



files on school
education **no. 13**

Acting against
racism and
antisemitism

Foreword

Faced with the danger of acts of racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia, the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research wishes to react firmly in order to defend the republican tradition of human rights.

The combat for equality, freedom and respect of others, whatever their origins, is at the heart of the commitment of the republican State as the State is the guarantor of democracy.

By initiating a scheme for preventing and monitoring acts of racism and anti-semitism over the last few years, the Ministry of Education has reaffirmed its determination to ensure that schools remain a privileged place for learning to live together.

This scheme is built around actions which involve the entire education community:

- identifying and measuring racist and anti-semitic acts which occur in schools;
- monitoring the content of information available to children;
- prevention by transmitting knowledge and values through teaching, namely civic education;
- involving pupils in educational programmes and structured debates against racism and anti-semitism.

The Ministry of Education's concrete commitment on a daily basis is part of a national framework under the auspices of the Interministerial Committee for combating racism and anti-semitism which provides the coherence and efficiency of programmes undertaken by all ministerial departments.

The work carried out within the education system is also based on partnerships with local authorities and associations which are behind a large number of projects.

However, the voluntary action of the State, local authorities and associations alone is not enough. Faced with the risk of indifference and passiveness, the combat against racism and anti-semitism also requires the responsibility of all those concerned in order to defend freedom. This is what gives the educational role of schools its full meaning.

The aim of this brochure is to explain and provide greater understanding of France's commitment against racism and anti-semitism in schools.

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PREVENTATIVE MEASURES AND MONITORING

The daily challenge of schools to combat the violence of racism and anti-semitism means reacting swiftly with regard to incidents and not allowing any act to go unpunished. Since 2003 the ministry has reinforced preventative measures and monitoring in order to satisfy this requirement by:

- creating a national and regional system for preventing and combating racism and anti-semitism;
- ensuring that precise information is collected about racist acts within the school environment and ensuring that such acts are not allowed to go unpunished;
- paying particular attention to the content of information made available to pupils;
- working in collaboration with other government departments.

Continuous monitoring: the implementation of a national and regional monitoring and follow-up system

Since February 2003 a national unit, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, has coordinated a network of units in each of the 30 regional education authorities responsible for preventing and combating racism and anti-semitism. The Regional authority coordinators appointed by the chief education officers (recteurs) roll the scheme, monitor the reporting of incidents, support victims and implement educational programmes in collaboration with head teachers and teaching staff. A telephone answering service, at national and regional levels, provides victims and witnesses of violence with a point of contact.

Associations combating racism and anti-semitism may refer matters to the national unit. The unit collects precise information on incidents which occur and proposes follow-up action (protection of the victim, responses of education teams). The unit also liaises with other ministerial departments.

COMPOSITION OF AN EDUCATION AUTHORITY UNIT:

Example of the académie de Strasbourg

- The mediator for the Ministry of education and the mediator for LICRA (League against Racism and Anti-Semitism)
- LICRA members
- Head teachers,
- The regional director of the Legal Affairs department,
- The regional Head teacher coordinator
- A pupil elected to the regional high-school council
- A representative of parents

Evaluation and assessment: statistical evidence of incidents

The implementation of an efficient prevention policy requires exact knowledge with regard to acts of racism, their perpetrators and their victims, in addition to where they occur. For this purpose, the ministry has equipped itself with a system for collecting information.

SIGNA software, introduced in all state secondary schools and primary school districts in September 2001, collects data on serious acts of violence which occur in state schools.

Since January 2004, all acts of violence of racist and anti-semitic nature have been noted.

Monitoring the content of information available to pupils

• Prevention on the Internet

The Ministry of Education is convinced of the importance of online resources, but is also aware of the need to protect pupils against any content which offends human dignity. With this aim, it has instigated a programme for prevention, education and training.

Today, more than 90 % of schools are equipped with **filtering software** and a national **black list**, regularly updated, is accessible to all schools. The list contains a list of banned sites, generic themes (according to words and lexical fields, for example) and URL to be excluded from browsing.

Measures for training and raising awareness of education teams and pupils have already been introduced at regional level. These allow pupils to sit different stages of the IT and Internet certificate following a training course which includes a module on digital citizenship.

The publication of acceptable use policies on the Internet enables the rules of Internet use at school to be disseminated. A section is dedicated to the banning of anti-semitic, xenophobic and racist sites. These policies, which are explained to pupils, are part of school rules and are signed by head teachers, pupils and their parents.

• Increased vigilance with regard to the content of school textbooks

School textbooks are published in France under the full responsibility of private publishers. However, school textbook publishers and the Ministry of Education now collaborate with a view to being particularly vigilant regarding the teaching of religious matters including any wording which may induce racist or anti-semitic attitudes in class.

