

Albania

Ethem Ruka

Minister of Education and Science



Born in 1947, Mr. Ruka graduated from the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the Tirana University. He holds two Doctor's Degrees in Endocrinology (one in France and the other in Albania). He took part in academic activities at the Institute "Pierre and Marie Curie" in Paris, in Italy, and in Greece. He became Pedagogue at the University of Tirana and Head of the Chair of Physiology and BioChemistry. He is author of school curricula of biology for the compulsory and secondary level of school, of many university

editions and of ten textbooks for the primary and secondary level. He has published more than 20 scientific articles in local and international academics journals. From 1997, Mr. Ruka is Ministry of Education. He is depute of the People's Assembly from 1992. He was member of the Law Commission and Human Rights in the Council of Europe (1994-1996).

Education for democratic citizenship - Learning to live together

The logo "Learning and living together" is one of the main challenges of the Balkans region. It should be put in the foundation of the young generation education and constitute one of the main goals of our school, which mission is to prepare the new generation with a wide culture and a general formation as citizens of a democratic society, equipped with right concepts of coexistence with different groups and minorities, respecting other nations and other cultures.

Our societies are living in a transition phase and the school, as part of the society, is undergoing the same process. Social-economic changes in our countries during the new democratic period are widely reflected in our schools and our societies. The school as a laboratory of the society where souls are being prepared has an important responsibility and an irreplaceable role. That is why the Ministries of Education should consider education for democratic citizenship a priority of their work. That is why the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science in cooperation with UNESCO, the Council of Europe and different foreign organizations, foundations and NGO-s, has focussed its activity mainly in the field of civic and intercultural education. Some of the on-going projects are a precious experience that we may share with our partners.

All the aforesaid projects aim at developing the Albanian school as a place where democracy can be taught and learned, promoting concepts and attitudes of respect and esteem from each-other, respecting the linguistic and cultural differences and diversities, ethno-cultural groups and minorities. Another goal is to encourage all the concerned actors acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become successful and responsible citizens who live together in a democratic society and design models of school participation and democracy to be applied to schools throughout the country.

In this way we intend to create a co-operative climate in the participating schools and communities, to develop models of student, teacher and parent participation and support the creation of the adequate structures and working methods, to enhance the role of schools as civic, cultural and social centers in the local communities and to allow the population feel the ownership for their schools, to train teachers and head teachers, to encourage co-operation between different schools and different regions of Albania and to realize school based projects designed to improve the day-to-day functioning of schools in a democratic way by promoting concepts of a conflictless co-existence.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Albania is ready and opened for collaboration in these fields with all countries, especially with the South-East European countries.

This conference is another contribution to education for democratic citizenship and learning how to live together and we are confident it will have an important impact in our schools and our societies in the new century. *Ø*