



CHARTA NOSTRA

Final Assessment Report



October 2008



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Project information

Project acronym:	CHARTA NOSTRA
Project title:	CHARTA NOSTRA
Project number:	129199-CP-1-2006-1-GR-COMENIUS-C21
Programme:	SOCRATES
Sub-programme	Comenius 2.1
Project website:	http://www.ecose.org/chartanostra/
Project period:	From: 01/10/2006 To: 30/09/2008
Beneficiary organisation:	European Cultural Organisation-Social Education
Project coordinator organisation:	ECOSE
Project partners:	(ELLAS) -ANDRAGOŠKI ZAVOD MARIBOR – LJUDSKA UNIVERZA (SLOVENIA) - LEADER - LINGUA FORMAZIONE E COMUNICAZIONE (ITALIA) -INSTITUT MUNICIPAL D'EDUCACIÓ DE BARCELONA (ESPAÑA)
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This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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1. Introduction

This is the final Report of the 'Charta Nostra' (CN) joint project which has been carried out in the course of the last two and a half years, with the active participation of qualified partners from Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain. From the outset of this final report, it is stressed that the direct financial support and the overall cooperation/encouragement of the European Commission throughout this 'innovative exercise' has been more than instrumental in completing the project with success. So has been, in many respects, the valuable and sustained contribution of all participating individuals and organizations, at all phases of the implementation of the project.

Under the overall coordination of ECOSE (Greece) and within the well-defined framework of the European Union in the particular field of civic education as ought to be perceived in our globalized and technologically advanced era, this collective endeavour aspired to register- in the long run- a legitimate claim of noticeable contribution, with long lasting impact and usefulness. The specific 'easy-to-use manual' which has been developed and which is presented in a more detailed fashion below, may very well taken as a concrete corpus along these lines. In addition, the two interim reports that have been prepared by L.C. Bombas in the course of those two and a half years, selected segments of which will also be included in this final report, have already provided interesting empirical data and much reflective thinking, along the teaching of civic education front in our contemporary European educational scene.

With these brief introductory remarks in mind and by providing some additional descriptive aspects for informative purposes, this concluding report of CN unfolds itself to the interested reader as follows:

Having begun its exploratory and aspiring journey sometime around the middle of 2006, this project has come a relatively long way to its completion by the end of 2008, amidst a plethora of constructive intra-personal and inter-personal encounters/challenges of all kinds. Among other 'testimonies' along these lines of argument, one very well quote concrete comments and accounts from the highly informative 'Evaluation Sheets' completed by all partner organizations towards the final stages of the project.

The central theme/concern of CN, namely ***civic education in its very broad and contemporary sense in the European context***, that has permeated the entire procedural fabric of this joint European project, has already influenced –one way or another- in a catalytic way all individuals involved in the phase-to-phase implementation of the project. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to the partner organizations which have taken active part throughout the entire carrying out of the project, a great number of other individuals (e.g. teachers, students, educational experts, psychologists, social workers, voluntary organizations) from partner countries have also participated and, thereafter, contributed towards its successful completion. Thus being the case, the scope and the 'very essence' of this transnational project focusing on main aspects of civic education among the youth Europe-wide, have already become known to a receptive audience, claiming, thus far, a noticeable score along the dissemination objective of all similar European endeavours. A dissemination objective, of course, which is to be further and more systematically pursued via the continuous use and the promotion of the specific manual produced as integral part of CN.

As originally proposed and approved for funding by the EC, via the carrying out of the different phases of the project which are briefly summarized in the pages that follow, the *“handy teacher manual for teaching European citizenship using as focal point the Articles of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU”* has been meticulously thought and developed, with the valuable contribution/feedback of project partners. At this point in time, the innovative manual is already there, readily and unconditionally available to be used by everyone interested, in its electronic, multilingual, format. Once more, it is underlined with emphasis and in all tones that ***civic education and all its related parameters***, in their broadly defined sense within the present-day European Union Framework, have been at the very ‘heart’ of this joint initiative. And this has been so, as we –all Europeans- strive to keep pace with and incorporate into our daily lives the ‘real meaning’ of the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU as well as the specific ‘prescription’ of so-called Lisbon Strategy in the form of ‘key competencies’ which, in turn, ought to become operative and functional skills in our daily and highly demanding lives (*communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical literacy, competence in science and technology, digital competence, learning to learn, interpersonal, intercultural & social competences, civic competences*).

Accordingly, an elaborate discussion of the main features of this manual which is presented below, tracing both the structural and the functional characteristics of this innovative ‘tool’ in the hands (mainly, but not exclusively) of secondary education teachers, may offer an informative and useful ‘guidance’ to all those interested and concerned for the actual promotion of civic education within a contemporary European framework.