A joint commitment by all government departments

Over the last few years, the coordination of public authorities has been reinforced through the creation of new bodies both nationally and regionally as well as in schools.

• On a national level

The interministerial committee to combat racism and anti-semitism

Created by the decree of 8 December 2003, it brings together the Ministers of the Interior, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Social Affairs and national Education. This committee defines the priorities of policies proposed to combat racism and anti-semitism, and monitors the coherence and efficiency of programmes instigated within public services, whilst developing educational work.

The interministerial circular of 13 September 2004 to combat racism and anti-semitism. This circular concerns the different departments of the Ministries of Justice, of the Interior and national Education. The objective of the circular is to improve response rates regarding acts of racism and anti-Semitism to facilitate information and care for victims, to develop educational and preventative programmes and joint training plans for all three ministries.

“High authority” for equality and combat against discrimination

Created in June 2005, this independent authority is made up of key figures mainly from associations and trade unions. Its role is to accompany and advise victims of discrimination, and also to contribute to changing mentalities by making people aware of discrimination. Two priorities have been defined in order to develop equal opportunities: Education and Employment.

• On a regional level

Commissions for the promotion of equal opportunities and citizenship

The main priorities covered by this commission are: the mobilisation of civil society, integration within the workplace and the combat against racism and antisemitism. In relation with the public prosecutor and the chief education officer, each “*préfet de département*” (senior official) monitors the definition and implementation of joint programmes.

• On a local level

A health and citizenship education committee

In each school, a committee implements preventative measures concerning the immediate school environment liaising with parents, pupils and outside partners. The different partners exchange their points of view, diagnose situations, follow up events, and decide on the strategy to be implemented and programmes to be introduced. Within the framework of these committees a large number of schools include programmes for preventing acts of racism and anti-semitism.

COMMITMENT IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The construction of tolerant thinking, open to others whilst defending Human Rights, is essentially based on education and learning.

An education based on republican values

State school teaching is based on the values of the Republic: freedom, equality, fraternity.

These values cover all disciplines which are based on national programmes. Although each discipline pursues its own theoretical objectives, their purpose and educational approach give them overall coherence.

Learning values through:

- **the curriculum:** through the study of literary texts, philosophical debate, the rigorous observation of scientific experiments, critical examination of historical events, pupils learn to structure their arguments; this reasoning, based on knowledge, is an instrument for understanding and explaining the world.
- **civic education** which encourages pupils to behave according to principles of knowledge and values. Civic education facilitates dialogue, shows the need for knowledge to overcome prejudices, and develops autonomy and personal reflection. Programmes highlight the importance of denouncing all attacks on equality, of condemning discrimination and of being vigilant in the face of racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia.

At primary school (children aged between 6 and 11), children learn about the values of society in the classroom. Teachers then develop the notion of personal responsibility and reflection on guidelines for living together.

At secondary school (pupils aged between 12 and 15), the programme is based on the notion of “human beings” and “citizens”, and is tested in the Brevet des Collèges (equivalent to the general certificate for secondary education).

At high-school (pupils aged between 15 and 18), civic, legal and social education, through structured debates, enable students to consider the notion of citizenship by confronting the realities of the contemporary world.

EXTRACT FROM SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM (SECOND YEAR): COMBATING DISCRIMINATION

“Analysing different forms of discrimination will enable the question of human dignity to be tackled, whatever the pupil’s origins, social group, physical appearance and beliefs, whether real or assumed. The means for combating discrimination will nourish the debate on individual and collective responsibility, on the role of the law and judges, on the place of associations, and on the importance of human rights education”.

Case studies on racism and anti-semitism, sexism and discrimination against the disabled using historic examples and situations taken from French society as well as from abroad may be analysed.

- **the organisation of high-school life:** high-school students elect high-school, regional and national representatives. The high-school councils thus appointed are involved in the running of schools; they are associated with decision-making processes and may be behind specific actions.

MOBILISATION OF THE REGIONAL HIGH-SCHOOL COUNCIL IN THE ACADÉMIE D'AMIENS

In the académie d'Amiens, during the first meeting of the council in December 2004, students spoke of their concerns with regard to racism and anti-semitism. They underlined the importance of displaying information in schools: high-school magazine, screens and panels. In order to "break the law of silence", they requested the development of preventative educational programmes in collaboration with associations.

Pupils mobilised around key events

In addition to teaching, a large number of educational programmes are available to pupils. These programmes enable a specific theme to be developed, often through a multidisciplinary approach, in partnership with other ministries, museums, authorities, clubs and societies.

• National awareness days

These are organised throughout the school year and offer pupils the opportunity to increase their knowledge whilst taking part in collective programmes.

