

**Special report
of the Ombudsman of Kaliningrad region
“Problems of civil and human rights education in Kaliningrad region”**

One of the main objectives of the ombudsman of Kaliningrad region is to promote human rights education. The important part of this work is civil and human rights education of young people and children.

In the adopted by UNESCO Strategy in September 2003 the human rights education is seen as “an essential part of the right for education”. This means that the right for education is violated not only in case if the child is not taught how to read, write and count, but also if he does not get a proper education in the sphere of human rights. The Strategy also underlines that “the human rights education should not only be theoretical, but should provide an opportunity for the learner to develop and apply the knowledge to respect human rights and democratic values in school life”.

The monitoring of the civil and human rights education in the region, conducted by the experts of the Ombudsman institution in 2003-2004, has shown that in the majority of schools in the region the the main goal of education – to bring up citizens for living in the democratic civil society – is not fulfilled. For this purpose children should be provided with a number of skills and abilities in order to build up a system of democratic values, a readiness to participate in a social and political life, which is impossible to realize in the existing educational system.

It turned out that at present there are no subjects “Human rights” or “Basic law” in the school curriculum. In high school there are subjects “Social science” and “Civil knowledge” where a little number of lessons is devoted to legal and human rights issues. In some schools there are optional subjects such as “Law and economics”, but are not free of charge, which does not provide a possibility for all students to study these courses. This situation contradicts the main principles of equality of rights and opportunities stated in the national and international documents on the rights of the child. It is stated in the Conception of the modernization of the Russian education until 2010 that there is “a necessity to ensure the equal access of young people to proper high-quality education in accordance with their interests and inclination independently of the income of their families, place of living, nationality and state of health...”.

The effective methods are rarely used in human rights education in the schools of the region. At the same time a great number of different textbooks and manuals is used in schools, many of them do not provide necessary knowledge and often are full of legal mistakes and absurdities. For example, in the manual “Rights of the child” recommended by the Department of Education to use in the junior school, the author asks children to answer the question: “What do you do so that your parents will not want to change you for another better child?” Such question can traumatize a child. Moreover, such a situation contradicts the principles of the rights of the child proclaimed in the federal and international documents.

The textbook “Social science” by Kravchenko A.I. is often used in the schools of Kaliningrad. It also contains questionable statements and legal inaccuracies. The right for life is presented by the author from the point of view of the right to control and handle your own life: “Some people choose dangerous jobs: cosmonauts, stunt man. Others conduct experiments on themselves: test vaccines and medicine. Suicide is not punished by law...”. The right for life per se is seen as the right for death. Such interpretation of one of the fundamental human rights is inadequate and dangerous, taken into account a tendency of teen-agers for suicides.

In the capital devoted to labour rights the author claims: “Every person can start working at the age of 15”. Although article 63 of the Labour Code of the Russian Federation it is stated that “labour contract with persons less than 16 years old is illegal, and only in some cases listed in the Federal law it can be permitted to start work from the age of 15”. Children can start working from the age of 14 only during the school holidays and only in the special conditions of work.

It is obvious that such mistakes, inconsistencies and ambiguous statements in the school manuals are inadequate, due to the fact that children and teen-agers can discredit statements of adults and the national legislation.

In some cases the discrepancies between the textbooks and the legislation are caused by the constant changes in the Russian law. However, it is unlikely that teachers are able to follow the legislative changes on their own. For this purpose it is important to organize regular seminars on changes in legislation, mailing-lists with clarifications of new laws. Teachers of all disciplines need the knowledge on legal aspects of social life, but they do not have any opportunity to get this knowledge.

There is a sentence in the textbook "Society knowledge" by Sokolov Y.V. for the 9th grade under the topic of family law: "For example, a man-father and a woman-mother decided to divorce. But the father of the child should financially help his former family...", "if the father turned out to be a *rascal* and he will hire a good lawyer, than the mother will have to find a second job...". Therefore, a stereotype of behaviour is thrust on children, when in case of divorce a child should always stay with a mother, and a father should pay an alimony. Such reasoning can be considered as discrimination of men.