Yet, although the principal emphasis of this concluding report focuses around the ‘end product’ of the project that has been prepared in the form of a widely usable ‘activities centred manual’, a number of several (other) points are recorded here as necessary informative reminders to the reader. Drawn from the application form, it is believed that these selective mentionings concerning the basic premises, the rationale and the goals of the project, may provide a good insight and a functional perspective in following up the different implementation phases of the project. In that sense, the entire picture on the overall outcomes of the project could be sketched in a more complete fashion, while the presentation/usefulness of the manual per se (the ‘core’ of the report, at this point in time) may be better understood and appreciated.

Thus, as stated in the initial proposal submitted and approved/funded by the EC, this ‘Charta Nostra’ project wanted *“to contribute to meeting a need, in providing students with knowledge of European matters, so that they can participate as active citizens, with rights and obligations, in the European environment”*. Setting a number of highly aspiring –yet absolutely essential and quite realistic- objectives which, among several others, aimed *“to foster the common values on which the Union is based”, “to contribute to the Lisbon Strategy”, “to popularize the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the EU and in extension the European Constitution”, “to promote intercultural education” and “to strengthen the European dimension in education”*, this transnational project presented itself as an innovative joint contribution at filling part of the gap in the vital ‘territory’ of formal and informal teaching of civic education. The apparent lack of specific and ‘child/learning centred’ activities for constructively and effectively approaching the actual teaching praxis of civic education (mainly, but not exclusively) within institutionalized school systems, became the ultimate target of this project. Within this vein of argument, expectedly, the rationale that systematic civic education teaching among European youngsters constitutes one of the fundamental cornerstones of the contemporary European unity and cohesion in a highly multicultural environment, came to be both the guiding force and the step-by-step cooperative platform of this joint endeavour from A to Z.

Embarking upon a critical approach with regard to existing arrangements in the field of civic education teaching Europe-wide, and taking into serious account a number of undeniable facts which so eloquently underline that,

“The success of any school education policy clearly depends to a large extent on teaching staff”;

“...the subject of civic education that remains relegated among secondary classes and appears more as an obligation that must be met rather than the fulfilment of a vision for the creation of responsible citizens. In many cases, it is a subject that is taught based on the teacher’s personal experience and instinct, while available manuals that would facilitate the teacher in managing the course topic and in better preparing teaching activities are insufficient”;

“...very little attention is given to civic education in a European context as a factor enriching and adding value to the specific cognitive subject. European matters are often underestimated and students graduate knowing very little in relation to the wider political, social, cultural and economic environment in which they will have to operate and claim the share of life they are entitled to”, the project set its course of implementation through a number of collaborative phases (steering group meetings, surveys, brainstorming sessions, design and development of specific teaching-learning activities, pilot testing, tuition courses for teachers), the CN project started its exploratory journey with participating partners from four EU country members.

Within this vein of argument, the first implementation steps of the project were concerned with a number of concerted efforts in order to map out existing practices in the field of civic education teaching in selected (partner) European countries, so that a solid and reliable ‘baseline’ could be established. Understandably, such an empirical, cross-country baseline was both a necessary prerequisite and a suggestive platform for reflecting on existing school/teacher practices and moving forward to new considerations in the civic education field. At the same time, the goal of producing new and innovative teaching material and suggesting new teaching/didactic strategies for civic education curricula aimed at designing and developing a very specific, easy-to-use- ‘manual’ though which interested parties (individuals or/and organizations) across Europe could promote and consolidate ‘civic education aspects’ within a European framework at the junior high school level, has always been kept in perspective.

More specifically, the so-called national or local coordinators in Slovenia (Andagoški Zavod Maribor-Ljudska Univerza) and in Italy (Leader- Lingua Formazione e Comunicazione), throughout the implementation of the different phases of the project, have been extensively cooperating with ECOSE within the framework of the CN joint endeavour, while in Spain the Institut Municipal d’Educació de Barcelona has also taken part in some project phases. They all used and capitalized on the expertise, feedback and the cumulative knowledge of several (additional) individuals (teachers, other professionals related to education/learning) in collecting pertinent data for the purposes of the project and in sharing and exchanging related ideas. They have also been instrumental when pilot testing the specific activities of the manual developed, as well as during the ‘tuition courses’ phase of the project, towards the concluding phase of the project. In that sense, it may safely be claimed that, as a whole, a substantial number of individuals and organizations have been directly involved and thereby contributed towards the implementation and the completion of this transnational project. The ‘manual’ which is discussed at full length below and which has been jointly thought-developed by three CN partners and, thereafter, finalized and produced by ECOSE, best illustrates this cooperative undertaking as a whole.

In order to have a more complete picture when reading this final assessment report, let us for a while recount two of the principal phases of the project, which have been eloquently summarized in the 'mapping-out of civic education' report (April, 2007) and in the 'suggestive guidelines for the tuition courses' (August, 2007).

2. Anthology from the ‘Mapping-out of Civic Education Report’

As the mapping-out of civic education report of the CN project has succinctly pointed upon reviewing the empirical data collected in all four participating countries, the teaching of civic education in today’s secondary schools does not present itself to be at the point/level desired and/or needed, within the present European context. Despite several minor differences from country to country with regard to educational arrangements, curricula and teaching books/materials for civic education teaching, one easily concludes that, on the whole, the respective picture is far from satisfactory –let alone encouraging or promising. A concise anthology of some of the main findings presented through this report, are quite indicative in that respect.

