

This document was prepared by the gifted and talented students participating in the European Youth Summit 2016, which was held in Wien (Austria) from the 29th of February to the 5th of March 2016, with the supervision of Monica Parodi, Ph.D., specialist in Political legislation and revision by Monica Parodi and Anna Maria Roncoroni, Ph.D. The document is intending to call the attention and action of all parties involved in bettering the life of gifted and talented students, be them politicians, teachers at any level of the education system, potential mentors, tutors, parents and all members of the societies in Europe and other continents. This charter wants to contribute to the process of making these societies more and more supportive for the help of gifted and talented as their key resource and – in fact – as their life insurance to solve the unprecedented challenges mankind faces in the 21st century.

CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS OF GIFTED STUDENTS

Preamble

The States Parties of the present Charter,

Recalling that the United Nations has – in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – proclaimed that every child is entitled to the right of education.

Recalling that, at European level, the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Charter of Human Rights affirm that the education is a fundamental right to everyone.

Reaffirming that education is a fundamental human right and that the education systems should be flexible enough to allow to all students, without exception, the right to fully develop their potential.

Recalling that the United Nations – in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance, and that – as indicated in the Convention of the Rights of the Child – the children need special safeguards and care.

Recognizing that there will be always children with special needs for whom special arrangements have to be arranged.

Recalling that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe – in its Recommendation 1248 (1994) – declared that gifted children are a group with special needs.

Acknowledge that the gifted children have special needs.

Affirm that any gifted child should be able to benefit – without discrimination – from appropriate educational conditions that would allow him/her to develop their abilities, for him/her own benefit and for the benefit of society as a whole.

Considering that most ordinary educational systems do not provide adequate conditions for the full development of gifted children,

Bearing also in mind that no Country can waste the potential of their gifted students and that it would be a waste of human resources not to identify their intellectual or other potentialities.

Have agreed as follows:

Identification

For the purpose of the present Charter:

1. “gifted or talented” refers to students from kindergarten to University and *“is the manifestation of performance or production that is clear at the upper end of the distribution in a talent domain even relative to that of other high-functioning individuals in that domain. Further, giftedness can be viewed as developmental, in that in the beginning stages, potential is the key variable; in later stages, achievement is the measure of giftedness; and in fully developed talents, eminence is the basis on which this label is granted. Psychosocial variables play an essential role in the manifestation of giftedness at every developmental stage. Both cognitive and psychosocial variables are malleable and need to be deliberately cultivated”* (Subotnik et al., 2011)¹.
2. Gifted and talented students with Learning Disabilities, disabled, coming from low social/economical background and with any type of disadvantages should be have special attention in order to be identified.
3. Every student should have the right to have access to a process in order to be identified as gifted and/or talented taking into account all the complexity of giftedness and/or talent. This complex process, when possible, should be free of charge or, in any case, economic status and cultural background should not be an obstacle for taking part of this process.
4. The identification process and procedure should become a priority shared and encouraged by the European Community and each Member State. Every State should make an effort to implement one or more identification processes suitable for their culture.
5. The complex identification process should be decided by a community of experts in the field recognized at national and international level.
6. In every school or district there should be a trained person for the identification of gifted and talented students (this person could be the psychologist of the school or a trained supervisor). This person should interview, monitor and recommend testing if he/she thinks that one or more students can be gifted and/or talented. The testing can be done at any age.
7. Every teacher should receive a basic training in how to identify talented and gifted students in order to assist in the identification process.
8. Testing should include different aspect of Giftedness: there should be tests in the intellectual, academic, motivational, emotional and creative field, as well as tests for manual, spatial, and many other types of talents. If necessary, the same student can be tested several times at different age.

¹ Subotnik, R. F., Olszewski - Kubilius, P., Worrell Rethinking, F. C. (2011). Giftedness and Gifted Education: A Proposed Direction Forward Based on Psychological Science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 12, 3-54.

9. The test should be standardized, created by experts and shared by the national/international scientific community with expertise in the field of giftedness. There should be different kinds of test for different age groups. There should be tests based on different means of communication (oral, written, figural) for students with different needs and abilities.

10. The child and the legal guardians have to be informed about the results of the tests and their meaning.

11. The talented and gifted children should be also informed about the possibilities offered to join programs and activities to further develop their talents.

12. Tests should be extended by recommendations based on long-term behavior and speed of development, as well as by complex, in-depth interviews, where ever possible.

Obligations

13. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Charter to each gifted student within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the gifted student's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

14. States Parties shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Charter.

Non discrimination

15. States Parties should recognize, respect and protect the individual differences. Gifted children, as well as other students, need adequate educational opportunities to develop their full potential.

16. In particular, in order to achieve the goals of the present Charter, the States Parties shall take appropriate measures and policies to secure that gifted students will not be discriminated or privileged because of their special needs.

17. State Parties shall also adopt the necessary measures to administer the special procedures dedicated to gifted students in order to avoid the risk of labelling, with all its undesired consequences to society.