The same textbook offers a test, in which a lot of slang and colloquial expressions are used: *cool man, possibly a "high" for you is the most important thing in life*. Obviously the author tried to attract attention of young people by using slang and entertaining games in the textbook. However, such methods do not assist in promoting a respect for law.

Hopefully the recently adopted Order of the Ministry of Education "About the expertise of the school books", which established the procedure of examining in order to evaluate the correspondence of the textbooks' content and modern scientific approaches as well as the age-related psychological peculiarities of school children, shall improve the quality of the textbooks.

The majority of human rights and civil courses in schools teach "dead law", i.e. children are taught only the basic of the theory of rights, learn legal terminology. The range of problems presented in the textbooks is quite remote from the reality. At the same time every day young people face situations in which they need to apply their practical knowledge of the labour rights, mechanisms of human rights defense, ways of interaction with law machinery etc. For this purpose they need to be taught about the things that can be applied in their adult life.

The expert of the rights of the child of the Ombudsman institution of the Kaliningrad region has worked out a table which reflects the legal status of a child from birth till the age of majority and shows a necessity of specific knowledge of rights and responsibilities depending on the age of the child. For example, a child has many rights from the moment of birth (a right for life, a name, personal development and respect for human dignity, a right to protect his legal interests, a right for a citizenship etc.). This means that some knowledge should be provided for children already in the junior school. From the age of 6 a child has the right for education and a right to make small everyday purchases. At the age of 8 a child has the right to become a member of children's social unions and NGOs, and from 11 years old a child has an accountability and can be placed into a special institution for socially dangerous actions. From the age of 14 a child has the rights to command his own incomes (scholarship or salary) without parent' permission, and has intellectual property rights, and also be accountable for the conducted agreements and deals.

The main problems in civil education were detected during the discussions with the representatives of educational authorities and teachers. It turned out that their enthusiasm is decreasing due to:

- Inconsistencies in educational standard established by the Ministry of education and science and national priorities of the Russian Federation, as well as inconsistencies in learning models and educational standards.
- Lack of attention to the problems of civil and human rights education by the governing authorities.

- Absence of systemacy in teaching human rights.
- Lack of proper development of teaching methodology for human rights and civil education.
- Lack of qualified staff and teachers, lack of human rights culture with teachers.
- Absence of the system of persistent education in human rights.
- Lack of methodological literature and textbooks.
- Lack of curriculum time devoted to human rights education
- Lack of financial and technical support.
- Legal nihilism.
- Discrepancies between theory and legal practice.

The Ombudsman institution also developed some recommendations educational authorities and public officials:

To assist in promoting the understanding by teachers of the essence of human rights and civil education.

To assist in development of the standards of the human rights education of the new generation.

To provide assistance to teachers in human rights education.

To organize human rights trainings for teachers to empower them with new methods of human rights education.

To develop mailing lists for the teachers with the information on changes in legislation.

To provide schools with manuals, textbooks and necessary legal acts.

To promote cooperation with public authorities in the sphere of human rights education for young people and children.

To cooperate with NGOs and teachers dealing with human rights education.

To encourage teachers to and NGOs working with human rights education.

To work out a regional program of human rights and civil education based on the complex and systematic approach, and pay a special attention to education of orphan children.

To introduce into the regional educational component a special course on human rights education.

To establish a Centre for human rights and civil education under the governance of the Department of education of the Kaliningrad region.

The modernization of the civil education in the region shall help to increase the level of knowledge and readiness of the teen-agers to step into the real life after school, prevent child neglect and minor offence, assist in their professional orientation, and improve the society of the Russian Federation.

The experts of the Ombudsman institution of the Kaliningrad region recommend the following human rights education manuals and books for using at school educational courses:

1. Methodological manual "Living rights" developed by the St.-Petersburg institute of law within the framework of the project "Street law".
2. Manual "Human rights" published by the Youth centre for human rights (Moscow).
3. Manual "Basics of legal knowledge" (8-9 grades) (the project "Human rights in schools" by the Russian foundation for legal reforms).
4. Manual in human rights education "Compass" (Council of Europe, 2002).

