

ABOUT THE SCHOOL OF TOLERANCE PROJECT

School of Tolerance is an educational project that is being implemented in the high school "Gostivar" in Gostivar by the Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution with the financial support of SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency). The project is designed to last for five school years and it has started in the 2003-2004 school year.

The overall aim of the „School of Tolerance“ project as defined in the general project proposal submitted in 2002 is to create a model-school in which active tolerance, respect for differences, and active student participation will exist as part of the daily life in a high school with Macedonian and Albanian (and Turkish) as languages of instruction. While the overall objectives are (1) Introducing changes in the global school atmosphere - from autocratic-conformational towards democratic-participative setting *and* (2) Introducing changes in the inter-ethnic relations among all participants in the educational process - from parallelism and division towards social interdependence.

There are many reasons why these goals are of high importance. The baseline situation (when starting the project) was characterized by:

1. Lack of any communication between the students of different ethnic communities;
2. Very little communication between the teachers from the different language groups;
3. All activities in the school were taking place separately for the three language groups (with a clear language separation concerning the communication, the information given to students and the final products);
4. Lack of any joint appearance or performance of the students in the public (in ethnically mixed groups);
5. Lack of any kind of organization of the students at school level or within the different language groups;
6. Lack of extracurricular activities and engagement of the teachers and students;
7. Total lack of initiatives for any kind of activities by either the students or the teachers;
8. Total absence of the students from the decision-making processes.

Achievement of the abovementioned goals is considered to be most successful through an integrative approach. That means, developing and running different activities at the same time with all subjects of the educational process, i.e. with the students at the first place, but also with the teachers, the school management and the parents.