18. In order to secure the right for each gifted student to receive adequate educational opportunities, the State Parties shall act appropriately to ensure that they will be protected against all forms of discrimination based on their sex, ethnic origin, religion, social conditions, language or culture.

Education

19. States Parties recognize the right of the child to have access to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate

measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of their capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all students;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

20. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

21. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

22. States Parties should consider that every student has the right to learn at the best of their capabilities. In many cases, the curricula are not suitable for gifted and talented students in one or more topics because they already master the subject at a higher level. So, their right to learn is not respected for this population.

23. Teachers are one of the most important parts of gifted education. In order to provide the best possible education for gifted and talented students, if the student wants to have more challenging exercises, in order to stay interested and deepen his/her knowledge, teachers should be able to provide proper materials. As highly gifted students are able to learn faster, they may get bored during classes. This shall be prevented by offering extra material deepening the current topic and challenging the student. Therethrough the student's attention would be kept high and would get extra support without losing time of the teachers, and therefore without extra expenses for the school or the state. Nobody should be forced to do additional work that does not correspond to his/her interests and capabilities.

24. Gifted and talented students should have extra curricular activities and the possibility to participate in summer camps, targeting his/her interest and fields of knowledge, talent and giftedness, independently by their social/economic status and age.

25. A qualified teacher must follow pedagogical and subject-specific courses dedicated to Gifted and Talented students and should renew her/his preparation being updated. Teachers should also follow courses on how to recognize and promote giftedness.

26. Teachers should use various teaching methods.

27. Every student should have the possibility to express anonymous feedback to their teacher (about the teaching methods, topics, etc.) in a respectful way, at least once a year. Teachers should be able to take the feedback as a constructive critique and change/modify their teaching methods according to the needs of the class.

28. Every teacher must support his/her students and help them to achieve their goal. If a student is very talented and interested in a certain area, the teacher should support (if possible and if the student wants to) the participation to competitions/free-time activities/projects in this subject.

29. Gifted and talented students should attend lessons and classes of the subject of its excellence and interest, independently of the age, but related to their cognitive, social and emotional abilities, and level of knowledge and expertise in the specific field. The student will stay with his/her classmates most of the time but also with older students in his/her area of giftedness or talent.

30. Gifted and talented students should have a tutor and a mentor provided by the school or external Institutions/Organizations/Associations, helping the students with social, emotional and academic issues. Considering that gifted and talented students have a neuro-diversity and feelings or interests that are not in line with their age, they may face social issues and emotional problems, which should be minimized by the help of a tutor. An additional mentor should support the student in finding programs and possibilities to stimulate his/her interest and giving help with all academic questions.

31. Gifted and talented students, during the high school, should have the possibility to apply his/her knowledge to real life situations through stages or internships. Considering that highly gifted students often reach a high level of expertise very early, they should be allowed to work with scientists of public institutions or professionals, in order to gain working experience and learn how to apply their knowledge in real life situations. Studies have shown that this is a more efficient way to deepen knowledge than frontal lectures.

32. Gifted and talented students should have the possibility to attend public university lectures in his/her field of interest, and without any obligations. Anyway, if asked, the student is allowed to attend all lectures and seminaries and take the exams, which have to be acknowledged by the state and the university as soon as he/she has finished high school successfully.

33. Gifted and talented students should have an individual contract. The contract should specify the means of collaboration between the student and the teacher, the fulfilment of the needs of the student, and the ways in which the student is evaluated. A personal contract is an interview between the teacher and the student held twice a year, in which the teacher introduces the student to his/her situation. Afterwards, they jointly discuss on what to do in the following period of the scholastic year. The teacher and the student should discuss about the evaluation procedure, as well as the goals the student wants to reach during the semester. The teacher and the student agree on the extent to which the different types of examination (oral or written examination, participation in class, homework, etc.) influence the mark. At the end of the discussion, both the teacher and the student sign the contract determining their work in the following scholastic period.

34. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

- (a) The development of the student's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;
- (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

- (c) The development of respect for the student's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the student is living, the country from which he or she may come from, and for civilizations different from his or her own;
- (d) The preparation of the student for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;
- (e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

35. No part of the present article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Private life

36. States Parties recognize the right of the gifted students for rest and leisure, to have the possibility to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate in cultural life and the arts.

37. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the gifted students to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

Information

38. States Parties shall take opportune measures in order to divulge and explain the operational definition of “giftedness and talent” adopted in their country.

39. State Parties shall act appropriately to make understandable to potential gifted student, him/her parent's, him/her guardian's, him/her teachers and all those who deal with potential gifted student the concept of “giftedness and talent”, the connected opportunities offered by the educational systems and the identification procedures.

Conclusive disposition

40. Nothing in the present Charter shall affect any provisions which are more conducive to the realization of the rights of the gifted students and which may be contained in the law of a State party, in the relevant European Union law and in the International law in force for that State.