ACTIVITY REPORT 2020

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### INTRODUCTION

We hereby present OIDEL's activity report for 2020, an unusual year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the lives of a staggering number of people around the world. At OIDEL, we stand by those suffering from the pandemic and hope that this unexpected and painful situation will soon be overcome. Since mid-March, OIDEL, similarly to other organisations, has limited its face-to-face activities at the United Nations and in the European forums in which it usually takes part. Thanks to technology, however, we have continued to deploy online a high level of activity in the field of the right and freedom of education, as reviewed in detail by the present report.

On the other hand, with the future of OIDEL in mind, we have reviewed our objectives and our working practices in the years to come. We remind you that OIDEL's main objective is to support and collaborate with people and institutions that contribute to the right to education having a greater relevance at the international organisations in which we participate, given that it is a fundamental human right to people's development.

As a result, we work in several lines of action:

- Institutional relations:
  - o In the United Nations and at the Human Rights Council session, in NGO platforms on the right to education and in the UNESCO.
  - o At the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

- Research projects with universities and international organisations that target educational pluralism.

- Updating the reports Freedom of Education Index and Legislative Corpus on the right to education and freedom of education, which OIDEL publishes periodically.

Finally, we would like to thank the people and entities that help OIDEL to fulfil its mission.

Yours sincerely,



Diego Barroso OIDEL President

## UNITED NATIONS ACTION





#### SESSIONS AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

2020 has been a particularly challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has had a strong socio-economic impact worldwide, to which the education sector has sadly not been immune. Despite the existing difficulties, OIDEL has been committed to the protection of education, continuing to deliver oral online interventions.

The Human Rights Council (HRC) meets regularly in quarterly sessions held in February, July and October.

#### 43RD SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

In February 2020, OIDEL attended the opening of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, composed of a highlevel segment, side events and informal meetings to follow up on HRC resolutions.



Camila García speaking during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres opened the highlevel meeting by highlighting the importance of education. More than 100 representatives, including Heads of State and Foreign Ministers from different countries presented the latest situation of human rights in their country and stressed the importance of international cooperation to address current and future challenges.

During the second and third week, OIDEL delivered two or a linterventions at the Council, under item 3 of the HRC Agenda "Promotion and Protection of All Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural rights, Including the Right to Development".

First, as a response to the contribution of the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights, Karima Bennoune, OIDEL addressed the importance of the cultural approach of the right to education, as well as the need to recognise the important role of teachers.

During the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues (Fernand de Varennes), OIDEL highlighted the importance of language in education as a mechanism for inclusion and the importance of public authorities having positive obligations in relation to public schools to ensure that all children enjoy a quality education which is inclusive.

#### 44TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

In July 2020, OIDEL attended the 44th session of the Human Rights Council which focused a lot on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis, that has had health, economic and social repercussions has also had an impact on the world of education. Unlike previous ones, this session was entirely held online.

The Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Koumbou Boly Barry, presented her conclusions on three reports, the first one being on the impact of COVID-19 on education, and the other two about her visits to Tunisia and Qatar. She specially focused on the report on the pandemic and made two important points:

Firstly, countries that collaborate with teachers' unions and associations showed fewer inequalities in educational continuity. These inequalities were already present before, but the pandemic has intensified them. Most countries agreed that online education should become a more frequent measure, and considered that it should be used as an emergency and temporary tool to respond to the pandemic, but never as a substitute for face-to-face classes. A constant dialogue is necessary with parents and teachers to develop better state policies, given that they have managed to maintain schooling despite the circumstances.



Ignasi Grau participating in the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education. Secondly, Boly Barry urged all states to be aware of the interconnection between the right to education and the rest of the human rights, stressing that education must always be taken into account when considering other social policies and must be financed to reduce inequality, especially among the most vulnerable groups.

OIDEL pointed out in its intervention the importance of the role of parents, families and communities regarding education, especially during this pandemic, and called on the international community to support non-governmental, non-profit schools for the important role they play in protecting the right to education for many communities.

