



## **EU Policy Instruments for Intercultural Dialogue: Proposals for Improvements**

Submission to Commission Directorate-General Education & Culture  
contributing to its formal review of the European Agenda for Culture

April 2009

*“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**

The adoption of the European Agenda for Culture at the end of 2007 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 Dialogue. 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, organizations and institutions is crucial for the realization of this vision. It requires adequate policy frameworks and resources at European, national, regional and local levels. At the EU level a structural involvement of civil society actors is indispensable for good policy development. Structured Dialogue as a Community method offers the possibility for the transfer of independent knowledge, practice and innovation to political institutions, and their translation into policy and practice.

The years 2008 and 2009 saw the first experimentation with the work processes under the Agenda –important lessons can be drawn to strengthen these processes and to achieve progress on the Agenda’s substance. The Platform for Intercultural Europe therefore welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the European Commission’s formal review. Accordingly, this paper offers comments and suggestions on:

1. The Structured Dialogue
2. The positioning of the Civil Society Platforms
3. The Open Method of Coordination

### **I The Structured Dialogue**

In the course of 2008/9, the Structured Dialogue has been characterized by a series of meetings with different combinations of participants – representatives of the three platforms (our own, as well as ‘Access to Culture’ and ‘Cultural and Creative Industries’)

with those of the OMC WGs, with DG EAC, the three platforms amongst themselves (either just key representatives or also members), and also of individual platforms with DG EAC. It must be noted that these meetings were entirely procedural, i.e. they served as fora for the exchange of information and discussion of preparations for events in the EU calendar, such as the EU Culture Forum in September 2009, but did not lead to an engagement on content between any of the parties.

Our contribution to the Structured Dialogue therefore consisted of self-contained presentations of our organisational purpose and activities, notably during the EU Culture Forum in September and as part of the three platforms' presentation to the Cultural Affairs Committee (CAC) in October 2009.

The lack of engagement on policy content between the Structured Dialogue partners has several reasons, some of which stand a good chance of being simply 'outgrown', while others will need pro-active solutions:

### **Suggestions for a more effective Structured Dialogue**

1. **Provide pro-active assistance in the 'translation' of recommendations** emanating from the work of the partners into concrete policy-making. This would be in keeping with the novelty and even experimental character of the work being undertaken. It would also help build a sense of real opportunity and enthusiasm by our stakeholders.
2. **Incorporate Structured Dialogue in the next tri-annual Work Plan of the European Commission** for the implementation of the European Agenda for Culture (2011-2013) to ensure that it remains an integral part of EU policies in the field of ICD.
3. **Help create a content-relevant counterpart amongst the OMC working groups** for the Platform for Intercultural Europe and thus an opportunity for true collaboration where exchange can be followed up with concrete initiatives for analysis, policy and practice (see our full proposal for an OMC working group on Intercultural Dialogue below).

## **II The positioning of the Civil Society Platforms in the field of Culture**

The European Commission should be lauded for finding a way of backing the establishment of the Structured Dialogue with the creation of a dedicated funding line for operational grants in the EU Culture Programmes and also some extra support for annual meetings. The Platform for Intercultural Europe is grateful for the support it has received in 2009 and has been awarded for 2010. However, the strings attached to being a 'policy support structure' under the EU Culture Programme present a danger of tying up platforms such as ours too tightly.

### **Suggestions for strengthening the Platforms**

1. **Endorse transversality:** Our platform is an important experiment in transversality with the potential of increasing the links between policies. For example, our concern for engagement and mutual understanding through cultural activities of individuals and groups of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds can make a contribution to endeavours focusing on rights, entitlements and affirmative action. Cultural policies are therefore relevant to integration policies. Consequently, rather than having to demonstrate our Platform's relevance solely regarding the development of cultural policies, 'policy support structures' should be explicitly encouraged to

be transversal in their membership as well as their activity profile. They should also be supported in building relations with different policy circles and access to information not in the public domain, such as on Intercultural Dialogue as a work area of the EU Integration Council.

2. **Welcome participation of national/local organisations in addition to European organisations in Platforms:** A 'policy support structure' or 'platform' is supposed to consist of organisations "with a trans-national or Europe-wide dimension". While this criterion leaves some flexibility of interpretation, making it clearer could reduce uncertainty. Certainly in the field of Intercultural Dialogue there are not many organisations, which have a European organisational structure and which monitor and influence EU policy. In fact our constituency consists to a large extent of national or local organisations, with a record of European cooperation, but not necessarily with a record of European policy involvement. There are good reasons for our Platform to have national or local organisations amongst its members: (1) Advocacy must be informed by practice, so we need access to a network of practitioners, which is only possible with the help of national/local organisations. (2) The involvement of national and local organisations is also crucial for taking the debate on our demands for intercultural policies away from Brussels and into the EU Member States. This befits the fact that the Structured Dialogue is a complement to the OMC, which is "deliberately about national competences" (Xavier Troussard).
3. **Manage expectations and align resources:** It is thought that civil society holds the knowledge, experience and understanding of societal issues with which to inform policy processes. However, a fully functional transmission of this kind (especially where platforms do not just regroup established advocacy bodies, but draw in organisations with little policy expertise) requires long-term capacity-building and therefore investment. Moreover, the triple mission of carrying out relay work between practice and policy, extending public-civic dialogue from the European to the national level, and approaching intercultural policy transversally represents, of course, a huge ambition. The maximum size of operating grants to platforms would have to be raised substantially, or funding from other EU-sources opened up, to realise this task more fully. Given our particular history as a civic platform seeded with the financial support of a consortium of foundations but then handed to the funding responsibility of the European Commission, a private-public partnership needs to be brokered with the help of this political institution to ensure that the Platform can fully carry out its designated mission.

### **III The Open Method of Coordination: Proposal for a Council Working Group on Intercultural Dialogue**

We first expressed our demand for a working group on Intercultural Dialogue under the Open Method of Coordination (OMC WG on ICD) in the concluding part of our Rainbow Paper. We reiterated it during our presentation to the Cultural Affairs Council last October.

Given our observation that our participation in the Structured Dialogue is hampered by the lack of a content-relevant partner, we take this opportunity to flesh out our proposal - relevant also for the design of the Council Work Plan for Culture from 2011 onwards:

## Three good reasons for a Culture Council working group on Intercultural Dialogue

### (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 Intercultural Dialogue 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 countries<sup>1</sup>. 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

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<sup>1</sup> See Compendium on Cultural Policies and Trends, Table "Intercultural Dialogue: Examples of Policies and Programmes"

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.
- 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 Structured Dialogue Platform for Intercultural Europe needs a counterpart.

### **What an OMC WG on ICD could do (Draft Mandate)**

- 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 Competences<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>2</sup> Council conclusion of 22 May 2008 on Intercultural Competences, 2008/C 141/09

- 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 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.

### **Concluding Remark**

The arguments for an OMC WG on ICD put forward in this paper are addressed to the European Commission and take a global European point of view. The Platform for Intercultural Europe is ready to support its demand with a campaign to convince individual Member States up to and exceeding the number of ten required for the setting up of an OMC WG. In the course of such a campaign, we will refine our arguments and apply them to the specific contexts and priorities of Member States. We invite the support of the European Commission in this endeavour.

EU intergovernmental work on ICD should go hand in hand with EU initiatives in this field. Similar dilemmas and challenges arise in making Intercultural Dialogue policies a priority at national and European level.

The Platform for Intercultural Europe offers its expertise also on EU instruments - we have recently conducted a study on the implementation of the Intercultural Dialogue objective in the EU Culture programme. We offer our summary and conclusions of this study in parallel to this submission.