According to the original design of this joint project the ‘mapping-out’ of Civic Education (CE) teaching in the formal secondary schooling was carried out at the very early stages of implementation of the project. The whole idea of having at hand an indicative picture of CE teaching across the European Union, as this picture could be drawn by the teachers themselves involved in the actual teaching of CE, appeared to be a highly useful primary datum for planning and developing alternative/enhanced teaching material and activities. Especially so, in light of the fact that this particular schooling domain of CE in the daily school classroom, continues to be virtually unexplored in depth *at the school level*. Understandably, almost by definition, the inherent ‘built-in’ methodological limitations of this small-scale project led us to include only four different EU countries as partners and participants, while aspiring to claim the possibility of generalizing on the basis of our findings and our proposals across the Union.

This empirical survey was carried out as follows (in the months of December 2006 and February 2007) and revealed the specific results described below:

A total of 16 secondary school teachers, representing and ‘speaking’ on behalf of their respective schools in each participating country, contributed their primary input in this transnational exploratory survey. Four EU member countries (Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain) were represented in this small scale cursive endeavour via their sub-sample consisting of 4 secondary school teachers in each case. The participating secondary school teachers were all -one way or the other- involved in the actual teaching of CE themes and issues as part of the formal curricula of their school.

An especially designed -relatively short- questionnaire was developed and constructed by Dr L.C. Bombas within the framework of the overall objectives of this project. The questions included in this instrument centred around both quantitative and qualitative aspects of CE teaching in secondary schools, while prime emphasis was given to items eliciting useful information about Europe/European Union related issues and concerns. The questionnaire was administered to all 16 participated teachers in each one of the four countries taking part in the survey, explaining in detail the overall scope of the joint project. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 13 items/questions pertaining to the teaching/learning of ‘Civic Education’ in the formal education system of each participating country. Of these 13 items/questions, nine were of the so-called ‘open’ type questions and the rest 4 of the ‘closed’.

Thus, the main findings obtained, in a rather generic presentation, were as follows:

- ♦ It seems that, on the whole, Civic Education (CE) teaching takes place –mostly- in grade three of junior high school;
- ♦ With the exception in the case of Greece, where there is a specific CE textbook strictly prescribed by the Ministry of Education, and Slovenia (books prescribed by the state as well), in the other two participating countries, no specific CE textbook (as such) exists;
- ♦ It is not only the absence of specific CE textbook characterizing Spain and Italy, but also the absence of CE as a school subject on its own. Thus, the teaching of CE as a separate school subject in the formal curriculum exists only in the case of Greece and Slovenia, whereas in the other countries CE issues/themes are taught and/or ‘diffused’ in the teaching of other school subjects like History, Geography, Social Sciences, Sociology, Language, etc;
- ♦ Teaching CE issues may take place at any school hour during the day. It appears, however, that in most cases examined, such a teaching takes place after the third teaching hour;
- ♦ Although the teaching of CE as a separate school subject in the curriculum has been recorded in the Greek and the Slovenian educational scene, it seems that, under whatever scheme CE is taught, the total weekly teaching ranges from one to two teaching hours;
- ♦ In all cases surveyed, the teaching of CE issues/themes goes well beyond the use of only one specific book. CE teachers in all four countries also use additional informative and illustrative material in the form of articles and various other related items drawn from newspapers, magazines, the internet and the Teacher’s Book (in the case of Greece). In addition, CE teaching includes the use of DVD and video as well as a special activity in the local Town Hall (Spain), where, under the eloquent name “Public Audience”, participating students discuss civic issues at length;
- ♦ The books used in the teaching of CE issues are quite recent publications (2004, 2005 & 2006), a finding which implies that most recent developments and contemporary issues of European content/interest have been included in the particular units of those books. Interestingly enough, the chapters/units taught, for their most part, centre around the individual and: the state, society, Europe and the European Union, human rights, contemporary interculturalism, minorities, democracy, mass media and ecology;
- ♦ Either ‘always’ (50,00%) or ‘sometimes’ (43,75%) all students appear to enjoy the teaching/learning of CE as conducted in their respective country;
- ♦ Class participation during the teaching of CE seems to be definitely high (91,25%);
- ♦ The contents of the textbooks used for teaching CE reflect/express in a satisfactory way (75,00%) today’s reality at national and the European level, a finding that in both cases of Greece and Slovenia reached the 100,00% figure;
- ♦ Regarding the ‘Europe/European Union issues and themes coverage’ of the CE books/contents, the majority of participants (56,25%) opted for the ‘yes, to some extent’ answer;
- ♦ Given the fact that they use no specific CE textbook in their teaching, expectedly, Spanish and Italian teachers had nothing to say concerning issues and themes that were probably missing from textbooks of CE. Greek teachers as a whole thought that nothing of substance was actually missing from the textbook used, whereas in the case of Slovenia several issues were stressed as missing. Issues that were basically centred around human rights, other cultures, solidarity, marginal groups/minorities and combating xenophobia.