They cover:

- **Human Rights:** Children's Rights Day on 20 November, Human Rights Day on 10 December, Women's Rights Day on 8 March, International Day for the Abolition of Slavery on 2 December;
- **combating discrimination:** every year since 1989, around 21 March, the International Day Against Racism, a national education week against racism has mobilised schools;
- **solidarity:** Day for the Refusal of Misery on 17 October, International Week of Solidarity and Cooperation in November;
- **remembrance:** Day in remembrance of the Holocaust and for preventing crimes against humanity. Every year, on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, 27 January, teachers are invited to ask their students to think about the Holocaust and genocide.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES ON A EUROPEAN SCALE

Many programmes are based on joint work between French and European schools and contribute to the construction of history on a European scale. Occasionally, this work can be in the form of an exhibition.

- **Mannheim, Izieu, Auschwitz:** this exhibition, created in 2004 by French and German high-schools, is a reminder of the history of the children of the Maison d'Izieu. It retraces the lives of four pupils, from Mannheim in Germany. It presents the cultural, social and political roles of the Jewish community in the history of the Rhine city, before the Shoah.
- **The Jewish children of Villa Emma de Nonontola at the Maison d'Izieu:** created by French and Italian pupils, this exhibition is dedicated to the history of Jewish children from across Europe who took refuge at Villa Emma in Nonontola near Modena. It was extended in 2005 by a comparative study of the history of the children of Izieu and Nonontola carried out jointly by pupils of the French high-school in Madrid, St Marc de Lyon high-school and Modena high-school.

• Competitions

The René Cassin Human Rights Prize

The aim of this prize is to promote, illustrate and disseminate the basic principles of Human Rights. Created in 1988 and paying homage to the Nobel Peace Prize, this prize rewards pupils, education teams and schools who have carried out specific projects.

The National Advisory Board for Human Rights is associated with the organisation of this prize awarded by a national panel of judges.

The National High-School Council competition

In 2005, within the framework of the Week of Education against Racism, this council, which brings together 30 high-school delegates from the different education authorities, launched a competition to write a 3 minute film script against racism and anti-Semitism open to all high-school students entitled: "10 clips for another perspective". An official ministry website gave advice on how to draft a scenario with on-line assistance from a professional scriptwriter, Regis Warnier. 555 draft scenarios were sent in by students from all of the education authorities. The ten best scenarios were produced by professionals and broadcast on national television and the winners were received by the minister accompanied by key figures from the world of education, the arts and show business.

CIVIC PATHWAYS

The main objective is to insure coherence between the different education citizenship initiatives and the awareness raising days. Teachers can build a "civic pathway" throughout the year around thematic approaches. 5 themes are proposed: Human Rights, Remembrance, Solidarity, Europe, the Environment and Sustainable Development. These pathways are the result of a partnership between the ministry and the association Civism and Democracy (CIDEM). A website provides resources and assistance for teachers: www.cidem.org

THE RENÉ CASSIN PRIZE AND THE WORK ON REMEMBRANCE

In 2004 a special mention for the René Cassin Prize was awarded to two classes of secondary school pupils from the Paris region for their work in which they imagined an exchange of letters between two children during the Algerian war. The work is the result of a project carried out by two teachers of French literature and language, and history and geography, the book "lettres croisées": Oran- Villiers le Bel-1961-1962", a wartime story told by Djamel, the son of an Algerian worker, and by Nicolas, the son of a French civil –servant. Despite the war and the distance which separated them, the two boys remained friends.

Within the framework of this work, pupils met witnesses from the period and reflected on the complexity of the work of remembrance when stories are compared and contrasted.

Léon Blum Secondary School, Villiers le Bel, Académie de Versailles

Shared responsibility with local authorities and associations

Local authorities play an important role in the implementation and development of educational programmes. They organise a large number of trips to places of remembrance and support preventative and educational programmes.

The Week of Education against Racism is a major event for this shared responsibility. 17 associations and 7 partner trade unions work in partnership with the ministry. This group, made up of antiracist associations, teacher and student trade unions, and federations of parent teacher associations, is sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

A FESTIVAL OF ARTICLES AGAINST RACISM IN RHEIMS

For 6 years the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (ILARA) and the Académie de Reims have offered secondary school pupils the chance to take part in a literary festival of articles against racism, anti-semitism and all forms of discrimination. The quotation by Antoine de St Exupéry: "If you are different from me, brother, far from doing me wrong, you enrich me" was the subject of the festival in 2005. School pupils write a text author. A panel of judges, representatives from the education authority, the City of Reims and LICRA, award the first Prize and several other prizes compensate pupils for their efforts: poetry, originality, humanity, solidarity, etc. This year the Festival brought together 15 secondary schools and around 1 000 pupils wrote an article. Prizes were awarded to the winners on 21 March 2005, the international day against racism, at the Grand Théâtre in Reims. On this occasion, a theatre company presented the work of pupils.

