

# Platform for Intercultural Europe

## THE RAINBOW PAPER

### Intercultural Dialogue: From Practice to Policy and Back

25<sup>th</sup> September 2008

This document presents the Platform for Intercultural Europe, a civil society initiative taken in the context of the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue 2008, sets out this Platform's approach to Intercultural Dialogue and delivers its recommendations both to its own constituency and to public authorities at all levels in Europe, using the European Union as the point of access.

This paper is the result of a participative process in which many organisations came together to shape the voice of European civil society in the field of Intercultural Dialogue. The signatories of this paper thus recognise this voice as their own and commit to making it heard politically.

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# THE PLATFORM FOR INTERCULTURAL EUROPE<sup>1</sup>

## I. Formation

The *Platform for Intercultural Europe* was set up as the *Civil Society Platform for Intercultural Dialogue* in 2006 by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH; now Culture Action Europe) with the support of the Network of European Foundations (NEF)<sup>2</sup>, on the occasion of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. In accordance with the project to write a Rainbow Paper (a policy paper dealing with the needs arising from cultural diversity and hence not covered by “white” or “green” papers), it has also during this time been called the *Rainbow Platform*. Over 200 civil society organisations (local, national and European) have participated in its activities. The Platform links people and organisations promoting Intercultural Dialogue at the grassroots with those who work on policy. The Platform began with two organisations from the arts and culture field reaching out. Our core principle is firmly one of cross-sectoral engagement - we bring people together from the fields of culture, education, youth and social work, work on minority rights, and on anti-discrimination and human rights.

## II. Mission

The Platform aims to contribute to four levels of change in Europe:

- *attitudinal* – leading to a greater appreciation of diversity and the complexity of identities,
- *social* – working towards democratic inclusion and greater equity,
- *structural* - building capacities for change within organisations and constituencies in view of diversity, and
- *policy changes* – working for change at all levels, with the EU as the key communication point; enhancing standards and frameworks to tackle exclusion, inequalities and breaches of human rights related to cultural diversity.

## III. Record

The Platform’s first year of work culminated in the paper “Practice Makes Perfect: A Learning Framework for Intercultural Dialogue”. It presented common views from across the sectors involved in the Platform at the opening of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in January 2008. After an on-line consultation and live discussions we now present our policy paper for your endorsement. Hundreds of people have contributed to this paper. It stands out as a participatory exercise and as a piece of collective thinking (and convivial compromise), rather than as an exercise based on academic research principles. It can however be understood as complement to the raft of policy documents produced by international organisations, such as UNESCO<sup>3</sup> and the Council of Europe<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> More detailed information is available on: <http://www.intercultural-europe.org>

<sup>2</sup> A consortium within the Network of European Foundations (NEF) has been supporting the Platform for Intercultural Dialogue since its beginning. This consortium involves the following partners: Compagnia di San Paolo, European Cultural Foundation, Evens Foundation, Fondation Bernheim, Freudenberg Stiftung, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

<sup>3</sup> Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008.

# THE RAINBOW PAPER

We, civil society organisations and citizens, active from the local to the European level, and working in domains ranging from the arts, education, youth and social work, to work on minority rights and anti-discrimination, agree on this Rainbow Paper as a call for social action and change. We believe that Intercultural Dialogue and intercultural action need the commitment of civil society actors and public authorities.

(The collection of signatures takes place online at <http://rainbowpaper.labforculture.org>)

## A. OUR APPROACH TO INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

### **I. The Three Principles of the Intercultural Experience:** *Dialogue, Competence and Action*

**Dialogue:** We rally behind the following understanding of Intercultural Dialogue: “a series of specific encounters, anchored in real space and time between individuals and/or groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, with the aim of exploring, testing and increasing understanding, awareness, empathy, and respect. The ultimate purpose of Intercultural Dialogue is to create a cooperative and willing environment for overcoming political and social tensions”. (Definition from Rainbow Paper I).

**Competence:** While we consider such real human encounters to be at the heart of Intercultural Dialogue, these encounters need facilitation. People need to be equipped with skills for such a coming together. Capacity and skills must be created for Intercultural Dialogue.

