as Peace Education (EURED) and Coexistence Initiative, USA. We would like to thank the Compton Foundation, the Slifka Foundation, the Netherlands Commission for UNESCO and Oxfam Netherlands (Novib) for funding.

## More information

For further information, please contact Emmy Toonen at the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. Phone +31(0) 30 242 7780 or e-mail [e.toonen@conflict-prevention.net](mailto:e.toonen@conflict-prevention.net)



# Pre-registration form

I would like to register for the conference. Please send me the conference programme and a registration form.

Surname

First name Mr/Ms

Organisation

Address

Country

Tel

Fax

E-mail

As we would like to have an indication of the number of participants for the different working groups, please mention below which groups you would like to attend:

1

2

3

Please return this form to:  
European Centre for Conflict Prevention  
Secretariat Conflict Resolution in Schools  
P.O. Box 14069  
3508 SC Utrecht  
the Netherlands

By fax: +31 (0) 30 236 9268  
Or send an e-mail to:  
[e.toonen@conflict-prevention.net](mailto:e.toonen@conflict-prevention.net)

The European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) is the initiator of this conference and started its work on conflict resolution education with the seminar Conflict Resolution in Schools in March 2000. The ECCP is an independent non-governmental organisation. Its overall objective is to contribute to the prevention and/or resolution of violent conflicts in the international arena. It also acts as the secretariat of the European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation and initiates, co-ordinates and implements its activities. The Platform is a network of over 150 key organisations working in the field of conflict prevention and/or resolution.