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PALAIS DES NATIONS • 1211 Genève 10, SUISSE

Site [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org) • Tél. +41 22 917 9000 • FAX: +41 22 917 9008 • E-MAIL: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org)

Reference: WRGS/RB/Res32/20

**Subject: Report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 32/20 of the Human Rights Council**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights presents its compliments to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva and has the honour to refer to Resolution 32/20 entitled, “Realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl”.

This resolution urged “all States to strengthen and intensify their efforts to realize progressively the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl”, recognized that “education is a multiplier right that empowers women and girls to make choices to claim their human rights, including the right to participate in public affairs, and to participate fully in the making of decisions that shape society”, and expressed a determination to “continue to make the progressive realization of the right to education a reality for every girl”. Finally, it requested the High Commissioner, in close cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, to prepare a report on the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl to be submitted for the consideration of the Human Rights Council at its thirty-fifth session.

In this context, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would like to request information in response to the following questions for the preparation of this report:

1. What are the concrete steps your Government or organization has taken to ensure the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl? Please also elaborate on the impact these steps have had, where appropriate.

The principle of non-discrimination and thereto related gender equality have been among the core values and principles of Estonian education system already from the 1990s. They have had a reflection in the curricula and different legal acts.

In August 2014, the Government approved amendments to the national curricula of basic and upper secondary schools which *inter alia* enhanced the promotion of gender equality at these school levels, including in tuition of social subjects, career planning, technology and handicraft.

According to a Regulation of the Minister of Education and Research, study literature must be based on the core values established in the national curriculum, whereas it must take into account the principle of multiculturalism and avoid stereotypes that incite gender based, nation based, religious, cultural or racial prejudice.

Gender equality also resembles in prioritising and developing human rights education. Pursuant to the Estonian Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act and curricula, human rights and gender equality are core values of general education. Schools shall build up a school culture respecting democratic and human rights values. Within the learning process, human rights are connected with the core competences (for example value and cultural competence; social and civic competence; self-awareness competence; communication competence) described in the general part of the national curriculum.

Human rights education in connection with value education, media literacy and critical thinking is set as a target to be developed in the General Education Programme 2016-2019 (part of the Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020). According to the Programme, a concept and strategy of human rights education in Estonian education system will be developed by 2017.

As an accompanying material for the implementation of the national curricula, descriptions of study process have been worked out in Estonia. These descriptions are there for every subject and the aim of these is to assist teachers in integrating cross-curricular topics, core competencies and creating links between different subjects in the study process in their own subject. The descriptions of study process are currently being complemented with the topics of human rights, gender equality and communication competence.

2. Which measures would your Government or organization propose and implement in order to eliminate gender disparities in education by 2030, taking into account goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as other relevant SDGs?

The main obstacle in eliminating the disparities are gender stereotypes, lack of awareness and some traditional gender roles enrooted in different societies. The measures taken on the international level could therefore be directed to awareness raising, including giving voice and providing a communication platform for civil society initiatives and human rights organisations. But it is also important to empower (in terms of finance, know-how, organisation etc.) local communities in building their own capacities for providing different types of education options for women and girls. It is crucial that the support and measures offered by the UN would be tailored to the needs of different countries and communities.

Estonia will definitely continue its efforts in empowering women and girls via ICT education at home and in developing countries. Estonia also remains committed to the implementation of the resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Our national action plans have always contained education related activities, especially on awareness raising and issues of women in the military and law protection institutions personnel.

3. What are the challenges that *your Government or organization faces* in implementing policies and programmes towards the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl? Please elaborate on the nature of these challenges and the steps taken to address them.

One of the root causes for gender inequality are gender stereotypes. They influence both men and women in a variety of ways and create sometimes hidden connections between different fields of life.

The key measure to empower women and reduce inequality is to raise awareness in the society at large as well as target specific groups and people like teachers, employers, employees and policy-makers. The aim is to create a common understanding of the causes and consequences of gender inequality, including gender pay gap, and provide know-how for tackling these problems.

It is important to encourage women to participate more in business life and create their own enterprises. It is important to bring transparency to decision making processes to guarantee that there are more female leaders in politics, public office and private enterprises. ICTs and related knowledge directly contribute to economic empowerment of women.

It is also important to keep in mind that our children learn from the grownups and society around them. Therefore, in Estonia human rights and gender equality are included in the school curricula and shall be implemented throughout all the subjects and 'lived' in the school culture.

4. In the view of your Government or organization, what are the obstacles and barriers *faced by girls in particular* in effectively accessing education? Please elaborate on the nature of these obstacles, how they manifest in practice, and what steps have been taken to address them.

We see the problems twofold: gender stereotypes and wider structural problems, such as e.g. social inequality, growing popularity of far-right ideologies and old-fashioned teacher-centred ways of teaching and learning, which do not allow developing values, competencies and active critical reflections by students. The steps taken to tackle those obstacles are described above. In addition to that we would bring out the following projects specifically related to stereotypes:

- recent training courses organised by research and analysis centre Praxis for school managers on gender equality. During the project a one-day in-service training course that covers topics such as equal treatment and gender equality in schools, the role of school management in creating stereotype-free school culture and teaching practices etc, is developed for school principals and management. The course is tested out on two groups in Tallinn and Tartu in November 2016. More information: <http://www.praxis.ee/en/works/training-for-school-principals/>.
- Two projects under the Norway Grants 2009-2014 programme "Mainstreaming Gender Equality and Promoting Work-Life Balance" aim to integrate gender equality issues into higher education curricula, including teacher training. The Estonian Women's Associations Roundtable Foundation implements a project on gender mainstreaming into teachers' education and training and the Praxis Centre for Policy Studies implements the project "Gender equality programme for social sciences and teacher education programme students".

5. Does your Government or organisation have experience with the use of qualitative and quantitative indicators to assist in monitoring the realization of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, and if so, which have been used and why?

In Estonia all statistics on educational institutions, students and, teachers as well as school performance indicators are available at a website: <http://www.haridussilm.ee/>. It is possible to sort some of the data based on gender there. During the project “Students or Boys and Girls? A Study on the Readiness of Estonian Teachers and Education Workers for Gender Sensitive Teaching and Educating” conducted in 2010-2012, 200 teacher surveys and in-depth interviews were held. A conclusion was formed in a collection of articles and an advisory methodology created to audit the knowledge of and attitudes towards gender equality. In 2016 ministry conducted special analyses on gender equity monitoring gender related questions at all educational levels as well as giving overview of the current actions and proposing additional activities. The report will be soon available (in Estonian) at the Ministry website: [www.hm.ee](http://www.hm.ee)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would be grateful if submissions could be limited to five pages and sent to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (United Nations Office at Geneva, CH 1211 Geneva 10; Fax. +41 22 917 90 08; Email: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org)) by 25 November 2016.

Please indicate whether the information provided can be made available on the OHCHR website. Any enquiries may be made to Ruben Brouwer at [rbrouwer@ohchr.org](mailto:rbrouwer@ohchr.org), telephone: +41-229171156.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.

11 October 2016