These findings indicate that the teaching/learning of CE themes and issues finds a very friendly and active student audience across different socio-cultural and national contexts. And this comes out quite clearly from the entire data collected. The very fact revealed and

stressed here that the vast majority of students not only do actively participate during such a teaching but they also like and enjoy CE teaching very much, may very well be ‘capitalized’ and ‘exploited’ when thinking of developing innovative and/or alternative teaching material and activities. In other words, an undertaking towards developing teaching techniques and teaching material/activities for CE at the school level may find a readily ‘fertile’ ground among secondary students who –as shown- enjoy very much CE teaching/learning. No doubt, this is a concrete point of ‘substance’ that needs be kept in mind not only by all those involved in planning and developing CE policy, but also by those responsible for implementing such developments at the daily school praxis.

Before concluding this cursive presentation, another indicative finding begets particular mention in this context. A particular finding which ought to be extensively and systematically considered and thoroughly discussed among all interested parties.

Issues and themes related to and concerning today’s Europe and the European Union as a whole, do seem to constitute integral part of the broad/general content taught in CE classes.

To the extend that this datum linearly corresponds to the existing reality in EU schools, it is definitely a very encouraging and promising outcome. One may certainly ‘build’ on this and further expand and update CE teaching along similar lines. The specific mentioning/underlining on the part of the Slovenian participants about several important issues missing from CE teaching and their emphatic suggestion to include and, possibly, strengthen issues/themes pertaining to interculturalism, discrimination and xenophobia of our era, should definitely ‘ring a bell’ to everyone of us concerned.

Finally, the innovative educational initiative adopted by the Spanish teachers in conducting the ‘lesson’ of CE outside the school classroom and the school premises, for that matter, by visiting the local “Town Hall” and organizing there –on the spot- CE discussions and real-life activities, may surely be taken as a vivid example of true innovative and alternative approaches to teaching/learning. At the same time, such phenomenologically ‘risky’ educational and pedagogical practices implemented by our Spanish colleagues in the context of CE formal schooling, provide both the impetus and the momentum for today’s school to come out of the closet and become ‘part and parcel’ of the real life/world. Something that our youngsters attending schools world-wide always needed, and they need it, even more so, in our present day globalized and multicultural world.

3. Guidelines for the ‘Tuition Courses’

This specific suggestive text in the form of a concise guideline aims at assisting all those responsible for conducting the prescribed ‘tuition courses’ across the four participating countries. It is repeated and stressed from the outset of this report that this particular phase of the project called ‘Tuition Courses’ is of utmost significance for the successful completion of the said project, since the teachers involved and trained during those ‘Courses’ are expected to act as both the pivotal force and the multipliers in implementing the activities in real life/school situations with their students. The European (eight) key competencies framework should always be kept into perspective throughout this instructive procedure in the form of the so-called ‘tuition courses phase’ of the project.

Thus, all of you (teachers) who are to be involved throughout the implementation phases of the project and the execution of the activities, should:

- ✓ Study carefully *all* the activities developed by the other three countries/partners and try to put them into perspective with your own activities, so that a final functional *corpus* of cross-country activities emerges;
- ✓ Be flexible and versatile when ‘working out’ with your students on one or another set of activities in the classroom. For example, some questions/texts may appear difficult (in terms of the vocabulary used or their overall meaning) or ‘too long’ for your class, despite their validity and relevance. Make arrangements and modifications so that these particular questions best suit your students background characteristics and their priorities at hand. Omit or rephrase, as the case may require, keeping always in mind the pursued objective in every instance and the key competence ‘taught’ and ‘cultivated’;
- ✓ It seems (as most probably expected in most cases) that in several instances boys and girls approach differently the respective activities pertaining to the European key competencies and the ‘civic competencies’ teaching procedure in particular. If and when that is the case, sex differentiation becomes an important parameter that needs be carefully considered when implementing the activities completion phase;
- ✓ The very fact that the four participating countries, through their respective educational systems, differ among themselves in several crucial aspects and priorities, suggest and necessitate particular attention. For example, when approaching the ‘communication in foreign language’ key competence, where one may observe noticeable differences among the educational systems, or the ‘digital competence’ and so on, the execution of the respective activities have to be arranged and adjusted accordingly. And the teacher has a very important role to play in this respect.

