



THINK

EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

There is no accepted definition for Intercultural Dialogue. The term is an adaptation from other terms, all of which remain current, such as multiculturalism, social cohesion and assimilation. The best formulation at the moment is perhaps the terminology used by the Council of Europe in its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, which states:

‘Intercultural Dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage’.

Note that this definition is wide enough to encompass almost all kinds of exchange between culturally distinct groups and individuals while setting down no priorities with regard to any of them.

Why is the issue of intercultural dialogue high on the European political agenda today?

Mainly because of the increasingly pressing question of the ‘meeting of cultures’; provoked both by the movement of people and by the increasingly porous nature of our national identities. We are living through an osmosis of cultures facilitated by travel, technology and the interconnectedness of our contemporary economies and cultures.

The United States has often been characterised as the world’s melting pot, but the

terms of the debate in Europe are somewhat different. Historically the European experience has been of rich cultures learning (or not) to live with each other, as different political, religious, linguistic and cultural experiences rub up against each other in limited geographical spaces...less of a cultural melting pot and more of a cultural buffet as it were! Much of Europe's astonishing richness comes from the meeting of these cultural realities, but also, sadly, some of the most unfortunate and aggressive moments in world history. Europe is now a peaceful, economically successful and increasingly politically integrated environment. The challenge of 'the other' has not gone away however. If anything, with each passing enlargement, with each year's growing awareness of our interdependence, the challenges that face Europe grow.

Intercultural Dialogue is increasingly seen as one of the ways to promote mutual understanding, better living together and an active sense of European citizenship and belonging.

EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE - THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The European Year for Intercultural Dialogue

2008 was the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue. The Year aimed to promote Intercultural Dialogue and to raise general awareness of the importance of developing an 'active European citizenship'. The key messages were targeted at young people but also the disadvantaged. Civil Society is in general encouraged to mobilise and get involved. Each country had a national coordinating body, and the civil society sector was coordinated through the Rainbow Platform (now the Platform for Intercultural Europe LINK <http://www.intercultural-europe.org/site/>). The budget for the year was 10 million, which focused on 7 flagship projects, the co-financing of a number of national projects, an information and awareness

raising campaign and finally evaluation. Note that European Years generally promote an issue in the public eye; support relevant public organisations and NGOs in their work; and provide limited resources for some trans-national work at European level. Recent Years have concentrated more on raising the profile of the issue concerned, less on funding projects through dedicated budgets; they have rather sought to make their issue a funding priority in existing programmes. Dedicated budgets for recent European Years have been around €12 million between the Year itself and the preceding (preparatory) year.

The Civil Society Platform on Intercultural Dialogue - the Platform for Intercultural Europe - is an initiative that was originally set up to bring together organisations from different civil society policy sectors to 'share effective Intercultural Dialogue practices and to engage with the political process under the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 and beyond'. The Platform was launched jointly by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the Culture Action Europe / the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage at the end of 2006, and brought together over 200 European and national civil society organisations from a wide range of sectors (youth, culture, social affairs, life long learning, human rights etc). Culture Action Europe is coordinating the Platform. To know more about the Platform activities: www.intercultural-europe.org

EXPLORING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE - RESOURCES AND LINKS

Resources and links

- Decision no 1983/2006/ec of the European parliament and of the council of 18 December 2006 to establish the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (<http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/images/stories/eudecision-eyic2008-en.pdf>)
- Rainbow Paper I (<http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/images/stories/thinkpdf/rainbow%20paper%207th%20jan%202008%20en.pdf>)

- Consultation site Rainbow paper II
(<http://www.intercultural-europe.org/site/rainbow/about>)
- ERICarts study - "Sharing Diversity: national approaches to intercultural dialogue in Europe"
- 'Living together as equals' – the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue
(http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/images/stories/CoE-White%20Paper-interculturaldialogue-05_08-en.pdf)
- "EFAH mapping exercise: The experience of cultural diversity in EFAH membership" - Final report Autumn 2007, Research conducted by the EFAH office in partnership with the Foundation Fitzcarraldo and funded by the European Cultural Foundation
(http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/images/stories/thinkpdf/diversity_mapping_final_report.pdf)