**Action:** Beyond encounter and dialogue, we also value intercultural action: living, working and creating together. Practical engagement is more effective than debates. Most issues, from the resolution of violent conflicts to environmental protection to public health, are more successfully advanced by taking cultural differences into account, and by engaging constructively with diversity as a resource.

## II. A Constructive Path: *From Intercultural Challenges to Interculturalism*

We are committed to taking the following path:

### Step 1: Focus on disenfranchisement

We want to stop identifying conflicts in our interactions with “others” as foremost culturally and ethnically motivated when they are often actually rooted in socio-economic and political inequalities.

### Step 2: Focus on attitude

We want to stop approaching culture only as a realm of difference, where cultural identities seem essentially irreconcilable. We want to ask first what we need to act on together and see what this requires us to do.

### Step 3: Focus on competences

We want to improve conditions to cultivate multi-layered identities - for both individuals and groups. The development of intercultural competence is a pre-requisite for any fruitful interaction between cultures.

### Step 4: Focus on what we have in common

Based on newly acquired competence we want to work towards developing a consensus of what values we have in common.

### Step 5: Focus on what we can become - together

We want to seed intercultural innovation and facilitate intercultural action by public policies. We must make interculturalism, i.e. the principle of evolving cultures through intercultural engagement, our new human norm.

## III. Value Premises

We consider diversity as a fundamental human asset. Peaceful coexistence opens up new avenues of productive cooperation. Intercultural Dialogue can turn our diversity away from being socio-cultural difference into active inter-group collaboration. Diversity necessitates exchange and negotiation over values and actions. It neither functions well if merely ‘managed’ (in the sense of granting everybody their cultural niche), nor if it leads to assimilation. Intercultural dialogue must be based on equality and thus actually result in more equal opportunities. Intercultural action should be motivated by a sense of human solidarity and increase where possible social cohesion as well as individual freedom. It should be a natural process for healthy societies where everyone can exercise rights and duties as citizens.

Economic arguments for intercultural dialogue must also be made (starting with immigrants’ contributions to national economies, or the significance of immigrant groups as particular markets, or the cost of non-integration of migrants and minorities in terms of social welfare, safety and policing costs). But at best, this approach is a complement to the ethical premises stated here.

## **IV. At the Heart of our Intercultural Dialogue Approach:** *Migration and Minorities*

Migration, which has always existed, is currently perceived to be at an historic high in Europe. Doubtless, we are all faced with an increasing diversity of people in our cities due to economically or politically motivated migration and also due to professional mobility. We also have considerable indigenous minorities and traditional forms of diversity throughout Europe. Both immigrant populations and indigenous ones can and do constitute minorities. Sometimes conflicts escalate or riots erupt within our cities. On the doorstep of the European Union (the Balkans and the Caucasus), we are confronted with open wounds of war. Places and situations of conflict and post-conflict ask for Intercultural Dialogue as a way to mediate, and to facilitate reconciliation. In some cases the intersection of religion and culture becomes salient to questions of intercultural dialogue. Moreover, intergenerational dialogue can also become the linchpin of Intercultural Dialogue. Finally, differing memories and histories can be brought into play.

The Platform for Intercultural Europe has attracted interest from people working in all these domains. Rather than focusing on any specific type of cultural diversity and of Intercultural Dialogue, we are interested in drawing out generally applicable civil society contributions to local Intercultural Dialogue. Especially in the field of capacity building, these contributions include education, civic participation, social responsibility and dynamism, good communication, and creativity. This paper is therefore about the principles and conditions of engagement needed for Intercultural Dialogue to be fruitful.

Intercultural Dialogue and action is a necessary pursuit at all levels, from the local to the international, between European countries and between Europe and the rest of the world. Intercultural Dialogue is equally relevant to governmental missions and personal encounters. And clearly, the international has repercussions for the local.

However, our focus is on local diversities, related to migration or ethnic minorities. We suggest comparing local challenges and solutions, and to draw lessons from the Europe-wide experience. In our view trans-national communities such as the European Union need to develop guidelines on how to deal with diversity constructively. We plead for such guidelines and call for supportive frameworks that can have an impact on national and local actors.

