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Organizzazione  
delle Nazioni Unite  
per l'Educazione,  
la Scienza e la Cultura



Commissione Nazionale  
Italiana per l'UNESCO

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TEACHING OF PHILOSOPHY IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

in the framework of the High-Level Regional Meeting  
on the Teaching of Philosophy in Europe and North America

14-16 February 2011, Milan, Italy

*Referring* to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

*Bearing in mind* the Paris Declaration for Philosophy,<sup>1</sup> which states that philosophy teaching should be maintained or expanded where it exists and introduced where it does not yet exist, on the understanding that, by training independently minded, thoughtful people, capable of resisting various forms of propaganda, philosophy teaching prepares everyone to shoulder their responsibilities in regard to the great challenges of the contemporary world,

*Convinced* that the contemporary complex challenges related to globalization and induced social changes, the multifaceted crises that human societies face, and the new ethical paradigm that is emerging in relation to the balance between our way of life and ecological concerns, require that youth are equipped with solid conceptual tools that enable them to question the existing models, to seek meaning and to imagine new possibilities,

*Considering* that, as an exercise of rational and critical reflection that takes universally comprehensible concepts as its starting point, philosophy offers valuable instruments conducive to the construction of rationally and calmly argued dialogues, especially in increasingly multicultural societies,

*Acknowledging* that the very goal of education is not to instil exclusively measurable and expectable competences, and being aware

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted during the International Study Days on "Philosophy and Democracy in the World" organized by UNESCO in Paris on 15 and 16 February 1995. UNESCO, 171 EX/12, Annex II, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001386/138673e.pdf>.

of the threat that such an approach would present for collective and individual fulfilment,

*Well aware* of the increasingly pervasive role of an ideology that is inspired by a rationale of “performativity”, of result, of quantitative indicators and of evaluation methods arbitrarily imposed upon philosophy teaching,

*Believing* that philosophy teaching can also strongly develop imagination and creativity, which are indispensable for youth to be proactive in engendering social, political and scientific innovations,

*Taking reference* from the results of the Study published by UNESCO in 2007, *Philosophy, a School of Freedom - Teaching philosophy and learning to philosophize: Status and prospects*,

*Building upon* the recent Italian initiative in organizing a national meeting to examine the place of philosophy teaching in curricula, as well as the French education reform announced on 18 November 2010 in favour of introducing philosophy class beginning from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of secondary education,

We, participants in the High-Level Regional Meeting on the Teaching of Philosophy in Europe and North America, jointly organized by UNESCO and the Italian National Commission for UNESCO on 14-16 February 2011 in Milan, Italy, highly welcome this initiative that has allowed us to exchange ideas and experiences, as well as to unify our efforts in favour of philosophy teaching in the region and in our respective countries.

We recommend to:

**1. The Member States** of the region, to:

National policy, planning and administration of education

- Encourage education policies that accord a full, complete and autonomous place to philosophy in curricula at secondary and higher education;
- Reaffirm that education contributes to building the intellectual autonomy of individuals and refuse to reduce the education process to training for instrumental techniques and competences;
- Reaffirm the crucial importance of philosophy teaching for critical thinking and take action to strengthen it;

- Work with the relevant stakeholders towards reintroducing philosophy where it has disappeared from the curricula, and strengthening it where it already exists;
- Avoid subjecting philosophical work to evaluation practices and performance indicators that are not compatible with the specificity, the sense and the essence of this discipline;
- Ensure that academic freedom is fully respected in philosophy teaching, since academic freedom is a “necessary precondition to guarantee the proper fulfillment of the functions entrusted to higher-education teaching personnel and institutions”, as stated by UNESCO’s “Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel”;<sup>2</sup>

#### Educational innovations

- Promote research, pilot experiences and practices in the field of philosophy with children in pre-school and primary education, and, when possible, institutionalize this approach in the education system;
- Foster academic and pedagogical debates on the specific nature of and relation between philosophy class, civic or moral education, and religious education, so as to draw maximum benefits from each of these;
- Entrust philosophy teachers with reflection on issues related to moral education and religion;
- Support intercultural approaches in philosophy teaching in secondary schools, and support teacher training accordingly;

#### Teacher training and public debates

- Provide systematic academic and pedagogical training – initial, in-service and distance-learning – to all philosophy teachers;
- Introduce philosophy courses in teacher training in general, with the support of philosophy departments, with the aim of making philosophical enquiry a principle of primary and secondary school education in general;
- Encourage practitioners of philosophy with children to attend philosophy courses as a condition for doing philosophy in primary schools;

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO General Conference, 29<sup>th</sup> Session, Resolution, Vol.1, 1997.  
[http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13144&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13144&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

- Enhance public awareness through philosophy teaching based on in-depth analysis of priority themes such as norms, culture, social justice, peace, tolerance, etc.

