

**Education Policy on Education for Democratic Citizenship and
the Management of Diversity in South East Europe**

Stocktaking Research Project

Country report: Serbia

National context

PROLOGUE

On October 5th, 2000, the citizens of the Republic of Serbia defended their election choice and overthrew the authoritarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic, the Socialist Party of Serbia and its satellite parties. For more than ten years they had prevented all attempts at the transition of Serbian society into the European family of nations, and the provision of a pluralist government in economy and political relations in society. This event was the crucial turn in development of social relations in Serbia. It brings hope that the changes that have started will lead to the much needed renewal of the country. Among the most emphasised changes, we can single out those in the educational system, where education for democracy and human rights (EDC) is especially significant, as well as learning about the necessity of building tolerance and creating conditions for community life that respects the existence of diversities (MofD).

1.1. Social context

The Republic of Serbia belongs to all citizens who live in it and its development is founded on democratic principles. As in other countries in south-east Europe that are in the process of transition, attention is paid to the privatisation of state property and the social capital that will be acquired in this way, as well as to co-operative relations with the international community. This process is quite uncertain and it will probably bring some undesired consequences, such as loss of jobs and a further increase in poverty. Nevertheless, it is believed that the government will solve this problem with well outlined social programmes that will provide at least a minimum of social justice and existence to the poorest layers of population. Another specific problem that the government has to face is the presence of hundreds of thousands of

refugees. Many of them still live in conditions unworthy of man. One part of the problem in the field of social issues derives from the sanctions imposed on Serbia for many years by the International community and the enormous destruction of Serbian economy and infrastructural facilities which was suffered during NATO intervention.

1.2. Political context

The Republic of Serbia is a democratic civil state that bases its organisation of government on principles of legality, the rule of law and the division of power into legislative, executive and judiciary. Pluralisation of political life enables the consistent development of a parliamentary system, a higher degree of provision of human rights and special emphasis on the rights of children, young people, women and national minorities. Even though the Republic Government currently does not have a special department for the protection of rights of minority nations (this function is currently carried out by the Ministry of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), it is planned that within the autumn reconstruction of the Government this will be one of the departments that will be established at the level of the Republic of Serbia as well. Even though the Republic of Serbia spent the last ten years either at war or surrounded by war, which resulted, amongst other things, in the temporary secession of one part of the Republic of Serbia (The Autonomous Province of Kosovo), Serbia has remained a multi-ethnic state with a significant percentage of minority nations. The inclusion of Serbia in processes of international integration has created a highly favourable and tolerant climate for relations between the nations. This is one of the prerequisites for ensuring that in future the Republic of Serbia will develop as a democratic-civil state that will provide conditions for the free development of all national identities.

1.3. Cultural context

The structure of the cultural heritage of the Republic of Serbia shows, without any doubt, that Serbia is a multicultural community. Since earliest times this has been a territory where different cultures intertwine: Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Serbian, Turkish, Croatian, Romanian, Hungarian, Albanian, etc. Even though the last decade of the 20th century was characterised by work on the affirmation of Serbian national culture, which has often been accompanied by certain failures such as the instrumentalisation of the previous regime, the tolerant tones in the development of the culture of minority communities have, to a large extent, been preserved, especially in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Where circumstances allowed, due to the nature of the previous regime, the principle of multiculturalism and openness has also been respected at certain levels. This has been well accepted by various parties and educational activities.

2. Policies and legislative base

2.1. General Considerations

In the Republic of Serbia, the process of transition in all fields of work and life has been intensified within the last year. The field of education has also begun its transformation towards the development of an open and modern system, based on principles of democracy, autonomy and equal opportunities. It is the wish of all the parties in the educational process to integrate the Serbian education system into the European trends in education.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, through its Ministry of Education, is preparing the Draft Proposal of Educational Reform, to be ready by the middle of the year 2001. It is expected that this proposal will

soon be adopted, which will mean that the Republic of Serbia will have an official document that represents its development strategy in education, thus finally breaking out from an outdated concept of education.

In the preparation of the above-mentioned document bearing in mind past and present problems in the educational process, and taking into consideration the demands for significant changes related to the principle of implementation of human rights and meaning of the legal state, we can say that the objectives of the educational process also include the development of a compatible and comparable system of education for multi-ethnic, multicultural and pluralistic society in the Republic of Serbia.