4. A synoptic presentation of the ‘Charta Nostra Manual’

As already said in preceding paragraphs and clearly described in the respective application to the EC, this joint project constituted a concerted effort to bring at the forefront civic education issues by focusing on *“European citizenship within the framework of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU”*, while, at the same time, taking into serious consideration the eight key competences given in the European Framework -which make possible the realization of the Lisbon Strategy for a *“knowledge based society”*. Using this framework as both a backdrop against which one is challenged to explore those important issues at transnational level and as a guiding stimulus/force for developing appropriate ‘tools for the actual school praxis’, this co-operative endeavour has, principally, been based on the following premises:

Given the very fact that, as the pertinent literature has unequivocally shown and the actual school praxis across different social and cultural contexts has –time and again- unreluctantly suggested, *“the success of any school education policy clearly depends to a large extent on teaching staff”*, that *“the subject of civic education remains relegated among secondary classes and appears more as an obligation that must be met rather than the fulfilment of a vision for the creation of responsible citizens”*, and that, as is most definitely the case in many other areas, *“very little attention is given to civic education in a European context as a factor enriching and adding value to the specific cognitive subject”*, immediate, systematic, and concrete action along this particular front has been long overdue.

Within this vein of argument, the delivery of a specific ‘corpus’ that would have been meticulously designed and developed in the form of a ‘handy teacher’s manual’, has been at the very core of this CN project. Such a manual would be expected to facilitate and promote civic education practices among all European youngsters –mostly within the formal education system without, of course, excluding informal settings of learning, whenever that is the case. Accordingly, all different procedural phases of this entire joint venture that have already been carried out over the last two and a half years, as planned, aimed at developing and presenting this innovative, activities-based, multilingual manual ready to be constructively used by all CN project partners as well as by any other interested party (be that party a formal school unit or/and other organizations) involved in the education/socialization of youngsters.

Thus, three project partners (Greece, Italy, Slovenia), having jointly gone through the developmental phases of the project in the course of continuously elaborative and creative contributions, have produced this final outcome/product in the form of ready-to-use ‘electronic teacher’s manual’.

The individual contents of this manual and the corresponding activities, which by definition constitute the principal ‘menu’ of the manual, along all its other related characteristics are described below in some detail. Furthermore, as expected, in the paragraphs that follow the reader may find interesting tips of information pertaining to the direct and/or indirect ‘connections’ between those activities of the manual and the specific ‘rights’ to be learned/promoted among the young Europeans.

The manual includes spreads over a grand total of 447 pages, structured in seven individual chapters. The detailed presentation of those seven chapters of the manual are preceded by the usual ‘acknowledgement’ section on the part of the coordinator of the project, followed

by three concise 'prefaces' prepared and signed by each one of the partner organizations. In the page that follows, the reader finds the 'Preamble' as originally stated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Expectedly and for obvious reasons, the seven chapters of the manual developed as integral part of the CN joint project follow, chapter-by-chapter, the specific structure and the content in terms of 'headings' of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. Indicative, symbolic and illustrative pictures have been carefully selected in introducing each individual chapter.

In their own respective preface at the beginning of the manual, the three national coordinators stress and emphasize the great importance and the immediate relevance of the European Charter for every European citizen, and especially so for all youngsters during their formative years at school. Furthermore, they explain the particular procedural undertakings completed in each country in order to reach the main objective of CN, while at the same time the 'activities oriented' approach of the manual are pointed out. Several sporadic direct quotes from these prefaces are quite indicative and illuminating: *"It consists of several different activities for junior high school students (~14 years old) and professors, as well as for any other interested party in the field of education...The Greek section contains 50 different activities at developing in young people and students a wide range of skills and abilities"* (S. Athanasiadou, Greece). *"Each activity represents a starting point for stimulating reflection and class discussion pertaining to the various aspects of the society we live in...The worksheets were devised along three main guidelines: a) acknowledging the principles, rules and behaviour of one's own culture; b) learning to observe reality from different points of view; c) using effective communication skills"* (A. Cuk, Italy). *"The following activities were tested in Slovenian schools as part of the Civic Education classes with the aim to make the students aware of the contents of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in EU, to fully understand them in their own lives. To achieve our aim effectively we've chosen the methodology of teaching and learning process that require active participation of the students...The students enjoyed participating in the activities and benefited much from them."* (H. Matavz, Slovenia).

As the manual developed within the CN joint project follows a sequence parallel to the individual chapters of the European Charter along with the respective activities attached to each sub-unit of the manual by all three participating countries, the user of this easy-to-use didactic tool has a very instructive and effective medium at hand when teaching civic education issues to his students/audience. Among others, the cross-country/national nature of all activities included in the step-by-step unfolding of the manual and the very practical and experiential, participatory in structure and orientation, character of the activities function as the necessary framework for establishing and consolidating a conducive to learning environment.

More specifically, upon dealing with the particular activities of chapter one in a civic education learning pursuit, the crucial issue of 'Dignity' in its various expressions among all humans comes into the scene. Covering the entire spectrum from human dignity and the right to life all the way to the integrity of the person and the prohibition of slavery and forced labour, each sub-unit includes three different sets of appropriately designed and pilot tested activities -one by each partner country, as is the case with the entire repertoire of activities throughout the respective chapters of the manual. The chapter two on 'Freedoms' that follows and which focuses on the right to liberty and security, the respect of private and family life, the protection of personal data, the freedom of expression, information, assembly and association, the right to education, to property and asylum, includes a whole series of innovative and highly challenging activities so that learners may become aware, cognizant, and respectful vis-à-vis those very basic freedoms and rights for all people indiscriminately. 'Equality' comes next in chapter three covering articles 20 to 26, while the

respective activities of the manual follow suit. Within the equality chapter, civic education teaching via this specific activities-based manual deals with the issue of equality before the law, non-discrimination which, in effect, implies equality between men and women as well as cultural/religious/linguistic diversity, the rights of the child and elderly and the systematic pursue of integration of persons with disabilities.

