

Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue

I. In brief

Diversity is Europe's destiny.

European societies have always been diverse, it is to this diversity that Europe owes many of its greatest achievements and takes so much of its pride. However, diversity today is presenting Europe with a new challenge. A gap is growing between the reality of such diversity, recently enriched by those coming beyond Europe, and the perception of many in societies that such diversity is becoming a threat to the fundament of European identity.

The Council of Europe, as the guardian of the European Convention on Human Rights, has, on the one hand, the responsibility to defend the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law which are fundamental preconditions for security and stability in Europe, but its historic leading role is also to capture societal trends, analyse them and disseminate European ideas impacting more practically on European citizens' well-being.

II. Background

The 2005 CoE Warsaw Summit already recalled that "European identity and unity, is based on shared fundamental values, respect for our common heritage and cultural diversity". Member states resolved then "to ensure that our diversity becomes a source of mutual enrichment, inter alia, by fostering political, inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue."

This has been indeed the guiding principle for all CoE work in this area as evidenced by the recent report by a Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe "Living together: combining freedom and diversity in the 21st century" which offers an up-dated analysis of the current situation in our societies and gives a clear set of recommendations to member states and the CoE for facing the new challenges of today.

Diversity for the CoE is not only related to the ethnic or religious dimension, but also to the social, environmental, cultural, heritage, economic and

other dimensions which form the specific identity of a community or territory and which can only be taken into account properly through citizen participation.

III. Comparative advantages and added value

The Council of Europe is an organisation which is well placed to try and bridge the gap between diversity as a reality -socially and economically needed – and diversity as a perceived threat. Its main added value consists in:

- A consolidated **set of standards** starting from the fundamental framework given by the ECHR, the European Cultural Convention, the Framework Convention on National Minorities, the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, but also the Granada Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, the Valletta Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, the Florence European Landscape Convention, the Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society .
- The uniqueness of **CoE approach** which is able to cater for specific needs in a flexible yet respectful way involving governments, civil society, academia, business, media, etc. This approach underlines the necessary of direct involvement of citizens in the conception and management of development projects based on the use of cultural and natural resources in order to contribute effectively to the creation of cohesive societies and sustainable communities where people want to live and work, now and in the future.
- Action based on the notion of the "**diversity advantage**" which uses links between the economic, social and ecological environments of areas in which people live on a daily basis and by putting communities at work capitalising on local cultural resources helps to bring about renewed social and economic drive within communities (see below).

IV. Geographic contextualisation

CoE at work on cultural diversity and inter-cultural dialogue: flagship projects

Inter-cultural cities

Intercultural Cities, a joint action of the CoE and the EU, has developed and tested, at the local level, a **diversity management model**, called intercultural integration. It is based on the notion of diversity advantage – considering migrants as a resource for local economic, social and cultural development, and not only as vulnerable groups in need of welfare support and services, or a threat to social cohesion. Intercultural integration implies a strategic reorientation of urban governance and policies to encourage adequate representation, positive intercultural mixing and interaction, and institutional capacity to deal with cultural conflict. Intercultural cities offers a comprehensive methodology for helping cities develop their diversity strategies, and a range of analytical and assessment tools, including the very successful Intercultural cities INDEX. The model is now being implemented by over 60 cities in Europe, as well as in Japan, Korea, Mexico and Canada.

A “policy toolbox”

A comprehensive and practical **“policy toolbox”** is offered to further democratic cultural policies and governance aimed at transparency, respect for diversity and identity, intercultural dialogue, access, participation, and cultural rights. Its main components are:

- *Cultural Policy Reviews (CPR)* currently run in Turkey and the Russian Federation; based on a national background report and in reply to selected policy questions, independent experts produce a review report offering mapping and policy guidance functions, including good practice information and tailored recommendations. Whilst the CPR of Turkey produces a comprehensive study on the country, the exercise in the Russian Federation combines a thematic focus (infrastructure and provision, diversity and the social value of culture, contemporary cultural production/industries) with a regional one (Ulyanovsk, Mari-El, Omsk). Thirty countries

have been reviewed so far and the methodology of this CoE flagship project can be flexibly adapted to needs.

- *Compendium information system* offers 42 permanently updated European cultural policy country profiles that inform, inter alia, on diversity policies, monitor related standards and offer a good practice database on intercultural dialogue. Based on its success in Europe, a world-wide information system is currently being shaped.
- *CultureWatchEurope* provides an interactive platform and dedicated think-tank for debating governmental and civil society positions on cultural policy as well as targeted research on trends and concerns such as re-nationalisation, management of diversity, participation of citizens.

Cultural Diversity in Kosovo

This CoE-EU joint project is geared to promoting development dynamics from a multicultural angle, involving the reconciliation of all the communities present in Kosovo. This reconciliation presupposes developing socio-economic models based on cultural resources. The cultural heritage is a tool for encouraging inter-community dialogue. These models improve citizens’ living conditions and quality of life and reinforce the competence of the players involved, including the institutions and other partners.

The results mainly concern citizens’ quality of life. People are gradually realising the importance of their cultural heritage as a common asset. The programme leads to sustainable economic development, improving local living conditions. At the institutional level, it is a matter of sustainably reinforcing the capacity of the institutions in Kosovo for managing the cultural heritage.

European Heritage Days

The ‘EHDs’ is a high profile and prestigious Programme. The ‘open Days’ include the most well known and celebrated heritage monuments and institutions as well as the most local and modest. National governments take pride in showing off ‘national’ heritage. The EHDs provide a European shop window for this national promotion. On the

other hand, the 'European dimension' of the Programme enables this heritage to be seen as a "shared heritage". Since 1999, the EHDs have had a permanent slogan: "Europe, a common heritage".

The North-South Centre

Created in November 1989, the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (more commonly known as the "North-South Centre"), was set up in Lisbon in May 1990. The aims of the Centre are:

- to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law through **intercultural dialogue** and education, in particular among the youth of Europe and its neighbouring regions;
- to provide a framework for European co-operation for the purpose of increasing public awareness of global interdependence and solidarity issues;
- to promote policies of solidarity in conformity with the aims and principles of the Council of Europe, by fostering **dialogue and co-operation between Europe and non-European countries in neighbouring regions.**

V. Contacts

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