In general, all countries agreed on the importance of international cooperation and the sharing of good practices to address this crisis. When schools close, many pupils no longer receive school meals, domestic abuse increases and there is a high risk of children, especially girls, dropping out of school. While some countries see online education as a new opportunity, most expect it to be a temporary measure.

#### 45TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

In September 2020, the 45th Human Rights Council took place. OIDEL's participation was online in all three oral interventions which revolved around different thematic debates: truth and justice, indigenous peoples and good governmental practices.



#### SOCIAL FORUM



The Social Forum is an annual meeting called by the United Nations Human Rights Council. It provides a unique space for an open and interactive dialogue between civil society actors, UN Member States representatives and intergovernmental organisations.

It is generally held in October for three days to discuss a theme chosen by the Human Rights Council at its March session. This year's theme was: "Good Practices, Success Stories, Lessons Learned and Current Challenges in Combating Poverty and Inequalities".

OIDEL prepared an oral intervention focusing on the role of states and public policies to address poverty and inequalities in the field of education. It highlighted the right to education as a key to the development of the human personality of the children.

#### Link to intervention

#### NGO PLATFORM FOR THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In January 2020, before the pandemic came to our lives, we had the opportunity to meet at Geneva with the Special Rapporteur Koumbou Boly Barry at a meeting organised by the NGO Platform for the right to education in one of the rooms of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights.

Boly Barry introduced the content of her report examining the right to education and detailed how an NGO can contribute to its elaboration. The Special Rapporteur asked each of the organisations on this platform for a written contribution to be taken into account when drafting the report. The content of OIDEL's written contribution focused on the cultural dimension of the right to education.



Meeting of the NGO Platform for the ight to education with the special apporteur in the background.

#### **GROUP MEETING OF EXPERTS ON CULTURAL RIGHTS**

In February, OIDEL has been invited to participate in a meeting of experts on cultural rights with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, Bolly Barry. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the legal basis, the theorical content and the implementation of the cultural approach of the right to education.

The event was attended by Fernand de Varennes, Special Rapporteur on Minorities, and Patrice Meyer-Bisch, Coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Institute of Ethics and Human Rights (IIEDH), who made valuable contributions to the discussion.

We had the opportunity to present different contributions, which stressed the importance of civil society and especially the role of private schools in the realisation of the cultural dimension of the right to education for persistent minorities.



The Group of experts celebrating the end of their meeting with the Special Rapporteur Dr. Bolly Barry (centre).

#### UNESCO : "FUTURES OF EDUCATION"

In 2019, UNESCO launched the initiative entitled "Futures of education". This initiative is catalyzing a global debate on how to rethink the concepts of knowledge, education and learning in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty and instability.

OIDEL has participated with a written contribution and by holding a webinar in November entitled "Experience of Christian schools facing the COVID-19 crisis". This event was organised jointly with OIEC (Catholic International Education Office), GPEN-Reformation (Global Pedagogical Network Joining in Reformation) and GRACE (Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education).

European and African Independent Christian were taken as examples, demonstrating the current need to incorporate new technologies and to help improve teaching in schools in the following aspects:

•Good quality computer infrastructure: necessary for both families and schools, as it is virtually nonexistent on the African continent.

- •Essential means of communication.
- •Fewer pupils per class.
- •Satisfactory teacher training.



## EUROPE ACTION

#### EMIE GROUP (EUROPEAN MEETING OF INDEPENDENT EDUCATION)



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Due to the pandemic, Europe is facing an emergency situation that affects the whole educational community, particularly independent schools. OIDEL, together with more than forty European educational associations, has launched the manifesto "Europe must not forget independent education and educational pluralism".

This manifesto underlines the importance of state support for independent schools. Article 76 of the European Parliament Resolution on modernising education in the Union "*Encourages, with regard to increasing inclusiveness and ensuring freedom of educational choice, the provision of adequate financial support for schools of all categories and levels, both state schools and not-for-profit private schools"*.

In addition, the manifesto reaffirms the willingness of the endorser entities to continue contributing, sharing experiences, good practices and resources in order to recover quickly and safely from this crisis. It demands that governments do not take advantage of this crisis to achieve objectives conflicting with educational pluralism, and urges national and international authorities to listen to parents and professionals of independent schools.