Though this document has not yet been adopted in the Republic of Serbia, we can say with certainty that the objectives of future education system reform are:

- The reorganisation of the school system to enable it to make as efficient a contribution to the economic recovery of the country as possible;
- The modernisation or reorganisation of the school system as an essential support in the development of democracy in the country;
- The modernisation or reorganisation of the school system as a form of essential support for future integration of the country into Europe;

In this way, the Government of the Republic of Serbia has set certain specific objectives for the renewed educational process:

- The establishment and development of creative thinking, transferrable knowledge, skills and attitudes, and the capacity for efficient solving of complex problems, as well as capability related to decision making in complex situations and efficient communication;
- The acquisition of life skills and functional literacy, necessary for modern information systems;

- The development of a system of values that respects diversities and equity, as well as the best elements of national tradition;

Strategic commitments of the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, are directed towards the system changes in the education sector that provide the necessary conditions for the achievement of the following national goals:

- Economic revitalisation and development of Serbia;
- Continuous and democratic development of the country;
- Inclusion in the current trends of European international co-operation.

The framework of educational reform, in the context of reforms and changes as a wider social plan, is based on the following prerequisites:

- The decentralisation of the system, which implies the redefinition of the role of the republic's administration, as well as the role of provincial, regional and local educational bodies;
- The provision of qualitative education for everyone;
- The democratisation of the education system through the creation of suitable conditions for the inclusion of interest groups in the decision making process; the introduction of educational programmes for civil society and education for democracy;
- The co-ordination of educational and economic sectors so that education can meet modern social and economic needs.

In order to fulfil its priority list of activities and develop a coherent and comprehensive programme of education reforms, the Ministry of Education established contacts and ensured co-operation and co-ordination between the republic administration in education, expert teams, provincial, regional and local educational bodies, non-government sector and other

interest groups in education, with the objective of establishing consensus on essential issues and objectives in education and providing support for the planned changes. The decentralisation of the education system is targeted by the following means:

- The encouragement and support of autonomy and development of schools;
- The introduction of new forms of participative management and governance;
- The promotion of professional responsibility instead of political obedience;
- The move from surveillance, from administrative control over pedagogical-advisory support;
- The provision of an easier approach to educational resources at local and regional levels;

The following must be provided in order to accomplish the objectives set by decentralisation:

- New procedures for the election of school principals;
- A new role for school boards and parents' councils;
- The co-ordination of activities of school boards and parents' councils with activities of local and regional educational bodies;
- An advanced training programme for newly elected principals;
- A suitable advanced occupational training programme for supervisors;
- An increase in the efficiency of management in the education system at regional and local levels;
- The establishment of regional educational centres.

Based on the attitudes contained in the Draft Proposal of Educational Reform and the policy of the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, we have to conclude that the main trends of educational reform in Serbia relate to the following areas:

- Management – change of management methods in the education system with the objective of improving the quality and efficiency and of increasing the responsibility of the main stakeholders in education to the beneficiaries, respecting the principle of comprehensiveness, including the rights and needs of minorities.
- Curriculum – decreased scope of teaching curricula, development of generative and transferable knowledge, development of critical thinking and decision making skills, problem solving, communication and use of information technologies, fostering of democratic values.
- Schoolbooks – abolition of monopoly, choice of alternative sources, selection based on specific criteria.
- Assessment and evaluation – development of a practical and efficient system of monitoring the quality of educational material, inclusion into international system of monitoring and assessment of results in education, development of a system of external exams at the end of the elementary and secondary school. Innovation of a new role for supervisors - from control to advisory one.
- Advanced occupational training – integral system of education, occupational training and development of teachers.

Amongst changes that have happened within the last year in certain regions of the Republic of Serbia (especially in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and the City of Belgrade) a certain number of projects are being implemented, the objective of which is to support the basic guidelines of development strategy of the education system of the Republic of Serbia. They also include projects that correspond to projects of education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and school of tolerance (MofD). These two projects should become an integral part of educational development strategy in the Republic of Serbia.

The Ministry of Education and Sport is working actively in the implementation of recommendations from the reports of the World Bank, OECD and UNICEF, the objectives of which are indispensable corrections in the Serbian education system. .

The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, as well as certain laws in this field (The Act on Social Care for Children, Act on Elementary Education, Act on Secondary Education, Act on University, Act on Pupils' and Students' Standard) provide enough possibilities for further development of democratic values and strengthening of spirit of tolerance in ethnically mixed communities, as well as for the protection of all individuals and collectives which are in a minority position.