Chapter four on the 'Solidarity' front has given rise to a series of participatory activities aiming at promoting among civic education attendants the workers' right to information/consultation and to collective bargaining and action, fair and just working conditions, prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work, social security/assistance, health care and environmental/consumer protection. Next, (chapter five) articles 39 to 46 of the European Charter which concern themselves with 'Citizens' Rights' -from right to vote and to stand as a candidate at elections to the right to a good administration/petition and the freedom of movement and residence- have functioned as a kind of stepping stone for the CN participants in designing and developing specific civic education activities for the European youth. Finally, chapter five on the 'Justice' issue that refers to the right for a fair trial/defence, presumption of innocence and the right not to be tried/punished twice for the same criminal offence, concludes the European Charter and the manual of CN after having attached the appropriate activities to the respective articles. The last (approximately) twenty pages of the manual include the section on the so-called 'General Provisions' of the Charter (chapter seven) which through the individual articles 51 to 54 make particular mention to the scope of guaranteed rights, the level of protection and the prohibition of abuse of rights. As most probably expected, no activities have been developed by the CN partnership for this concluding part of the European Charter of Rights.

Having thus far provided an overall structural presentation of the manual which, of course, with the activities developed by CN joint project, follows article by article the contents of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, it is both necessary and appropriate at this point of the presentation to take a closer look at the 'constituent parts' or the apparent 'skeleton' of the activities making up the core of the manual developed. Such an informative undertaking may further illuminate and complete the presentation of the manual per se, while, at the same time, it may challenge the interested reader of this final report on the CN project to turn to the actual manual that –as said, time and again- is readily available in its electronic, format.

Accordingly, each single activity (of all three CN partners) following each article of the Charter has been designed and developed along the following structural mode: There is a title and a subtitle for each individual activity preceded by the name of the organization/partner that has developed the activity. Next, one finds the category 'level of difficulty' for dealing with and successfully completing the specific activity (scale 1-3), followed by the amount of time needed for carrying out the entire activity as prescribed in the manual. The size of the group (e.g. individual work, in pairs, in smaller or relatively large groups) gets specified in the next category, as is the location (formal classroom, or other informal teaching/learning setting) within which the activity ought to be carried out. Expectedly, the teaching and/or any other material needed for the successful implementation of the activity are mentioned in full detail, while the next instructional category explains both the preparation and the execution phases involved upon dealing with the particular activity at hand. The aim of the activity is clearly defined and expressed in a concise, yet succinct, way, while the so-called 'variation/development' structural category of the activities provide indicative tasks that the participating students/learners of the activity would have to complete. Finally, each instructional sheet that introduces and guides each individual activity to be implemented includes a list of indicative sources used for developing

the activity and, as a footnote, the ‘keys-solutions’ or the correct answers to the tasks that the learner has to complete.

With regard to the actual content of the different activities (50 different activities by each one of the three partner organizations so that there is one-to-one correspondence with the respective 50 articles of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights) included in the manual, several interesting characteristics of those activities should be mentioned. First of all you have a wide variety of tasks, questions, problems and ‘mini projects’ that prospective users/learners in the civic education field would have to solve and/or complete. This variety characterizing the activities, which –all the way- has been a conscientious approach by all those developing such activities for the CN manual, concerns the content (e.g. vocabulary-oriented tasks, mathematical problems, understanding and reproducing specific texts, drawing special pictures and shapes, etc), the ‘method’ of trying to deal with the task at hand (e.g. individually, in pairs, in small or larger groups, the class of learners as a whole), the thematology of each activity (e.g. contemporary social issues, history, arithmetic/geometry, older and current political dilemmas, cultural and intra-cultural topics, the environment, Europe and the European Union, the arts), and the level or the degree of difficulty (relatively easy task, moderately difficult, difficult).

It is obvious that such a creative variety on the activities sheets portrayed via the pages of the manual may provide the teacher or any other initiator of ‘civic education sessions’ with the much needed flexibility and adjustability for the ultimate benefit of the learners concerned. Thus, depending on the particular background and context-bound characteristics of the specific individuals involved on the learners side, the time available for carrying out and complete the required tasks of civic education teaching, and depending, also, on the specific attribute or civic education aspect (aspects) that the teacher wishes to promote and emphasize at a given time and in a given place, this innovative easy-to- use manual produced by CN leaves room and, in fact, encourages all differential teaching/learning in the civic education domain. Finally, the ‘indicative sources’ section of the activity sheet which cites relevant references for the interested teacher/learner, may very well be of valuable assistance when one chooses to go further and expand on the civic education issues under consideration.