#### Link to the manifesto

# PARTICIPATION IN OPEN CONSULTATION PROCESSES (EUROPEAN UNION)

Throughout 2020, OIDEL has contributed to numerous open consultations carried out by the European Commission, particularly on digitilisation (Digital skills for resilient education and training and Digital literacy and competences for the 21st century) and also, on the action plan to overcome the coronavirus crisis in the field of education.

OIDEL also participated in the various processes of drafting European Parliament Resolutions by proposing amendments to the various political parties. One of OIDEL's proposals was to call for a greater focus on the support of private schools and the families who enroll their children in them, as well as a greater support to disadvantaged groups.

### INGOS CONFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The INGOs Conference is a body that represents civil society in the Council of Europe. Founded in 1949, it holds each year an NGO international conference in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe headquarters. The Plenary Conference decides on policy lines and actions. It also adopts a position on fundamental issues and sends them in the form of recommendations or resolutions to other bodies of the Council of Europe, to international or national institutions, as well as to the media.

OIDEL has a consultative status in the Council of Europe and this allows us to attend meetings organised by this institution. This year, in the context of the global pandemic, OIDEL participated and voted virtually.



## MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES

# ISCRC (INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL CHOICE AND REFORM CONFERENCE) FORT LAUDERDALE (USA)



In January 2020, OIDEL participated in the International School Choice and Reform Conference (ISCRC). Since 2012, the ISCRC brings together more than 100 experts on education policies. It was an opportunity to catch up on global trends and research on educational freedom and its implementation. The ideas that were developed revolved around a wide range of topics, such as home schooling, changes within education systems and the role of parents in their children's education.

OIDEL made two panel presentations:

• The first panel was entitled "International Advocacy at the United Nations and the European Union". The director of OIDEL expressed some ideas on how these two international bodies perceive the approach to freedom of the right to education. ECNAIS and the European Foundation Society and Education also participated in this panel.

• The second panel was entitled "Right to education: tyranny or freedom?" Ignasi Grau discussed the interrelation of the social dimension of the right to education. Ms. Leslie Hiner from the EdChoice Foundation also participated in this panel and showed how some UN decisions have had an impact at a national level in the United States.



Ignasi Grau during the discussion: "Right to education, Tyranny or freedom?

#### COVID-19 VIDEO SERIES ON YOUTUBE



A new OIDEL initiative this year was to allow education professionals from around the world to discuss how COVID-19 was affecting the world. Several experts talked about their vision and experiences of the crisis and how the right to education could be encouraged in this context.

The series of videos of experts from around the world entitled "Education and COVID-19" has been published in our YouTube channel.

Participants included: Arja Krauchenberg from EPA (European Parents Association), Gregorio Luri (Spanish philosopher and pedagogue), Ashley Berner (Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy), Rolando Marín Coto (former Minister of Education of El Salvador) or Francisco O'Reilly (Professor of Philosophy at UNSTA).

Link to our YouTube channel

### PARTICIPATION IN THE "GLOBAL HOME EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2020"

In May 2020, the Global Home Education Exchange organised an international conference online which was moderated by Michael Donnelly from HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association). The aim of the meeting was to examine possible initiatives that would counter the impact of the pandemic on education and those that could help families cope with this new crisis, as well as vindicating homeschooling.

Former US presidential candidate Ted Cruz attended the meeting, as well as ministers and MPs from various countries, university professors and members of civil society. OIDEL explained how COVID-19 had been a great opportunity to reclaim the essential role of parents in the realisation of the right to education.



Among the speakers at the online conference were Professor Jan de Groof (Education Law and Policy), Ignasi Grau and Silvia Copio.

### WEBINAR : "A COMMON GOOD APPROACH TO COVID-19"



OIDEL, together with OIEC, organised and participated in a webinar in July 2020 on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the realisation of the right to education worldwide. Several topics were discussed, such as the importance of education in society, the challenges posed by the pandemic at educational level and how these challenges should be addressed.

Ignasi Grau from OIDEL participated as a moderator, and the webinar was attended by five experts from different areas of civil society.