2.2. Education for Democratic Citizenship

2.2.1. Curriculum

The Republic of Serbia does not have a national programme as a specific document that relates to education for democracy, but it has got certain guidelines that are contained in official documents of the Ministry of Education and Sport, plus several projects that were initiated and implemented by non-government organisations (NGOs), in co-operation with the Ministry. These documents do not relate explicitly to EDC, but they spread this idea through different activities in schools, local communities, regions, the City of Belgrade and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

Many of these activities contain explicitly the attitudes of the EDC, such as the legal state, as the base of the project, respect for human rights, with the emphasis on rights of children and of minority nations, rights of women and young people, multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism, multiconfessionality, pluralism, multi-party organisation of a society,

democracy, autonomy, principle of equal opportunities, the principle of life long learning and diversity, tolerance, solving of conflicts by non-violent methods, the development of a culture of dialogue and understanding, the development of a culture of peace as the basic objective of society and education for democracy, with active participation of young people in democratic processes.

After the changes that happened in October 2000, the Ministry of Education and Sport's way of working has also changed. It now supports the initiative of local authorities and the Ministry of Education of Vojvodina in organising different activities in the field of EDC in co-operation with the non-government sector. We point this out because the Ministry is aware of the need to provide space for education in the fields of EDC and MofD, but the legal framework in the Republic of Serbia has still not been brought to such a level that would provide for acceptance of all laws/acts necessary to begin implementation of educational reform.

2.2.2. Structural/organisational

The Government of the Republic of Serbia and its Ministry are leading the policy based on democratic principles that are mainly at the declarative level, due to the short time span within which the transition is being carried out. Its is also largely conditioned by the social and economic situation in Serbia during the last thirteen years. Necessary changes that Serbia had entered by the end of the last year require changes in the field of education as well. The shortness of this period gives certain encouraging estimates, so that it can be expected that true changes will really happen, and especially those that demand decentralisation, depoliticisation and the democratisation of the education system. During the previous period it could be seen that certain competencies were transferred from the Ministry of Education to bodies of local self-government and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, which is the first

encouraging step in this process. All principals of elementary and secondary schools, who are appointed by the Ministry of Education according to the existing laws of the Republic of Serbia, were appointed in the spring of this year, based on the proposals of local self-government bodies and of the Government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. School boards were appointed in the same way, which showed a much higher extent of democracy in this process than was the case up till now. Attempts are also being made to transfer the whole process (proposal submission and selection) to local self-governments.

The Draft Proposal of Educational Reform that the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia has prepared for public debate shows a special interest in inclusion in the school programme of Education for Democracy (EDC). The aim of the educational process elaborated in this way is the development of a social community that will be based on freedom, equity, understanding, and respect for oneself and others, and also on the development of human resources that enable creative work, and of a spiritual community dedicated to ideas of peace, brotherhood and hope. It also implies the development of a creative community based on mutual trust and capable of achieving high results. The aim is also the creation of a quality of relations between people that would ensure the full respect of each individual, regardless of their age, sex, religious, national, political or cultural affiliation.

2.2.3. Teacher training

The Government of the Republic of Serbia/Ministry of Education has got the programme of schooling and occupational training of teaching staff working in elementary and secondary education institutions. The staff for pre-school education staff is educated through the system of schools of advanced learning for education of teachers that are located in all regional centres of the Republic of Serbia. Teachers are educated at Teachers'

Faculties and certain faculties of Universities in Serbia (Belgrade University, Novi Sad University, Kragujevac University, Nis University and University of Pristina). For the aesthetic group of subjects, the teaching staff is educated at the Art Academy in Belgrade, or at some other of the above-mentioned universities. For specialised subjects taught in specialised/vocational schools the staff is trained at different faculties. A policy of advanced occupational training is carried out in the following way: seminars and conferences are organised by school supervisors; seminars and training of teachers for specific projects; seminars within the programme of Action against addictions; seminars, round tables and workshops within the Project of improvement of tolerance, peace and humane development; seminars and other forms of teacher training for those who work on the implementation of multicultural projects etc.

The Draft Proposal of Educational Reform anticipates quite significant changes in the status and education of teachers and their advanced occupational training. System solutions that shall enable this are as follows: new legislation; determination of the level of improvement and financial reimbursement; permanent occupational training; provision of regular resources/funds for advanced teacher training; establishment of a centre for permanent education.