## **V. Making Intercultural Dialogue Strong as a Political Project**

In the concept of Intercultural Dialogue, cultural diversity is taken as a given, and also as something positive. Yet under this topic, we do not focus on the protection and promotion of cultural diversity as such. Many national or ethnic minorities in Europe and elsewhere feel the need to assert their specificities and demand respect. We acknowledge that recognition of difference and empowerment are the basis for engagement and acceptance of otherness. However, we consciously resist the restriction of the notion of Intercultural Dialogue to the promotion of difference and to the sometimes frankly incompatible group interests that can exist.

Intercultural Dialogue is a mode of engagement between members of socio-cultural groups that allows them to work towards developing a basic value consensus and concerted, joint action. We believe that although all citizens have the potential to engage in Intercultural Dialogue, without civil society actors' leadership this potential cannot develop into the everyday, local, communal practice of interculturalism. This is our central political concern and mission: to put intercultural dialogue into the service of local social change, the fostering of peaceful coexistence and cooperation in the communities where we live and work.

## B. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS ON INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

### **The Essence:**

#### *Civic Commitment and Public Responsibility*

- Not only public institutions and politics fail to meet the challenges of diversity and Intercultural Dialogue. We also know that we, civil society organisations, have to change. Our own performance often fails to meet our proclaimed standards, or those which we ask from others. We will look into our own practices of governance, representation, staffing, programming, and how we engage with our constituencies.
- Based on this self-reflection and commitment to civic organisational change, we therefore address our comments to public authorities and their responsibility for political change.
- We acknowledge that education lays the foundations for future intercultural competences and therefore urge for resources adequate to the task.
- We acknowledge that organisations, private or public, need to build the necessary capacities for change. We therefore request support for capacity building in and between organisations and institutions.
- Sustainable intercultural policies and practices need guidelines and monitoring. Therefore we urge the European Union to provide the necessary means and tools for monitoring, alerting and assisting.
- Private and public actors need to mobilise for Intercultural Dialogue across the board.
- Investing in the future of intercultural societies needs resources.



## **I. Educating**

Education is the first and foremost place to encourage and practice Intercultural Dialogue. Formal, non-formal and informal education can contribute to Intercultural Dialogue. Intercultural learning should be promoted in every age group and across the spectrum of educational provision.

### **1. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Education for Intercultural Dialogue must start at the earliest age. Pre-school childcare facilities must be employed to guide the transfer of values and attitudes inherent in the promotion of Intercultural Dialogue, while taking care to involving families.

### **2. COUNTERING SEGREGATION BY SCHOOLS**

Across Europe, schools exist which practice segregation on the grounds of ethnicity, religious affiliation or wealth. Segregation can amount to a form of discrimination. As a minimum measure, segregation by schools needs to be countered by obliging all schools to promote intercultural education and by making intercultural education part of all teacher training. The segregation of the children of minorities, for example Roma children, and immigrants as a result of poverty and social exclusion must be eradicated.

### **3. ERADICATING DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS**

Discrimination happens in schools even if they do not practice segregation through their intake criteria. Actions are needed to eradicate discrimination in schools including awareness raising campaigns and intercultural training.

### **4. EDUCATIONAL CONTENT IN SUPPORT OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE**

Intercultural Dialogue needs supportive educational content across school subjects, while prioritizing the teaching of cultures and the history of religions, of migratory movements and of minority cultures.

### **5. ENABLING TEACHERS TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE**

Professional educators and school management staff must also be involved in awareness raising, and receive intercultural skills training.

## **6. RAISING THE STANDING OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**

Today's societies place a lot of emphasis on the formal education system. The many and varied skills and competences needed for effective Intercultural Dialogue which are obtained in a non-formal context are usually undervalued and often ignored. Skills gained in such contexts must be recognised, also to enable those who have developed them to progress.

## **7. RECOGNITION OF THE COMPLEMENTARITY OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION WITH FORMAL EDUCATION**

The work of schools for Intercultural Dialogue is best achieved if they are an open, dynamic space allowing for cooperation with all other forms of education.