The first speaker, David Fernández Puyana, ambassador of the United Nations University for Peace (UPEACE) to the United Nations in Geneva, referred to education as an instrument of the culture of peace, emphasising mutual understanding and the respect that arises from it.

Philipe Richard, Secretary General of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC) discussed the problems that existed before the pandemic and the changes that need to be made in the field of education.

Ashley Berner, Deputy Director of the John Hopkins School Institute for Education Policy, presented four policy recommendations on the US education system for the reopening of k-12 schools.

Arja Krauchenberg, representative of EPA, said that it is parents who have the most influence on the children's education and

this is often overlooked when it comes to contributing to their children's learning and well-being.

Koumbou Boly Barry, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, concluded the conference by elaborating on the most important points mentioned: the interconnectedness of rights, and the importance of the relationship between parents, state and teachers.

#### CONGRESS "EDUCARE PER IL DOMANI" IN TODI (ITALY)



In September, OIDEL participated in the 6th edition of the Congress "Educare per il domani" (Educate for tomorrow), organised by the Italian parents' association "Articolo 26" and was under the patronage of the Italian Senate and the Chamber of deputies.

The Congress was conducted by the founder of Articolo 26 Chiara lannarelli. Among the speakers were psychotherapists, sociologists and school principals. The presentation by Ignasi Grau, director of OIDEL, dealt with the legal, political and economic status of educational pluralism in the world and in Europe.



#### Ignasi Grau and Luisa Ribolzi among the

#### PARTICIPATION IN THE ONLINE EVENT "PUBLIC FUNDING IN EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM IN EUROPE: SITUATION, OPEN QUESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES "



OIDEL participated in a seminar organised by "Fondazione Sussidarietà" and the association "CdO Opere Educativa" in October 2020. The aim of this event was to share researches carried out by OIDEL, with the collaboration of ECNAIS and Professor Tommaso Agasisti of the Politecnico di Milano, thus reflecting on educational pluralism in Italy.

Charles Glenn, Vice-President of the OIDEL Executive Committee, stressed the fact that the current context demands major reforms in which both parents and non-governmental schools must become key players.

#### PARTICIPATION IN THE SEMINAR "CHECK ON FREEDOM OF EDUCATION: CONSEQUENCES OF THE CELAÁ LAW"



In December, we had the opportunity to participate in a virtual meeting with David Córdoba (Vinces Consulting) to discuss the new education law in Spain (Celaá law). The meeting, which was organised by the John Henry Newman Cultural Association, was presented by Lluis Seguí (Teacher and promoter of the Liceu Politècnic school) and moderated by Josep-Manuel Prats (President of the Federació d'associacions d'associacions de pares i mares d'escoles lliures de Catalunya (FAPEL)).

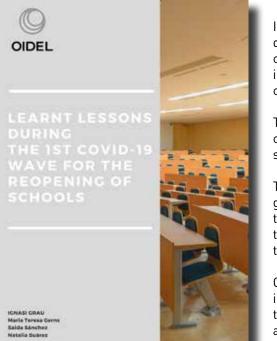


Ignasi Grau along with the other speakers, David Córdova, Lluís Seguí and Josep-Manuel Prats.



## PUBLICATIONS

#### REPORT "LESSONS LEARNED DURING THE 1ST COVID-19 WAVE FOR THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS"



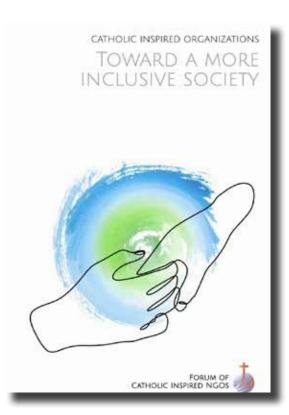
In September 2020, OIDEL presented the report "Lessons learned during the 1st COVID-19 wave for the reopening of schools". This report contains an analysis covering UN-recognised countries and gathers initiatives, trends and good practices on how to address the education crisis that has stemmed from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The aim of this research has been to describe how government and civil society in these countries have implemented good practices and strategies to address the education crisis.

The first section of the paper consists of a quantitative analysis of government strategies during the first wave of COVID-19. A general tendency towards online education was observed in developed countries towards, as well as an interest in offering educational programmes through television, radio or print media.

