



The Need for an EU Council Working Group on Intercultural Dialogue under the Open Method of Coordination

May 2010

Join the Campaign!

*"Public authorities and civil society forces
need to collaborate in closing the learning
cycle between practice and policy."*

*The Rainbow Paper. Intercultural Dialogue:
From Practice to Policy and Back (2008), Chapter B III, p.13*

Introduction

At the end of 2007, the EU Cultural Affairs Council adopted the *European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World*¹. This was an important step in making Europe a 'single cultural space'. One common aspiration of the European cultural space is a constructive approach to the diversity of people and to the diversity of their cultural expression. Such an approach is supported by the Platform for Intercultural Europe. We work with the vision of:

An Intercultural Europe where diversity is respected and valued, which requires free, full and equal participation by all citizens.

Building the intercultural competences of individuals, organisations and institutions is crucial for the realisation of this vision. It requires adequate policy frameworks and resources at European, national, regional and local levels. It needs the transfer of independent knowledge, practice and innovation to political institutions, and their translation into policy and practice.

The *Agenda for Culture* therefore rightly paved the way in the field of culture both for a structural involvement of civil society actors at EU level, as well as a for the introduction of an intergovernmental way of working - the *Open Method of Coordination* (OMC). The years 2008 and 2009 saw the first experimentation with these work processes under the Agenda. However, while there has been a civic interlocutor dedicated to intercultural dialogue - the Platform for Intercultural Europe - no corresponding OMC working group has to date been set up in the Cultural Affairs Council.

This document sets out why a content-relevant counterpart to the Platform for Intercultural Europe should be created amongst the OMC working groups (an OMC WG for ICD) and thus an opportunity for true collaboration where exchange can be followed up with concrete initiatives for analysis, policy and practice.

1. See http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-policy-development/doc399_en.htm

Three good reasons

(1) Obligation

- Given that the **European Agenda for Culture** (2007) made the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue a strategic objective of the European Union, each EU actor including the Member States must be guided by this objective.
- The Member States individually and jointly through the EU have endorsed the **UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions** (2005). An OMC WG on ICD could also be a channel to progress with the implementation of the UNESCO Convention in particular the endeavour to promote cultural expressions of all individuals and social groups, including minorities, and to enable an equitable interaction of diverse cultures.
- An OMC WG on ICD could help the EU to achieve its strategic policy objectives: The realisation of equality, freedoms and citizens' rights as stipulated by the EU **Charter of Fundamental Rights** depends on coordinated European action for intercultural Dialogue. Intercultural Dialogue is also an indispensable complement to the **Racial Equality Directive** and the **Employment Equality Directive** and is relevant to the Social Agenda and the Treaty of Lisbon. The social capital and the shifts in attitude to diversity and inclusion, which intercultural Dialogue activities bring about, are crucial in implementing equality laws and meeting social policy objectives.

(2) Return on Investment

- Under the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, knowledge about intercultural strategies was gathered, practices endorsed and created, connections made, and ideas planted. Governmental and non-governmental actors who invested in these processes in 2008 must be energised and galvanised to continue their work through a new focal point in the EU institutional landscape - an OMC WG on ICD.
- Ministries of Culture in several Member States played a leading role in coordinating activities under the EYID 2008. None of them had a prior history of managing an integrated transversal framework or national strategy on this topic and a comprehensive approach towards diversity only exists in a handful of countries². As such, the capacity of Ministries of Culture with regard to the cross-sectoral governance of diversity needs to be enhanced.
- In some Member States, regional and local authorities play a leading role in the development and implementation of intercultural policies. Regardless of national policies in this field, a European Framework of cooperation for national governments can give the regional and local actors leverage.