## **2. UNESCO, to:**

### International cooperation in the field of philosophy teaching

- Pursue its strategy in promoting and advocating philosophy teaching at all levels of formal and informal education, and in fostering intercultural dialogue in this field, notably by supporting the translation of texts from different philosophical traditions, as well as research and mobility programmes in favour of researchers from different cultures and nationalities;
- Intensify its initiatives aiming at establishing links and creating, on the one hand, networks between philosophers, teachers and students from the different regions of the world; and on the other hand, an international network for development and support of philosophy with children practices;
- Encourage UNESCO Associated Schools to launch pilot projects on philosophy with children;
- Assist the states who wish to set up programmes of regional exchange between universities and training centers in order to enhance the skills of philosophy teachers at all levels of education;

### Strategic orientations and research

- While endorsing the competence-based approach to teaching in general, acknowledge that education cannot be reduced to a mere training of measurable and predictable competences;
- Support philosophical and pedagogical research on the conditions and possibilities for children to philosophize and on the relationship between the philosophical traditions and philosophy with children, notably through collaboration with the International Council of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (CIPSH) and the creation of a working group on this matter;
- Given the increase of different forms of violence, terrorism and other similar calamities all over the world, promote in cooperation with strategic partners, namely UNESCO Chairs, CIPSH and other specialized bodies, research on the causes of such increase, and more specifically on rethinking the role of education, from a philosophical, humanistic and human rights-based perspective, so as to promote a culture of peace and non-violence;

### **3. UNESCO's National Commissions, to:**

#### Technical educational support to Member States

- Advise the Member States to elaborate national policies in favour of the introduction of philosophy in curricula and of its strengthening where it already exists;
- Support national initiatives on philosophy with children, and liaise with UNESCO for international coordination;
- Encourage Member States to address the diversity of philosophical traditions, by assisting them in publishing research findings, philosophical texts and anthologies, notably through translations of texts from authors of other regions of the world, in order to foster and facilitate intercultural dialogue;
- Encourage the creation, strengthening and expansion of the UNESCO Chairs in Philosophy;
- Plan specific UNESCO scholarships for PhD and post-doctoral students from other countries, on the basis of competitive exams;
- Earmark specific funds to assist and financially support major philosophical events at the international level;

### **4. The European Commission – Directorate-General for Education and Culture, to:**

#### Strategic orientations

- Make necessary efforts to maintain spaces of dialogue and of questioning on the sense of education, and to ensure that the practical application of the competence-based approach does not feed an illusion of transparency in education and does not impede on philosophy teaching on the grounds that this discipline does not develop "key competencies";<sup>3</sup>
- Take into due account the various valuable inputs of philosophy teaching at all levels of education in the intellectual education of all individuals ;

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<sup>3</sup> Education and Culture DG, *Key competencies for lifelong learning – European Reference Framework*, Brussels, 2007, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/publ/pdf/lil-learning/keycomp\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/publ/pdf/lil-learning/keycomp_en.pdf) (last accessed on 24 January 2011). See also *Key competencies. A developing concept in general compulsory education*, Eurydice, Brussels, 2002. [http://www.see-educoop.net/education\\_in/pdf/compulsary-edu-oth-enl-t05.pdf](http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/compulsary-edu-oth-enl-t05.pdf) (last accessed on 24 January 2011).

- Give an equal place and importance to science education or the teaching of technical disciplines on the one hand, and to philosophy and the humanities on the other, when elaborating European strategic orientations in education;

**5. Philosophy teachers and practitioners as well as civil society actors, to:**

Exploring new approaches to philosophy teaching

- Develop suitable courses and philosophical fora that foster public awareness on the new social and ethical challenges for humanity while making reference to classical texts and authors belonging to various philosophical corpora;
- Foster critical exploration of the different philosophy schools belonging to Western traditions and to other cultural and intellectual heritages;
- Work with teachers of other disciplines in order to experiment an interdisciplinary approach to philosophy teaching, for instance through introducing philosophical analysis and specifically philosophical topics into existing subject matters in primary and secondary schools;
- Encourage the universities, philosophy departments, research centres on philosophy and human sciences to overcome disciplinary compartmentalization and to promote more interdisciplinarity on the basis of solid disciplinary knowledge, with a view to reach out to the wider public;
- Use NICTs, when available, to facilitate interactions, active learning methods and international communication, while engaging in conscious and critical reflection on this issue so as to avoid giving youth the feeling that knowledge is a mere juxtaposition of fragmented information ;
- Organize, with the support of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP), specific sessions and workshops during the World Congress of Philosophy that will be dedicated to philosophy teaching.