## **8. RECOGNITION OF INFORMAL INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE ARTS**

The arts play a key role in Intercultural Dialogue. Intercultural Dialogue is conducted by and between artists; their audiences are inspired accordingly. Many works of art communicate across borders and boundaries and so they can be seen as vehicles of Intercultural Dialogue. Much art draws from many different cultures and is thus intrinsically intercultural. The arts also facilitate participatory processes. Active involvement in artistic and cultural activities allows for an easier understanding of other perspectives, the existence of other memories and histories, the capacity to take risks, the ability to be confident in your peers, the skills to be creative, the knowledge to analyse reality critically. The participation of citizens in cultural activities helps prevent discrimination. Today, the process of human development, which is individual, cannot be complete without the unique inputs provided by the arts. However, the skills gained by those partaking in artistic activity are often left unrecognised due to their perceived immeasurable nature. Although we by no means call for the strict development of a measurement system for such skills ("formalising the informal"), we do call for the general recognition of the part the arts play in developing both Intercultural Dialogue and tolerance. This recognition should be shown through greater funding of the arts and the extension of greater support to artists.

## **9. RECOGNITION OF INFORMAL INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIA**

Many ideas related to issues of cultural diversity, ethnic groups, minorities, discrimination, segregation are conveyed by the media. Thus, the media have a special responsibility in shaping people's attitudes and opinions. Media professionals must have access to training to become skilful creators and producers of media messages related to Intercultural Dialogue. They must help ensure a balanced media space where there is no over-emphasis of the tensions and the problems that periodically arise. Listening to the voice of the Other and helping people to understand why there are different perceptions of reality is a core challenge of the media. It should not only be faced when conflicts arise, but be a current concern and feature accordingly in the codes of conduct of media.

## **II. Capacity Building by Organisations**

Intercultural Dialogue is essentially the activity of individuals. Yet individuals largely live in and through organisations, predominantly in their places of work. Be they public institutions, enterprises or civil society organisations – their structures, and the rules by which they function, determine how much they help foster and valorise cultural diversity in society. They define their capacity to enable Intercultural Dialogue. Capacity building for Intercultural Dialogue in and between organisations and institutions must be supported.

### **1. REVIEWING STAFF COMPOSITIONS AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES**

The staff composition and governance structures of organisations and institutions must reflect the multi-cultural character of the constituencies they serve. Recruitment, training and promotion policies must be developed. This needs incentives and organisational development processes.

### **2. SERVING CONSTITUENCIES**

An on-going identification of constituencies must be undertaken, keeping in mind the changing demographics within Europe. Attention needs to be paid to the formation of minority elites (in ethnic communities, for example) who play the role of intermediaries to the majority. The strength of their actual representative mandate must be considered while giving credit to the emergence of new constituencies.

### **3. GROWING INTELLECTUAL RESOURCES**

The intellectual resources of all organisations and institutions need to be enhanced through mechanisms such as job shadowing, leadership training, and mobility schemes.

### **4. ADVANCING THROUGH COMPARISON**

Organisations progress faster if they open up to an external scrutiny of their practices and benefit from that of others in return. Reporting, monitoring and international comparisons are important tools.

### **III Monitoring for Sustained Policies**

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 is not based on common legal instruments for the promotion of Intercultural Dialogue. And neither is a legally binding commitment of Member States to any guidelines on Intercultural Dialogue expected. In order to guarantee the legacy of the year, such guidelines must nevertheless be developed in the years to come through a commitment to joint monitoring. Public authorities and civil society forces need to collaborate in closing the learning cycle between practice and policy. The European Commission and the Council of Europe have a leading role to play.

#### **1. COLLECTING DATA SYSTEMATICALLY**

The Grass roots' practice of Intercultural Dialogue as well as initiatives resulting from governmental incentives must be captured in knowledge banks. All relevant organisations and institutions need to contribute to, and facilitate the amount and quality of information available, for example through a condition for funding. Such data collection must be based on a clear and concise definition of Intercultural Dialogue and must be carried out with due regard to objectivity and quality.

#### **2. NETWORKING KNOWLEDGE BANKS**

In order to facilitate a system for accessing relevant information scattered among different virtual and physical spaces, networking and streamlining databases across national and institutional boundaries is to be supported rather than creating new databases. Existing databases, portals or observatories ought to be sensitized to the collection of data on Intercultural Dialogue and be encouraged to contribute in this field. Every practice database must be matched with a human network and collaborative activities to ensure that database contents remain accurate, up to date and importantly, used.