The level of development of methodologies in education is a crucial achievement for the development of education on the whole, which would reflect on achievements in the field of EDC as well.

2.3. Valuing cultural diversity and social cohesion

2.3.1. Curriculum

The existing curricula, inherited from the previous period, still do not contain the explicit attitude related to the necessity to respect personal and social diversity, but the need for the creation of such contents is pointed out explicitly in the Draft Proposal of Educational Reform proposed by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia.

Curricula and educational contents enable the expression of affiliation to a certain ethnic community. Education in languages of minorities is a positive side of educational process in Serbia. At the same time, the necessity of certain refining through strengthening of educational programmes is also obvious. The guarantees that were given to education in languages of minorities surpass the recommendations from the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages, having in mind that, according to the law, they are granted in case that the percentage of minority population in certain area exceeds 20% of total population. Positive regulations of Serbia allow the curricula in a minority language to be carried out if there are more than 15 pupils in a class, but in practise it is allowed (by the decision of the Minister of Education) that a class can be formed with 13 to 14 pupils as well. Objections of minority communities are based on the remark that the curricula which they study is only the translated Serbian curricula and educational programme and they insists on learning more from their national cultures, history and other fields.

The issue of religious instruction classes, namely their introduction in schools, that was rejected, with quite a lot of skill and political cynicism, during the rule of the previous regime, has been imposed on teachers, quite arbitrarily, at the beginning of this summer. There are many reasons to

believe that it will be very difficult, or even impossible, to establish such kinds of curricula from the beginning of the 2001/02 school year. Problems with the introduction of religious instruction classes are especially underlined in traditionally multi-ethnic Vojvodina, the province with 26 national communities and 30 religious organisations, that have difficulties in harmonising their interests in this field. After democratic changes in Serbia, the aspiration to learn more about certain processes from the past is all the more present, as well as to learn more about the role of Serbian people in those processes, the role of the neighbouring nations and states and the role of great European and other powers. The tendency to link with Europe calls for initial steps in acquaintance with European and wider integration links, learning about projects and demands and requests of European and other institutions.

This year the Federal Ministry for Ethnic Communities organised several round tables, tribunes and other meetings to accept the recommendations from the European Covenant on Protection of Regional Languages (that are, to a large extent, being implemented in Serbia) but also with the purpose of promoting the Bill on National Minorities, the adoption of which is expected soon and which anticipates a wide area for expression and exercise of rights and specific characteristics of ethnic communities in the Republic of Serbia.

2.3.2. Structural/organisational

One of the most important characteristics of education in Serbia is education in languages of national communities. According to the law, all groups of languages and national minorities have the right to be educated in their mother tongue at all levels. There are about 300 elementary and secondary schools in Serbia with about 47.000 pupils who are taught in Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak and Bulgarian. These pupils learn Serbian as their second language, which is the prerequisite of their

successful integration into curricula and educational systems of the majority population, but for other forms of linking as well. The participation of the minority population in school management is greater in communities where the national minorities have a larger number of inhabitants, but it is not rare, especially this year, for them to occupy positions in school managements even above the quota system that is still quite significant at this moment. Certain habits from the previous regime, related especially to party affiliation of members of school boards and school principals, are still preserved. That is why it still happens that, for example, schools principals in communities in which members of national minorities live need to be members of such a community, but also members of some, or at least proposed by one of 18 parties of the ruling coalition.

Curricula and teaching contents do not anticipate either the inclusion of special national or other groups (religious) or special position in school managements or special benefits for members of such groups.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia does not have a special programme or document in which it points out or confirms the importance of the inclusion in schools, in which the majority part of pupils are members of ethnic minorities, of the objectives of MofD.

2.3.3. Teacher Training

The Ministry of Education has documents on the contents and priorities that relate to teacher training. It is necessary to add that most of these programmes were adopted during the rule of the previous regime. In accordance with the principles of reform of the education system in Serbia that were adopted by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, this is one of highest priorities of the new government in education in Serbia. Projections of these programmes contain the parts that refer to MofD.

With the establishment and development of new methodology in the education system, as well as the approach to evaluation of diversities, we conclude that the demands of MofD correspond, largely, to the direction of educational reform in the Republic of Serbia.