(3) Policy Improvement

- The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 demonstrated that "Intercultural Dialogue as a concept has multiple meanings and that there is no uniform approach to ICD which is employed across Europe." (Sharing Diversity report, Executive Summary, p. 11.) The nature of cooperation under the OMC lends itself perfectly to an area where uniformity of approach or the harmonization of governance frameworks is out of the question. Member States can enhance their expertise in this complex policy area without submitting to EU authority. Free from the obligations of implementing common laws, they can work on developing appropriate national policy standards for intercultural dialogue.
- As the "Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe" shows, the European picture of intercultural strategies in cultural policy and the permeation of cultural policy with intercultural issues is still incomplete. An OMC WG could both advance the capacity for Europe-wide comparison and analysis, i.e. the aggregation of information, and create incentives for filling gaps in existing policies at national level.

2. See Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends, Table "Intercultural Dialogue: Examples of Policies and Programmes"

- A continuation of the work carried out during the EYID 2008 could help disentangle initiatives intended to promote the governance of cultural diversity within European societies, trans-nationally across Europe and internationally with other world regions. Policy tools for Intercultural Dialogue could then be made more distinctive. The Platform for Intercultural Europe would advise a first focus on diversity within European societies. As the Sharing Diversity Report concludes, a common strategy for ICD “could be built upon a broad vision, where economic and social inclusion policies and policies for cultural diversity are integrated and push each other forward” (p. 12).
- Non-governmental actors have been engaged in intercultural activities before these became policy priorities. Yet political initiatives such as the EYID have also increased the number of civic groups and networks that promote intercultural Dialogue. Those need to be recognized and supported. At European level, the Platform for Intercultural Europe needs a counterpart.

Draft Mandate: What an OMC WG on ICD could do

- Review different definitions of intercultural dialogue, compose a focused common one, and categorise and refine policy instruments accordingly.
- Use such an analytical grid to further research, compile and encourage intercultural dialogue policies, and to peer-review practices. Intercultural dialogue work carried out by museums or through the performing arts might merit special attention in this respect.
- Compare and elaborate models for institutional adaptations to cultural diversity, institutional capacity building for intercultural dialogue and the creation of ‘shared spaces’ with particular reference to the arts and heritage.
- Build on the conclusions of the Sharing Diversity Report, the IFACCA Report “Achieving Intercultural Dialogue through the Arts and Culture” and other relevant analyses.
- Establish an action plan for the implementation of the 2008 Council Resolution on Intercultural Competences³ with particular reference to the role of the arts and heritage in the acquisition and practice of such competences.
- Undertake a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of national and EU financial instruments in supporting intercultural dialogue.
- Assess the coherence of intercultural dialogue policies in the field of culture with those in other policy domains, e.g. integration policy, and propose or improve strategies for inter-institutional and cross-sectoral cooperation at EU, national and regional levels.
- Study cooperation possibilities with other relevant intergovernmental bodies (e.g. the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe).

What could make an OMC WG on ICD successful

- A clear mandate agreed by all parties involved.
- A chairperson elected by the members.
- Dual representation of Member States by government officials and non-governmental experts.
- Due regard for the need to bring in expertise from various policy and departmental domains for cooperation throughout the term of the group.
- Setting up of specialized sub-groups.
- A dedicated secretariat provided by the European Commission.
- Allocation of resources by Member States not just for meeting costs, but also to carry out research and drafting work that emanates from the OMC WG.
- Exchange and strategising with relevant dialogue platforms by individual WG members at national level and collectively with the Platform for Intercultural Europe.

3. Council conclusion of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences, 2008/C 141/09

Appeal to our members and supporters

In order to convince individual Member States to set up an OMC WG on ICD (up to and exceeding the number of ten required), above arguments need to be refined and applied to the specific contexts and priorities of Member States. Help us do so! An OMC WG on ICD would need two to four concrete collaborative projects. Help us identify promising ones!

Please write with your insights and ideas to: dialogue@intercultural-europe.org

To see how our mobilisation for an OMC WG on ICD unfolds, watch: <http://www.intercultural-europe.org>



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