

Thematic Seminar

“Reinforcing competences of education practitioners to manage intercultural and interfaith dialogue”

In the framework of the Annual Meeting of the NSC Global Education Network 2023

Lisbon, Portugal, 18 May 2023

Rationale

In Europe, alongside many parts of the world, there has been a clear international commitment towards intercultural dialogue over the past two decades¹: the official discourse acknowledges cultural and religious diversity as an asset to society and individuals², and recognizes the role that culture plays in the development of social and personal identities. There is also easier access to information and learning opportunities than ever before. Yet an increasing number of young European citizens, who represent the cultural and religious diversity of EU societies, describe a sense of detachment from their peer community, and consider that they do not feel fully integrated in the school environment³. In the context of lasting geopolitical instability, punctuated by several economical and financial crisis and a worldwide Covid pandemic, public anxieties over migration and diversity have been steadily growing in Europe⁴ and beyond⁵. There is continued distrust and fear of the «other», hate crimes, intolerance based on religion or belief, and prejudice.

School teachers and teacher educators do not feel prepared when addressing cultural and religious diversity in school settings and are lacking competences for the development of intercultural and interfaith dialogue, which is essential for achieving quality education for all⁶. As a part of a comprehensive approach towards the development of competences for democratic culture⁷, the capacity to engage in intercultural and interfaith dialogue is fundamental⁸.

By teaching ethical attitudes, such as respect and responsibility, as well as skills such as critical thinking, educators can empower young learners to become global citizens who will contribute to more peaceful societies. Education for global citizenship, also understood as Global Education, focuses on reflective learning, multiple perspectives, and the development of critical thinking as a main goal of the education process. This process also deals with the challenges posed by the new forms and the new ways of communication, and with the emergence of a generation of digital natives.

Schools, as the main academic reference where competences are taught and learnt, are spaces for dialogue where the local community and all the relevant actors (learners, families, teachers, civil society organisations

¹ The United Nations «Alliance of Civilizations» is an example of initiative of the international community « to build bridges, overcome prejudices, avoid polarization and a movement to strengthen mutual respect for traditions and religious beliefs» (Statement of the UN Secretary General at the launch of the Alliance on 14 July 2005).

² Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue “Living Together as Equals in Dignity” (2008), Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

³ Assumpta Aneas & Ruth Vilà (2023): Evaluation of Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue Competencies. Identification of Factors Related with Its Performance among Adolescents in the City of Barcelona, Religion & Education, DOI: 10.1080/15507394.2023.2187202

⁴ See data from European Fundamental Rights Agency, such as “Second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey” (2017).

⁵ See statements and reports from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as well recent Statements by the United Nations High Representative of the Alliance of Civilizations (2022)

⁶ Shuali Trachtenberg, T., Bekerman, Z., Bar Cendón, A., Prieto Egido, M., Tenreiro Rodríguez, V., Serrat Roosen, I., Centeno, C., *Addressing educational needs of Teachers in the EU for inclusive education in a context of diversity, Volume 1. Teachers’ Intercultural Competence: Working definition and implications for teacher education*, EUR 30323 EN

⁷ Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (2018), Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

⁸ Barrett, M. & Byram, M (2022) *Autobiography in intercultural encounters Concepts, Contents and Theory*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

and national institutions) meet global phenomena in and around the classroom. They represent a reality where specific competences are needed to practise intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

The reinforcement of these competences is not limited to formal curricula programmes. Formal and non-formal education can be mutually reinforcing in addressing contemporary challenges – such as radicalisation, migration, climate change, inequality – that are extremely complex and require a holistic and inter-disciplinary approach. It is in this context that civil society organisations can play an important role complementing formal education curricula to fill skills gap, through capacity-building programmes or project work in global citizenship education.

Activity description

This Seminar will provide the space to analyse and discuss the latest developments shaping intercultural and interfaith dialogue in the education sector, the challenges involved, and the skills and competences needed for its implementation.

Experts and participants will draw on examples and best practices of:

- How to teach and learn intercultural competences, in both formal and non-formal education
- Creating or enlarging the spaces for intercultural and interfaith learning with the support of different actors
- The challenges of engaging in intercultural and interfaith dialogue

Methodology and working methods

The Thematic Seminar will have a first part focused on topical inputs provided by experts, through keynote speeches and two panel discussions addressing current developments with regards to managing cultural diversity at the national and local levels, as well as the practice of intercultural/interfaith dialogue in schools. The second part of the Seminar will allow for interactive exchanges aimed at identifying good examples of practising intercultural and interfaith dialogue in the educational context.

The working language of the seminar will be English.