2.4. Cross Cutting Issues

2.4.1. Life-Long Learning

Within the strategy of development of education in the Republic of Serbia and determination of future national policy in this field, analysis has been carried out of the current situation in the republic's education system. . The results of this analysis are the background for planning and system arrangement of informal education for adults who are either working or are not employed. In this process, the partners are the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, the Republic Employment Agency/Institute, Chambers of Commerce and other associations. This issue has pointed to the inevitable link between the policy of formal and informal education so we can conclude that Serbia has determined the national policy of education of adults quite principally with the directions of educational reform – life-long learning. We can also say that EDC and MofD projects are an integral part of the new national educational policy.

2.4.2. Research and policy development

The Ministry of Education and Sport of the Government of the Republic of Serbia supports and stimulates research, analyses and projects that relate to development of democratic relations and the strengthening of a spirit of tolerance and diversity in the republic both independently and in co-operation with the provincial ministries and other levels of government in the Republic of Serbia.

2.4.3. International Co-operation

In the course of this year the Republic Government, as well as many other institutions in the field of education have established wide co-operation with international organisations and institutions. This relates primarily to international co-operation between universities, but also between other organisations and institutions which implement projects with educational, cultural, psychosocial and humanitarian contents. All these projects contain the expressed EDC components. In all this, the role acquired by the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina is of special significance since it joined the DKMT Euro region (Danube-Keres-Mores-Tisza) that includes several regions from Hungary, Romania and Serbia. All this co-operation, apart from influencing better relations between the citizens of these states, is also a significant factor within the activities that are going on and that are connected with the Stability Pact for South East Europe initiative.

2.4.4. Quality Assurance

The Government of the Republic of Serbia (Ministry of Education) is showing a large interest in the introduction of a system of quality control in all the activities related to educational policy and it was planned to innovate this field within the Draft Proposal of Educational Reform.

EDC and MofD projects have not been included by name in the mechanism for the provision of quality in the educational process, but they are in practice part of these mechanisms.

2.4.5. Information and Communication Technologies

The Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia, in co-operation with provincial, regional and local authorities, as well as with numerous donors (from the country and from abroad) managed to cover almost the whole territory of the Republic of Serbia (it refers to schools) with computer equipped classes. Although they are quite often modestly equipped it can be said that situation is not that bad in this field as in others.

Faculties and schools of advanced learning work with information technology facilities. Schools are often connected to the Internet and they have their web site.

3. Policy Implementation Measures

3.1. General Considerations

The Government of the Republic of Serbia is working currently only with old programmes and plans (strategy of development of education). At the same time, there has been an attempt to overcome this situation along the way, until the new reform of educational system in the Republic of Serbia is adopted. Certain encouraging steps were undertaken in several departments of the Ministry of Education and at different levels of political organisation (municipalities, cities and the Province of Vojvodina), for example, the organisation of shared activities with the non-government sector, instructive seminars with representatives of the International community and other forms of work that mark the directions of educational system reform in the Republic.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia, through its Ministry of Education, but also through other Ministries, opened its doors to co-operation with non-government organisations, which proved to be extremely significant in the field of education. It can be said that for this

purpose a significant co-operation has been realised with a number of non-government organisations and especially after the 3rd Forum of Non-Government Organisations of Yugoslavia (held in Belgrade in May 2001) and the Conference of Non-Government Organisations that was held in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in April and June 2001. At these meetings, the government officials asked, and non-government organisations agreed, to work together in order to find ways to solve problems in the following fields: education, culture, humanitarian needs and the development of civil society. The wish of the non-government sector to get involved in education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and teaching of tolerance (MofD) was stressed especially.

3.2. Education for Democratic Citizenship

3.2.1. Curriculum

Measures that should be taken in order to provide for the implementation of tasks set in the field of educational reform were addressed in the previous section and that is why we shall now speak only about programmes and other activities that relate to EDC and MofD. In the course of this year the Ministry of Education, supported by efforts of government representatives at other levels, carried out the promotion of special programmes, the objective of which is education for an active democratic civil society, education for tolerance and respect of diversities, education for the development of multicultural, multi-ethnic and mutliconfessional relations and the linking of schools with their local communities.

3.2.2 Structural/organisational

Even though these projects (EDC and MofD) do not involve the largest part of the teaching population they have, in certain parts of the Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, opened new perspectives on education in this region. It has to be pointed out that significant co-operation has been established with non-government organisations and international foundations in this group of activities. Some of those activities and projects were time-limited, while certain programmes, such as the contents related to EDC and MofD will be of a long-term character with a tendency towards permanency in duration.