After this informative –yet epigrammatic- portrait of the manual that has been presented in the preceding paragraphs as integral part of the Final Report of CN joint project thus far, this entire presentation will conclude by providing a short summary of the feedback data collected upon implementing the so-called ‘tuition courses’ phase of the project.

5. Feedback from the ‘Tuition Courses’

Procedurally, these tuition courses were realized after all 150 (50 activities by each one of the three partner organizations) activities sheets had been designed and fully developed. Each partner of the CN project with the civic education activities at hand approached a number of teachers in his country (and a number of other professionals and interested individuals in the area) and presented those activities by explaining in full detail, the scope, the content and the objective pursued through such activities and the CN joint project as a whole. The grand total number of direct participants (obviously, the vast majority of them being secondary education teachers, according to the original planning of the project) reached 436 individuals (Greece=192, Italy=100, Slovenia= 120, Spain=24). Female participants (N=310) outnumbered men (126), and this trend was observed in all four participating countries. The teachers involved in each country to (eventually) utilize the different activities developed in their classes/schools, were meticulously instructed on the methodology and the most appropriate ‘techniques’ that they should employ in implementing their task, while they were also encouraged to ‘build up’ those activities in civic education learning situations/settings they themselves choose. The manual jointly developed thus far by the CN partnership was at the disposal of all participants during the tuition course session. It is understood that during this tuition courses phase of the project, the partner organization experts were confronted with several questions (and anxieties) by the teachers participating in those sessions, questions which had to be answered/explained in full detail and with concrete examples. The feedback received by all participating teachers in those courses show that such questions and legitimate apprehensions during the ‘training’ had been fully entertained by the end of each session. On the hand, when making use of the activities, the teachers who were teaching other than CE subjects but were willing to undertake this task had been instructed/guided to make use of selected and representative activities, and not of the entire volume of activities available in the form of the multilingual manual.

Thus, the overall feedback comments and suggestions recorded by the teachers directly involved in these tuition courses sessions and reported as evaluative statements by the national coordinators of the project, may be summarized as follows:

Let us begin this section of the report with a rather general comment, regarding this very important phase of the project under consideration. Upon reading all four (Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Spain) evaluation reports of partner organizations (the three partners which continued their active presence and participation to the CN joint project from the beginning to its very end and the evaluation sheet submitted by the Spanish partner which experienced some difficulties a little before the implementation of the ‘Tuition Courses’ phase of the project and the final designing/development of the manual has not included their 50 items/activities as originally planned), it becomes abundantly clear that, as a whole, these evaluative statements along several lines portray a highly positive picture. Item after item, question after question referring to the content, the format and the entire execution of the courses that, in turn, make up the respective evaluation sheets completed, have elicited overwhelmingly positive responses on the part of those responsible for handling and administering the different phases of the project. A strong indication of the overall valuable contribution of the CN endeavour in many respects. Even the Spanish evaluation sheet, along with a limited number of mildly expressed reservations or scepticism concerning specific aspects of the implementation of this particular phase of the project, had positive comments and feedback for the project and its objectives in their entirety.

An indicative presentation of selected evaluative answers drawn from the pertinent data collected through the specific questionnaires, may further highlight the positive impact and the positive outcomes of this particular activity of the project, as directly perceived by the partner organizations and the respective national experts themselves.

↳ *“Very good impression expressed for the design, concept, structure and type of activities of the handbook....There was an interest on European matters...Promotion of multidisciplinary approach in learning process...Notification that there is a lack of connection between school and out of school life...Practical information and easy-to-use/handy materials should be produced and given to teachers...” (S. Athanasiadou, Greece).*

↳ *“The project had a very good impact...Teachers were favourably impressed by the quality and amount of activities presented in the Charta Nostra manual and the range of languages in which the material is presented...Teachers said they were interested in the manual and liked it. They said they will download and use it in their classes.” (A. Cuk, Italy).*

↳ *“Teachers welcome the Manual because it is oriented towards their needs and is easy to use: activity sheets are available for print outs, there is visual material ready. They were happy to take posters of article illustration to start using them immediately...They all agreed that civic education is one of the favourite subjects in school because pupils are encouraged to be creative and to express their views and opinions.” (M. Cimerman, Slovenia).*

Virtually all teachers selected to participate in the tuition courses sessions across the different partner countries expressed their unreserved satisfaction with regard to the training contents and process as well as to the didactical approaches employed by the national experts and the contribution of those experts. Furthermore, all performance indicators concerning the impact and the quality of those tuition courses have revealed a very positive picture through the respective responses focusing, among others, on promoting positive attitudes towards European Union, interaction with and awareness of other cultures, suitability of the materials used and appropriateness of the practical arrangements for the courses. The handbook used and distributed during the tuition courses procedure of the CN project has been found to be relevant to the participants needs, to strengthen the importance of self-learning, to create to the participants challenges in civic education and to assist participating professionals in developing positive attitudes towards the fight against racism/xenophobia and against the inequality between men and women.