#### **3. EVALUATING DATA AND INFORMING POLICY**

Databases must be connected to comprehensive research and analysis activities. They must, however, not remain the domain of academics. Activities for connecting with policy-makers must be built into the work programme and budget of every knowledge bank.

## **IV. Mobilising across boundaries**

Intercultural Dialogue is an endeavour, which can only succeed, if different sectors and different levels of government collaborate. Cross-sectoral cooperation by civil society organisations is thereby the counterpart to the promotion of Intercultural Dialogue across policies, and to the cooperation between governmental departments at EU and at Member State level.

### **1. EXCHANGE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN SECTORS**

These are needed in order to see the broad picture of political, economic, social and cultural reasons for difference and in order to meet the multilayered causes of conflicts. Many sectors contribute to education; organisations from different sectors need to learn from each other in their internal capacity building for Intercultural Dialogue; all sectors must contribute to the learning cycle between practice and policy. Institutional and physical spaces of encounter must be created and maintained where interculturality and cross-sectoral strategies are practiced, both in public institutions and civil society organisations.

### **2. MAINSTREAMING OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN EU POLICY**

The promotion of Intercultural Dialogue is so important that it needs to become not just a guiding principle in more EU policy areas than is presently the case, but that the activities supported under this objective must become more congruent and bigger. Their cumulative effect must become clearly perceivable.

### **3. INTERLINKING POLITICAL LEVELS**

Policies for Intercultural Dialogue must be developed and improved at local, regional, national and European level. The European Union should facilitate the exchange of information, and cooperation between public and civic as well as economic stakeholders. New forms of non-regulatory policy development are needed to the extent that they allow for efficient joint action.

## **V. Resourcing Intercultural Dialogue**

No investment, no visible results. Significant financial resources must be made available for Intercultural Dialogue across all policy areas. This is a core challenge for the European Union, as well as for national, regional and local governments. Companies and grant-giving foundations are also called upon to unlock resources. Commitment is needed on the basis of transparent aims and procedures.

### **1. DEDICATED FUNDING LINES**

The improvement of Intercultural Dialogue practices and policies needs to be supported by special programmes on all levels of public administration (local, national, regional and European). Corporations and foundations in Europe should be encouraged to do the same. The transformation of public and civic organisations should be promoted through investments into the following areas:

- Awareness-raising and exchange of experience
- Research, comparison, monitoring, and impact assessment
- Training and facilitation of capacity building
- Stimulation for the creation and use of intercultural meeting places
- Constituency or audience development
- Communication and outreach development

### **2. CONSISTENT SUPPORT ACROSS NON-DEDICATED FUNDING LINES**

All funding instruments at all governmental levels must have a distinct element of promoting Intercultural Dialogue. Intercultural Dialogue should not only be a declared aspiration of all relevant programmes, but their implementation must also correspond to the objective by paying attention to aspects such as: type, number and size of projects, composition and orientation of each partner supported.

### **3. BENCHMARKING POSITIVE ACTION**

Public and private funding organisations should consider targets for making funded organisations ‘intercultural’, and decide corresponding percentages of their overall funding.

## NEXT STEPS

Many of the recommendations in this paper have already been discussed and indeed formulated in greater detail by the *Platform for Intercultural Europe*. Signatories of this paper will become eligible for formal membership of the *Platform for Intercultural Europe*, which will live on as an established association.

The Platform will thus continue to exist in order to help civil society organisations realise the recommendations of this paper and in order to help move the European policy formulation process further. The *Platform for Intercultural Europe* takes seriously the call to be a partner for the European Union institutions in their “structured dialogue” with civil society.

We expect this commitment to be matched through the setting up of a European Union Council working group on Intercultural Dialogue under the “Open Method of Coordination” (recently introduced for the field of culture and providing a flexible and non-binding European Union framework for structuring cooperation and practice exchange between national governments). We must identify the legacy of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue together and define a follow-up work programme, including broad monitoring and evaluating activities.