3.2.3. Teacher training

As the Ministry of Education has not yet determined the base for teacher training necessary for EDC and MofD activities they can be discussed only in the context of the proposal contained in the Draft Proposal of Educational Reform in the Republic of Serbia.

3.3. Valuing cultural diversity and social cohesion

3.3.1. Curriculum

There is a clear and undoubted support for implementation of the contents from EDC and MofD projects because the leading officials from the Ministry of Education (and other members of the Government) are convinced that these activities are not only a contribution to educational processes in the country and a solid base for the creation of the curriculum, but also the wider base for the realisation of the democratic and transition process in the country and in the wider region. Activities related to educational reform and the implementation of EDC and MofD projects do not find the support of all the stakeholders connected with these processes started in Serbia last year. It can be said that opponents of these aspirations

have their supporters at all levels of organisation in society. This is primarily people who would like to preserve and conserve the situation in the sphere of politics, culture, science, economy and informatics as it was; people who, by their actions, wish to stop the process of all transitional trends, including processes in the field of education. Commonly, in those efforts they attempt to impose the so-called traditional approach that easily influences one section of citizens, especially people with lower levels of education and information and those citizens who do not want to accept the more universal ideas and civic values that are the basis of the democratic emancipation of society. The reason for this could also be found in the current objective situation that the country is faced with- in a very low rate of economic development, in the great economic poverty of a larger part of population, increased level of awareness of the need to introduce a new kind of egalitarianism, very unstable social cohesion of the society, the loss of basic value standards, the lack of acceptance (still present) of the philosophy of peace, dialogue and tolerance, as well as in slow acceptance of universal ideas on the co-operation of different individuals and group identities that are accepted very slowly by a large number of citizens.

3.3.2. Structural/organisational

School workers express their distrust through the fact that schools are closed to local communities, that they strive to preserve the existing relations and way of work, that there is a tragic lack of preparedness, on the part of some people working in education, to involve themselves in the process of occupational training, and true poverty providing a very low material base for education. Changes that have started in this field show that the option of insisting on fighting energetically against conservatism, this state of inertia, status quo and waiting for the problems to be solved by someone else, is winning gradually. This activity is reflected in the acceptance of new ideas with enthusiasm and optimism, the affirmation of

their values and a wish to implement new contents in the curriculum, in an improvement of relations between people, and in the everyday life of schools. These activities are evident, supported by the official politics, which shows that this process shall certainly continue and improve and innovate through time. Pilot programmes in this field have still not been elaborated and they were not known of at the time of completion of this report. The possibility of such piloting was anticipated by the Draft Proposal of Educational System Reform in Serbia. It is considered that they will contribute to the better definition of activities in this field.

Education authorities in the Republic of Serbia maintain co-operation with many non-government organisations: Belgrade Open School (BOS), Alternative Academic Educational Network (AAOM), Yugoslav Association for Rights of Children, Civic Initiatives, Specialised academic studies, Belgrade Centre for Women Studies, Centre for Multiculturality, Centre for Regionalism, Pannonia – humanitarian organisation, the group “Most” (“The Bridge”), Belgrade Human Rights Centre etc.

3.4.6. Finance

International organisations and foundations, such as the Open Society Fund, Council of Europe, Stability Pact and other organisations finance the largest part of these projects (this refers to co-operation of government bodies and non-government organisations). It has to be pointed out that although significant funds are invested into these programmes they are only a drop in the ocean compared to the funds that are necessary to complete this activity successfully. The same refers to the monitoring that necessarily follows the initial activities of the ministry and non-government organisations, which will necessarily depend on the inclusion of a larger number of stakeholders in activities connected with the change of educational system in the Republic and the implementation of these programmes (EDC and MofD) within the regular educational system.

4. Views from the Grass Roots

4.1. General Considerations

Non-government organisations are the most important factors of activities in the field of the Project of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and learning for tolerance (MofD). We shall mention only some of the most important organisations with their specific programmes:

- The Centre for Interactive Pedagogy from Belgrade develops education for tolerance, democracy and inter-culturalism under the title NIC NIBEO.