Quite similar appear to be the corresponding comments/answers provided by five other education professionals originated from new EU Member States (psychologist/school advisor, social worker, three mainstream teachers), who participated in the so-called ‘Instruction Workshop’ meeting (Athens, July 19-22, 2008). Their concrete responses on the items included in the respective ‘Participant’s Evaluation Sheet’ of the CN project have provided some additional interesting data from yet another perspective and which, in their turn, may further highlight vital aspects of the project as a whole and the future use/impact of the manual developed in particular.

Thus, in the form of a brief anthology of their responses, these five ‘transnational multipliers’ from Latvia, Slovakia, Romania and Estonia, have pointed out the following:

↳ Their expectations for getting to know ECOSE and its wide range of activities along with receiving specific information on the CN manual, meeting prospective partners for joint European projects, while presenting their own projects in process have been fully met

through the sessions of this ‘instruction workshop’. At the same time, they had the opportunity to exchange ideas on specific thematic areas in the fields of education and training in general and point out their own priorities and concerns in those two highly important fields during these well-organized/prepared meetings. The session that was exclusively concerned with the presentation and the elaborate explanation of the CN manual, appear to have been the most interesting/useful for all participants;

→ With regard to the actual content and the activities included in the CN manual, all participants have been overwhelmingly positive concerning the impact of the manual on crucial issues/parameters such as developing positive attitudes towards Europe, equality of the sexes, fighting racism and xenophobia, creating challenges for extra curricula activities and the teaching of civic education, strengthening the importance of self-learning and promoting technical skills. At the same time, it has become crystal clear from the responses of all participants in the so-called ‘multipliers’ category that the specific contents of the CN manual correspond in a linear fashion and are of immediate relevance to the needs of the participants, as well as to the needs/interests of many other individuals (teachers and/or other professionals) directly involved in the teaching/education profession in their respective countries, while these activities of the manual could very well be incorporated into both the national educational policies and the daily school curricula of each country concerned. The multilingual characteristic of the CN manual could be of great assistance in several circumstances, whereas the different activities making up the manual could be easily adapted to different socio-cultural and educational contexts;

→ All participants have stated that they would try and would succeed in disseminating the CN manual to a relatively long list of other parties, organizations and institutes in their respective countries in a concerted effort to make this highly useful handbook known and accepted as one of their teaching tool. Such organizations and institutes include local, regional and national authorities/communities, universities and other tertiary education institutes, teachers association and teachers training bodies, libraries, information centres and schools, NGOs and youth workers. According to their initial estimates, a total number of 30-40 such organizations are expected to receive all the relevant information/promotion of the manual, whereas in the case of the Estonian participant that number is estimated to be at between 50 and 100 recipients and for the Romanian participant the number of recipients is expected to reach the 300 figure;

→ The participants have expressed their interest in disseminating the manual by using all means/tools of technology (projector, computer, video, etc) available to them and by organizing special presentations, discussion groups, workshops and in-service training sessions in their respective countries, while incorporating elements and aspects of the manual into the daily teaching. On the other hand, existing difficulties/problems/low motivation concerning –quite often- a substantial number of individuals making up the ‘target group’ that do not appear to be interested in such initiatives, are going to be dealt with on ad hoc basis and by making full use of the flexibility and the originality of the activities included in the manual. The very fact that, on the whole, the respective target groups are not perceived by the participants to be faced with information overload, could – to some extent- further facilitate the dissemination, the approval and the eventual use of the CN manual.

6. Epilogue

The 'Charta Nostra' partnership has completed its relatively short life span as a joint European project amidst a plethora of constructive encounters and challenges. That has been the case for all those actively involved throughout its implementation phases, either as immediate partners at the centre of the project or as 'secondary' participants and/or recipients of the project's outcomes at its periphery –so to speak. The rather elaborate report as presented above and which attempted to epitomize the CN project in its totality, has provided the interested reader with all those pertinent elements that may portray its entire picture –and, hopefully, humble contribution- in the contemporary European making. At this point in time, in concluding this cursive informative presentation, one may very well point out succinctly and in a telegraphic form the following *three main achievements* of this project:

- a) To a considerable extent, the seemingly neglected area/field/school subject of **civic education** in its contemporary format and teaching within a European framework, came at the forefront as a quite promising and aspiring prospect, absolutely necessary and of paramount relevance in our multicultural and technologically advanced era;
- b) An active, **transnational network of experts and school teachers** has been established and consolidated through a constant and mutually respected cooperation along Civic Education lines. A specific network with partners and members in several European countries and which will continue its team work and contribution in the field in the years to come;
- c) The specific **multilingual, easy-to-use, activities based, CN manual** that has already been designed and developed in its electronic format as the overall outcome and the 'end product' of the joint project, no doubt, constitutes not only a much needed innovative tool in the hands of school teachers and all other professionals involved, one way or another, in the teaching of civic education issues, but, also, functions as a concrete stimulus and a stepping stone for further challenges in the future.