Overall, the report highlights the important role that parents have played in their children's education during the first months of the crisis, a role that has been recognised by governments and international institutions alike.

#### BOOK: "TOWARD A MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETY"



OIDEL, together with the Forum of Catholic-inspired NGOs, has participated in the publication of a book containing a compilation of ideas that will promote a more inclusive society. The book is the result of more than two years of work, in which OIDEL has been actively involved in the sections on the right to education.



## TRAINING COURSES DELIVERED BY OIDEL IN 2020

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#### ONLINE COURSE: "EDUCATIONAL PLURALISM AND INCLUSION"



OIDEL, in collaboration with WHETU, the UNESCO Chair of La Rioja and several education professionals, has created an online course on educational pluralism and inclusion.

The course aims to raise public awareness of educational pluralism at its multiple levels, as well as the challenges that could possibly arise and the best methods for its implementation. This course is aimed at professionals in the field of education.

The course "Educational Pluralism and Inclusion" is divided into the following units:

- 1. Educational Pluralism: a human rights perspective.
- 2. Challenges and opportunities at schools in a democratic society in the 21st century.
- 3. Management of religious and cultural diversity in the educational sphere.
- 4. Freedom of education in a pluralist context: a theoretical approach.
- 5. Pedagogical responses to live in a global society.
- 6. Autonomy of educational establishments: the pillar of a pluralist conception.
- 7. Global competence: a pedagogical response to live in a plural society.
- 8. Active methodologies to face diversity in education: Service-Learning.





### PRESS

During 2020, OIDEL featured in several media. Here are some news items:

- Television appearance: La Rai - Siège du Vallée d'Aoste, on a program about distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic - 8 May 2020.

- Interview with Ignasi Grau "Ignasi Grau, director of OIDEL, tells me"- Josep Maria Francàs- blog https:// www.noentiendonada.es/ - 26 May 2020 <u>see link</u>

- Article "Another missed opportunity to unite family and school" - Magisnet - 11 November



Screen-shot of the Magisnet article on OIDEL's work.

- Article "Pluralismo educativo en Europa" - BlogEC -3 December 2020 see link

- Article "Charter schools, mistreated in Spain and recognised in Europe and the United States" - ABC, 8 December 2020 <u>see link</u>

- Interview with Ignasi Grau "La concertada, un modelo para el mundo" - Alfa y Omega - 23 December 2020 <u>see link</u>

#### **OIDEL TEAM**



**Ignasi Grau** General Manager



Claire de Lavernette Main representative of OIDEL in United Nations



*Eva Pérez* Responsible for Communication



Noemi Goust Administrative responsible

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITEE**

PRESIDENT: Diego Barroso, Former President of the EPA (European Parents' Association).

VICE PRESIDENTS: Charles L. Glenn, Former Dean of the School of Education, Boston University. Ernesto Marín Coto, Former Vice-Minister of Education of El Salvador.

SECRETARY OF THE COMMITTEE AND PRESIDENT OF THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE: Ángel Sánchez, Corporative General Manager of IFE.

**MEMBERS:** Joan Curcó, General Manager of Fomento. Francis Delpérée, Professor Emeritus, University of Louvain, Deputy in Chamber of Deputies, Belgium. Claire de Lavernette, Vice chairman of the NGO Committe of the UNOG, Bertrand Doncieux, Executive Director of AEFLIB. Joan Gallostra, President of IFE. Paz Gutiérrez Cortina, Former Secretary of the Education Commission of the Mexican Parliament. Arja Kraunchenberg, Project Coordinator at EPA, and Vice President of LLLP (Life Long Learning Plattform). Georges Haddad, President of the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and former Director of Research and Foresight at UNESCO. Luisa Ribolzi, Professor Emeritus at the University of Genoa, Member of the National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes. António Sarmento, President of AEEP.



8, rue Le Corbusier CH- 1208 Genève Tel. +41 22 789 29 49 Fax. +41 22 789 29 22 oidel@oidel.org www.oidel.org ♥ oidel\_edu ♥oidel