- Belgrade Open School, as an alternative educational institution dealing with students who wish to increase their knowledge and improve research in social and humanistic science. The School enables students to be autonomous, aware and respected citizens ready to fight for the demands of democratic society. The School develops its activities through classes for advanced post-graduate students, research department, Centre for Religious Studies, Centre for Alternative Education and Centre for Civil Education. Three units are studied specially within this Centre:

- 1. Education for democracy
- 2. Programmes for minorities and Romany people
- 3. Management in non-government organisations

- The Alternative Academic Educational Network is the organisation that was originally planned and organised as a post-graduate organisation. It was established as the reply to the Act on University from 1998, which almost completely removed the autonomy of the University. Through all its programmes, this organisation threads education for democratic citizenship and learning for life in tolerant circumstances.

- Specialised Academic Studies, a non-government organisation that is active in Novi Sad. It gathers post-graduate students who study phenomena of democratisation of society, multicultural relations, transition processes and learning about tolerance. This organisation was established as the reply to the above-mentioned Act on University.

- The Centre for Multiculturalism (Novi Sad) is a non-government organisation, the objective of which is the affirmation of cultural identity and learning to live in multicultural community. During the spring of 2001 they organised a series of tribunes together with the Provincial Ministry of Education and Culture, with the aim of determining the situation related to issues of education in minority languages in Vojvodina and in the wider region (Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia).

- **"The Goodwill Classroom" - a school program for constructive conflict resolution was initiated in 1995 and conducted by NGO "Most". The program introduced methods of non-violent conflict resolution in elementary and secondary schools in the territory of the FRY. The main objective of the program is to strengthen among children behavior models that encourage mutual respect, readiness to cooperate and good will in general. The program is implemented through direct work with children performed by teachers and technical associates educated at direct application training seminars. A three-volume manual has been published and over 1,000 experts trained so far in over 30 towns. The program has covered more than 10,000 pupils and students.**

Educational programmes supported by the Programme of Education of the Open Society Fund had special significance during all these years. The following non-government organisations participated in them: the

Association for Creative Communication and Debate, The Association for Improvement of Settlements of Romany People, The Society for Family Mental Health and many others.

Organisations that supported educational projects are:

- Open Society Institute (HESP)
- Foundation Friedrich Ebert
- SIDA – Swedish International Development Agency
- Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
- The Know How Fund
- IIZ/DVV – Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Education Association
- Freedom House
- USAID and many other foreign foundations.

There are many local non-government organisations in the Republic of Serbia that have influenced the field of education for democracy (EDC) and living in diversities (MofD) over the last ten years, with limited objectives and with frequently modest material resources. This time we decided to present the activities only of possibly the most important factors in this field, without wishing to negate small non-government organisations, many of which are now trying, together with bodies of local communities, to develop new policy in this field at the local level.

4.2. Chosen Approach to Data Gathering

In data gathering we used different methods, such as interview, inquiry, focus groups and data that are contained in existing research and publications. Specific jags of educational activity and system, as well as of official stakeholders in this field, but even more the diversity of non-government and expert organisations meant that this task could not be

approached in an orthodox way and that no single method could be used for collection of data necessary to reveal details about this field.

4.3. Findings

The vast majority of individuals we contacted in relation to this research knew the most important guidelines of the government concerning the educational policy, politics of education for democratic citizenship (EDC) and life in diversities. A certain number of them has participated actively in all stages of the preparation of both the Draft Proposal of Educational Reform in the Republic of Serbia and the Conclusion of the 3rd Forum of Non-Government Organisations of Yugoslavia, and both Conferences of non-government organisations of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina where the need for common establishment of EDC and MofD contents was emphasised. This was needed especially because of the existence of a large number of experts who participate actively in the work of non-government organisations within the last ten years.

We can say with great certainty that the contents of EDC and MofD exist largely in activities of the non-government sector. The non-government sector has been trying, and has been quite successful in imposing pressure on the Government and gets the position of an equal partner in these processes. The Government and its ministries have also accepted this. Problems that arise among participants in these processes and in the implementation procedure of this task reflect, of course, the fact that government reform has not even started yet formally, which means that certain bureaucratic obstructions appear in these activities as well as the non-acceptance of certain activities in this field by participants in educational process. Participants of EDC and MofD often have to limit themselves in their activities for the above-mentioned reasons, namely because there are still quite a lot of xenophobic people among participants in the educational process and in a significant part of the state apparatus;

people with a lack of emancipating potentials, individuals without awareness of the necessity of acceptance of these principles, and some who consciously wish to obstruct these processes.

