

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

**OF THE STANDING CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS ON THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS**

- Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of 4 December 1980 in the version of 14 December 2000 -

Herausgeber: Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

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Edité par le Secrétariat de la Conférence permanente des Ministres de l'Éducation et des Affaires culturelles des Länder en République fédérale d'Allemagne

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1. Situation

Human rights are included among the preconditions absolutely necessary for a life of human dignity. Political freedom and social justice cannot be realised if the fundamental rights derivable from the dignity of man are not guaranteed. By the same token, having a world order based on freedom, equality and justice, certainly the only possible way of safeguarding a lasting peaceful co-existence of the peoples of the world, is also not possible without respect for these rights.

Since the end of the 18th century, human rights have been increasingly incorporated in the constitutions of many states. Their significance expanded beyond the national context after the Second World War as a result of international agreements. Thus, the majority of the countries of the world first publicly advocated the recognition of human rights through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations, and at the same time agreed which rights are to be guaranteed. The international conventions established by the United Nations on economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights are contractual agreements in force and binding under international law for the signatory states.

In a regional context, efforts have been undertaken and agreements concluded, giving human rights greater importance. Both the American Human Rights Convention and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms guarantee the citizens of the signatory states a high degree of protection of their rights. In addition to this, the participant states at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe declared their recognition and respect of human rights in the Final Act.

At the beginning of the new millennium, too, the human rights situation remains contradictory. Though they are verbally recognised world-wide, this recognition is in conflict with a reality that is often characterised by the disregard and violation of these fundamental rights. The violation of these rights is an everyday experience in many countries, not only due to the arbitrary use of power by the state. Denial of the right to political self-determination, the persecution, and suppression of those whose views differ from the official norm, i. e. dissidents, and discrimination against minorities are just as much a part of this as the daily distress caused by shortages and famine in many countries.

The international conventions have initiated a process in which human rights are no longer considered exclusively an internal matter of the individual states. The realisation of these rights has been recognised as the task of the entire community of nations.

Those countries whose political traditions are favourable to the idea of human rights and who

recognise the individual as the central value of society have a special obligation. Among them is the Federal Republic of Germany whose Constitution (Basic Law) declares that inviolable and inalienable human rights are the foundation of any human society, peace and justice in the world.

Human rights are not only realised by the actions of the state, but above all by the attitude and the commitment of the individual. School must make a substantial contribution to this by forming the character accordingly. Human rights education is a major task in the pedagogical mission of school and is defined in all Länder constitutions and school laws as one of the primary aims of education. It encompasses all areas of school activity.

2. Objectives and Contents of Education

Treatment of the human rights theme in the classroom should provide knowledge and insights in particular on

- the historical development of human rights and its present importance
- the significance of fundamental and human rights, both for the rights of the individual as well as for the objective formative principles of society;
- the relationship of personal freedoms and fundamental social rights in the Constitution and in international conventions;
- the variations in understanding and guaranteeing human rights in the various political systems and cultures;
- the fundamental significance of human rights for the origin of the modern constitutional state;
- the necessity of giving consideration to the protection of individual human rights in international law;
- the significance of international co-operation for the realisation of human rights and the safeguarding of peace;
- the extent of and the social, economic and political reasons for the violations of human rights observable throughout the world.

Exposure to the questions surrounding human rights is intended to awaken and strengthen the

willingness of students to actively promote their realisation and resist their being disregarded and violated.

Education with respect to human rights is intended to equip the student with the ability to promote the realisation of human rights in his or her personal and political surroundings. He or she should be ready to use the question concerning the realisation of human rights as an important yardstick for assessing the political conditions both in their own country and in other countries. This includes being prepared to stand up for the rights of others.

3. Contribution of School Subjects

Human rights education is a common task of all subjects and all teachers.

The subjects of the social science sector should systematically contribute to this endeavour; this must be reflected in the curricula of these subjects.

4. Textbooks

Textbooks must take account of the content of this recommendation. The same applies to all other teaching and learning aids.

5. School life

Human rights education cannot be restricted to the imparting of knowledge. It must include the emotional and behavioural component. The student must live and practise the respect of others in his or her everyday life at school.

6. Initial and Continued Training of Teachers

The Ministers and Senators of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder will bring their influence to bear to ensure that this agreement is given due consideration in the context of the initial and continued training of teachers.