

Information Centre on the Council of Europe

Since 1993 the Center for the Study of Democracy hosts the Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia (ICCE-Sofia). The Information Centre disseminates information about the Council of Europe (CoE) activities and offers technical assistance to the CoE delegations to Sofia. Herewith is a summary of some of the most important initiatives of the Information Centre in 2006, the final year in which it was hosted by CSD. Additional information is published at: www.cid.bg

Participation in the campaign to limit violence against children

The Information Centre organized a series of activities in the framework of the CoE initiative "To Build Europe for and with the Children", which was launched at the Monaco international conference (April 2006). At a press-conference in the aftermaths of the conference the ICCE and the State Agency for Child Protection informed the journalists about the campaign's priorities and about some related initiatives of the Bulgarian authorities. Another presentation of the children's campaign was organized at the ICCE premises for the members of the National Association of the European Clubs in Bulgaria. At the end of June, 2006 the ICCE in close cooperation with the Applied Research and Communication Fund organized a conference on "The Safer Use of Internet by Children". It was attended by representatives from the Bulgarian parliament, state agencies, firms in the communication technologies, NGOs and the media. The forum

was addressed by Mr. Svetoslav Spassov, Chairman of the Civic Council for Safer Internet. The conference contributed for the better dissemination of the Council of Europe initiatives in defense of children's rights.

The ICCE also published and disseminated with the assistance of the Ministry of Education and Science posters, containing the rules to be followed in order to limit children risk exposure in the Internet-space. These are to be distributed to all Bulgarian schools. A Council of Europe brochure was also published, containing the main goals and tasks in the framework of the European campaign for protection of children's rights.

In this context the ICCE organized series of lectures and discussions aimed at better informing the pupils about their rights. In coordination with the National Association of the European Clubs in Bulgaria teachers, psychologists and children discussed the prospects of introducing the School Ombudsman in selected secondary schools.

In June 2006, the ICCE jointly with a partner NGO – The Childhood without Tears Association – hosted a training seminar for magistrates on the prospects of improving the mechanisms for protecting the rights of children-witnesses of a crime in the framework of penal proceedings.

Cultural diversity as an antithesis to racism

The ICCE also took active part in another CoE all-European campaign aimed at fostering diversity and upholding human rights and inclusion, which focused on young people. In November, the Information Centre together with the Regional Inspectorate of Education in the town of Lovech organized a two-day regional training seminar on teaching diversity and multiculturalism. 10 secondary and primary school

directors and 10 teachers attended the training aimed at informing the audience about the European instruments in fostering multi-culturalism. In a parallel training exercise, schoolchildren from different ethnic groups took part in a drawing and essay competition. Participants in the seminar were lectured on the Council of Europe role in encouraging diversity, human rights and inclusion as opposed to racism and intolerance. A particular focus was laid on integration of Roma children and desegregation in the education field.