5. Conclusions

The Republic of Serbia spent ten years under the rule of an authoritarian regime. In accordance with such policy a highly centralised educational system and management in schools were accepted in the Republic. That resulted in the concentration of financial resources for education at republic level. At the same time the local self-government was deprived of the right to elect/appoint school management and principals. That task was transferred to the Ministry of Education. Election and appointment of principals was largely based on political affiliation, while the role of the principal transformed from the role of management of the educational process within school to the prevention of strikes by people employed in schools and boycotts of classes by pupils. Certain kind of disciplining of schools and municipalities that were governed by opposition parties was carried out through allocation of budget resources. Due to unfavourable economic trends in the Republic funds allocated for education were reduced in the budget. Until 1998 Universities had relative autonomy but the Act on University brought them under the strict control of the official government – the Government appointed all rectors and deans of all faculties in the Republic of Serbia. The academic public reacted extremely negatively to such events and it was articulated partly in the events of October 2000 as well.

Due to the chaos that ruled all fields of life, numerous failures occurred in educational system– conservatism, outdated methods of work, poor levels of equipment in schools, insufficient motivation of teachers and professors, material humiliation of people working in education etc. The biggest problem was still in the strengthening of xenophobia, a conscious

desire to leave the idea of tolerance and multicultural society and a conscious return to retrograde processes.

Education for democracy and human rights (EDC) and learning to live in diversities (MofD) are not contained explicitly in the curricula and educational plans, but quite a lot has been done in practise to implement these contents. The Draft Proposal of Educational System Reform in the Republic of Serbia, as one of priority tasks, leads to implementation of EDC and MofD project plans. The Draft Reform that was offered by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia corresponds largely to recommendations given to the Government of Serbia by the World Bank, OECD and UNICEF. A large part of these recommendations has already been applied in the work of the Ministry of Education itself.

Within the last year, a significant co-operation has been established between the Ministry of Education of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and non-government sector and International Foundations that contribute to development of civic society and democratic relations in our country. Government officials participate actively at meetings of non-government organisations (3rd Forum of Non-Government Association of Yugoslavia, Conference of non-government sector in Vojvodina, Regional gatherings of non-government sector) where they try to define the basic elements of common activities. Common activities that were agreed reflect in participation of the non-government sector in EDC and MofD projects, participation in development of local communities, participation in planning and carrying out of projects connected with the activities of the Stability Pact for South East Europe.

Religious education was introduced (by a questionable decision of the government of Serbia) into the curriculum this summer, but even at the beginning of October it still did not enter the classrooms, due to its optional character and the disapproval of a high percentage (around

60%) of parents. This percentage is especially high in Voivodina, where there are over 26 ethnic and around 30 religious communities. The other problem with the introduction of Religious education is that it represents the alternative, and disloyal, competition to Civic Education. In those circumstances only around 15% of the parents chose Civic Education (a brief description of the aims and tasks of this subject which is to be taught in the first year of primary and secondary schools is given in the Annex), so that it became evident that the authorities of the Republic of Serbia do not have a clear and uniform opinion about Education for Democratic Citizenship. This subject, Civic Education, has not entered the classrooms yet.

The economic situation in the country, namely the fact that economy of the Republic of Serbia is in very difficult position, is one of the most important reasons why we state certain reserves that activities connected with EDC and MofD can be realised. Resources that were promised by foreign donors are coming with delay and they create confusion among stakeholders of social changes in the Republic. We point out this problem because of the general conclusion that activities that are to be carried out within EDC and MofD programmes are quite expensive, bearing in mind the current economic situation in our country. It will be very difficult to implement them without significant support from International institutions and organisations. Despite everything, there is an appropriate climate and political willingness to include EDC and MofD activities not only in education system but also in all elements of social life.

ANNEX

These subjects will be studied in the first grades of primary and secondary schools. Within the first grade of primary school the first subject will be studied under the title “Knowledge about myself and others” (1 class weekly, 36 classes per year).

The general aim of this subject is to stimulate the development of personality and the social knowledge of pupils in the first grade of primary school. This subject should offer pupils the opportunity to become active participants in the educational process, to be able to form their knowledge and values necessary for creating autonomous, competent, responsible and creative persons, open for cooperation, respected by themselves and others.

The subject “Civic education” will be taught in the first grade of secondary schools. The general aim of this subject is to achieve knowledge, develop skills and acceptance of general values, which are needed in developing a person’s individuality, to be competent, responsible and engaged in social life. This is also very important for having a respect for human rights, basic freedom, peace, tolerance, enjoying the same rights for both sex, understanding between nations, ethnic, national and religious groups.