

Studying democratic values

Students in West Bank and Jordan enjoy lessons on Equality and Tolerance

At the end of May 2008, the first school year in the classroom program on Civic Education, developed in the framework of the EU co-funded project "Civic Education as a Leverage for Peace" and implemented by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and its partners has almost finished.

Between May 19th and May 22nd 2008, project director Dr. Lars Hänsel and project manager Annika Lübke visited students and teachers in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Jordan. Alessandro Campo from the EC delegation to Jordan, Thomas Birringer, representative of KAS Ramallah and Gerrit Schlomach from KAS Amman accompanied the project team on part of the visits.



Students from Sawahreh High School want to continue with program



Dr. Lars Hänsel and Dr. Nedal Jayousi with the students from Sawahreh High School

During the visit, teachers and students had the chance to give a short evaluation on the program and the values they have learned during the last year. Outstanding was the change the students went through since the beginning of the year: While at our first visits in September and October 2007, the majority of the students felt quite skeptic about the whole project and were afraid of the so called "Normalization" process, 8 months later, most students are very happy about the program and are even asking for a continuation. In addition to the students, the teachers too told us about a change in their ways of teaching and in their perception both of their own students and of other people in general.



Students from Birzeit School are evaluating the project



Students at Ahliyye High School in Ramallah

The students are trying to implement now what they have learned during their lessons. "We received many new ideas from our teachers. This will help me to become a better person. And I know now that we have to change ourselves if we want to change our

situation", one of the students from the Latin School in Birzeit, West Bank says: "of course, we have heard about the values of tolerance and equality before, but now we also understand them", she continues. But not only had the students received the program in a good way. Rana Q. from Ahliyye High School in Ramallah explains to us: "The new teaching methods showed me a lot about myself. I am more creative now, even in the other subjects I am teaching. And I have learned to listen to my students in a different way. I was very surprised how creative they are."



Students from Sweileh Secondary High in Amman



Discussing examples of Tolerance in the students' daily life

The Sweileh Secondary School in Amman Jordan was founded 1951. Today, Jordanian, Circassian, Iraqi and Palestinian students, mainly from traditional backgrounds study at the Girls' school. Because many of the school's students are coming from poor backgrounds, the yearly fees of the public school are around the symbolic amount of 6 JD. The school's Head Mistress, Amal Boshek believes that the project is a first step towards more tolerance in the society and very important for both students and teachers.



A student at Sweileh Secondary High, explaining the issue of prejudices due to the outer appearance



Gerrit Schломach, KAS Amman, discussing with students from Sweileh Secondary High

The classroom program was aimed to teach the students about 33 lessons on the subjects of "Equality", "Tolerance", "Justice and the Rule of Law" and "Active Citizenship". In the second project year, 44 additional classes from Israel, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Jordan will join the project. For the veteran students and teachers, the end of the school year 2007/2008 also means the end of their classroom program. Many of the students are sad: "We just started to learn something very important that is changing our points of view and our behavior. But there is so much more we want to learn", a student from Sawahreh High School for Girls in East Jerusalem mentions. Their head master, Huda I. agrees with her students: "These lessons are very important for our students. We want them to continue in addition to give new students the opportunity to study this program as well."



Students of the Latin Secondary School in Zarqa are developing ideas of freedom



Daliah Afaneh from the Latin Secondary School in Zarqa with her class

The students are eager to study the program and are actively participating in the lessons. When being told that the program is a joined program with Israeli and Palestinian schools, the girls of the Latin Secondary School on Zarqa, Jordan understood this as a chance to become more open and to get to know students from other countries. Their parents were more skeptical and some of them still are. But several talks with teachers and parents and the dissemination of information about the project helped them to accept the program. They now understand that their own society benefits from the lessons which include the teaching of democratic values such as "Equality", "Tolerance", "Justice and the Rule of Law" and "Active Citizenship".



Presenting ideas of freedom to the class



Group work at the Latin Secondary School in Zarqa

Daliah Afaneh, one of the two teachers at the Latin Secondary School explains: "I really enjoy teaching them. It isn't always easy for me to give them the possibility to say their own opinion, but I have learned something new from this project that I am now trying to use in my other classes as well." And Muna I., one of the two teachers at Schmidt's Girls College in Jerusalem will integrate the program into her regular English classes. Most of the other teachers will follow Muna's example.

Dr. Michelle Sansour, the Head Master of Ecole des Freres in Bethlehem even wants to go further: "The values of this project are equivalent to the values of our order and to what we want to teach the children. Therefore we are very happy about the program and will now see how we can add it to our regular curriculum."



Students at Schmidt's Girls College with their classroom teacher



Dr. Michelle Sansour and Dr. Nedal Jayousi at Ecole des Freres in Bethlehem

Part of the students had the opportunity to participate in the joint "Get-Together Workshop" which took place in March 2008 at the Dead Sea and included 60 students from Israel, the Palestinian Autonomous Territories and Jordan. The program helped them to receive the other students in a good way. "We came to the workshop to explain our own situation and to tell the other students how we are feeling. But we also listened to them and now, we understand their point of view better than before", one student from Schmidt's Girls Colleges says. "We are very happy to meet the Israeli and Palestinian students. It was nice to hear their opinion and we have made new friends", the students from Jordan are telling us. Until today, the students are in touch by e-mail and messenger. And one of the students adds: "Without this program and the lessons we studied in our classes, I don't think I would have really listened to the other students. But I learned to be more tolerant and that I need to listen to others if I want them to listen to me."



Dr. Lars Hänsel, KAS Jerusalem, Alessandro Campo, EC Amman with teachers and students at the Latin Secondary School in Zarqa



Dua'a Albisharat, Head Mistress of the St. Savior Episcopal School in Zarqa with her students