Participants

- Members of the Global Education Network
- Experts on intercultural and interfaith dialogue
- Education practitioners
- Representatives of Civil Society organisations engaged in the promotion of global education and intercultural/interfaith dialogue
- Representatives of national institutions and international institutions engaged in intercultural/interfaith dialogue

Programme 18 May

8:45 Registration

9:00 Institutional Opening:

- Ms Eduarda Marques, Director of the Lisbon Youth Centre, Portuguese Institute for Sports and Youth (IPDJ)
- Mr Adelino Silva, Executive Director of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe
- Reverend José Miguel Fraga Cardoso, Dicastery for Culture and Education of the Holy See
- Mr Muzhdad Hasanov, Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan

9:45 Session I: Panel discussion on the state of play of managing cultural and religious diversity in the educational sector

This panel discussion will provide an exchange of views on the latest trends and developments regarding international and national policy frameworks aimed at achieving social cohesion through intercultural and interfaith dialogue *versus* some of the experienced realities of intercultural integration in school settings.

This discussion will be moderated by Mr Nami Isaki, Executive Director of the Centre for Intercultural Dialogue, Republic of North Macedonia.

- Prof. Jonas Otterbeck, Professor of Islamic Studies, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, Aga Khan University
- Prof. Tamar Shuali Trachtenberg, Director and Head Researcher, European Institute of Education for Democratic Culture, Universidad Católica de Valencia
- Ms Maria Lucia Uribe, Executive Director, Arigatou International – Geneva, Ethics Education for Children

11:00-11:15 Coffee break

11:15 Session II: Panel discussion on schools

This panel discussion will reflect on the school as a space for dialogue, a space where the local community and all the relevant actors (learners, families, teachers, civil society organisations and national institutions) meet global phenomena, such as: migration; a place where formal education meets non-formal learning; a reality where specific competences are needed to practise intercultural/interfaith dialogue.

This discussion will be moderated by Ms Anna Weinrich, Board Member of the Organising Bureau of the European School Students Union (OBESSU), representing the voice of school students in Europe.

- Prof. Martyn Barrett, Professor of Psychology, and Lead Expert for the Council of Europe Education Policy Advisors Network
- Prof. Scherto Gill, Senior Fellow of the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace, and Chair of the Education Working Group of the G20 Interfaith Forum
- Ms Mayssam Imad, Head of the Education Unit, Adyan Foundation for Diversity, Solidarity and Human Dignity
- Ms Lantana Bako Abdullahi, Fellow of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID).

12:30-14:30 Lunch break

14:30 Session III: Practising intercultural and interfaith dialogue

This interactive session will give the opportunity to all participants to enter a dialogue and discuss some good practices of addressing cultural and religious diversity with young learners in formal and non-formal educational settings.

The discussions will be structured around four roundtables of 10-15 participants each, bringing together experts, government representatives and representatives of civil society. Several designated participants will move from one table to another every 45 minutes, in view of bringing new perspectives to the discussions. Designated rapporteurs will share the highlights of each of the roundtable discussions at the closing session.

16:30 Closing

- Mr Adelino Silva, Executive Director of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

16h45 Cocktail

The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

The European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, more commonly known as the [North-South Centre](#), is an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the [Council of Europe](#) created in November 1989. The North-South Centre was the result of a European public campaign which aim was to raise public awareness of the complex structural relationship which affected European and Southern countries, and to promote policies of solidarity

The North-South Centre develops multilateral, regional, and interregional cooperation projects that include field activities around three main programmatic areas: [global education](#), [youth cooperation](#) and [women empowerment](#). The main mechanisms of intervention are:

- Advocacy and confidence-building: encouraging a structured dialogue among elected representatives and other sectors of society to act on legislation for everyone to enjoy their universal rights in a more sustainable planet.
- Capacity building: expanding expertise, knowledge and critical understanding through dialogue, peer education and intercultural learning.
- Awareness-raising: spreading the message that every individual has a role and responsibility in building inclusive and sustainable societies.

The activities of the North-South Centre gather four main partners: governments, parliaments, regional and local authorities, and civil society. The latter is especially relevant to the work of the North-South Centre, which aims at taking its lead from experiences at the grassroots level by empowering, supporting, and working hand in hand with civil society, in particular with women and youth organisations.

The Global Education Programme

Global Education “*opens people’s eyes and minds to the realities of the world and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all; [...] global education is understood to encompass Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimension of Education for Citizenship.*”⁹

The 2023 Annual Meeting of the Global Education Network and the Thematic Seminar are part of *iLEGEND III: Intercultural Learning Exchange through Global Education, Networking and Dialogue (2023-2026)*, a Joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe: co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. The overall objective of the project is to increase the active engagement of EU member States, candidate and potential candidate countries’ citizens (in particular young people) in safeguarding sustainable development and confronting global challenges and inequalities at local and global level.

In the framework of *iLEGEND III* and related to the main topics of this Thematic Seminar, in 2023 the North-South Centre will launch a new Tutored Online Training Course on *Global Education and Intercultural/Interfaith Dialogue*; the main aim of the course is to introduce concepts, principles and methodology of Global Education, Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue and explore their interrelations.

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⁹ Maastricht Global Education Declaration, 2002