"THE MONTH OF OTHERS": A JOINT EVENT ORGANISED BY THE ACADEMIE DE STRASBOURG AND THE ALSACE REGIONAL COUNCIL

The aim of the "Month of Others" introduced by the Alsace Regional Council and the Académie de Strasbourg in March 2005 is to develop the education and awareness of young people in the combat against all forms of racism, fundamentalism, anti-semitism and xenophobia.

This event marked the will of institutions to react to the increasing number of desecrations of graveyards which Alsace suffered in 2004.

46, secondary schools and apprentice training centres (CFA) were involved in the projects proposed by associations.

Discrimination and the history of immigration in Alsace were the subject of debates, workshops, audiovisual and theatre creations. A regional event brought together the pupils involved in these programmes. It was an occasion to exchange points of view on the subject of respecting others. This initiative will take place each year.

AGREEMENTS FOR VISITING PLACES OF REMEMBRANCE

In the Paris region, a partnership between the regional council and the Unknown Jewish Martyr Memorial enabled more than 1000 pupils from the Paris region to visit the Auschwitz – Birkenau concentration camp.

The Academie de Nice and the Departmental Council for the Alpes

Maritimes organised in 2003/04 a day trip to the Auschwitz- Birkenau concentration camp. This initiative involved 82 secondary schools from the département, 2600 pupils and more than 200 teachers. It was accompanied by preparatory work and also included many creations: interviews with witnesses, exhibitions, slideshows, collection of articles, etc.

Teacher Training Colleges (IUFM) from Nice, Strasbourg and Toulouse joined forces with the Memorial of the Shoah in Paris to visit the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps. This trip brought together 80 people: trainers, students preparing the competitive entrance exams in teaching and who had chosen to deal with the question of how to teach the Shoah within the framework of their dissertation. Participants had access to educational resources at the Contemporary Jewish Resource Centre and the Museum of Art and History of Judaism.

Training courses and tools to support education teams

Training courses which include the prevention and combat against racism and anti-semitism are structured around **three main areas**:

- a reflection on discrimination and case studies on specific situations which affect Human Rights in schools;
- training in how to teach complex and conflictual periods of history;
- the teaching of religious matters with a secular approach which builds common cultural values whilst respecting individual beliefs.

• Training courses to support the combat against racism, anti-semitism and xenophobia at School

Training courses are offered to teachers in order to help them combat racism and anti-semitism at school. During these courses, matters relating to questions of identity and processes of discrimination are also dealt with. These courses are based on the analysis of case studies. They present the official and legal schemes as well as the associations with which programmes can be carried out in schools.

A seminar in 2004, “The integration of newcomers: what is the role of schools?” provided the opportunity to tackle the notions of immigration and integration in France and Europe. The analysis of the issues and difficulties related to integration in schools has encouraged debate on school organisational policy at regional level.

• Seminars on the relation between history and remembrance

This issue appeared in 2004 in final year history programmes for literary; economic and social science options. The history of remembrance of the Second World War enables pupils to understand the many different individual and collective memories, their construction, their evolution and any possible conflicts.

Preferred subjects are the remembrance of the Resistance and that of the Shoah. The remembrance of genocide, colonisation, the slave trade and slavery are also examined.

Recently three national seminars looked at the way contemporary history is taught:

- Remembrance and history: thinking, telling and teaching tragedies and/or the repressed in contemporary history (1999),
- Learning and teaching the War of Algeria and the contemporary Maghreb (2001),
- Learning history and geography at School (2002)

• Seminars on teaching religious matters

Religious matters are not subject to any specific form of teaching. They are inherent in all disciplines. State education teaches pupils about the major religions and their role in history whilst respecting religious freedom and the principles of secularism and neutrality of the public service. National and regional seminars support teachers of all disciplines in the implementation of this teaching. Three national seminars in 2005, 2003 and 2002 contributed to developing a debate on the implementation of this teaching in the classroom:

- Teaching Religious Matters (2002),
- Religions and Modernity (2003),
- Considering Islam (2005).

The Ministry regularly makes available to teachers resources which help them to implement specific actions and contribute to their training.

Including:

• Two resources are available for free in schools

The republican guide, today's republican idea (2004)

simple guidelines written by reference authors providing extracts of stories, novels, news, songs and poems as well as a filmography. These resources are just some of the original approaches enabling teachers to deal with the issues of racism and anti-semitism, rights and freedoms giving the resources to nourish the debate.

DVD of the film by Claude Lanzmann "Shoah"

The film "Shoah" by Claude Lanzmann, released by the National Educational Resource Centre, was sent to all upper-secondary schools in 2004 for educational use in class. This version includes three hours of extracts in the form of a DVD with a booklet entitled "The cinema, remembrance and history".