



# ÉDUCATION & CULTURE INFOS

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## Regroupement « Education & Culture »

### EDITORIAL

#### “Living together in equal Dignity”

That is the title of the Council of Europe’s White Paper on Intercultural dialogue!

The title alone is a good example of the ambitions as well as the basic necessity that have led to the development of the white paper.

Not less than twelve meetings and a number of revisions have been required to produce the final version of the white paper which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 7 May 2008. In the introduction there is clear affirmation of the priority of managing “growing cultural diversity in our continent within a “dynamic and open society, devoid of any kind of discrimination and of value to all”.

How can we not support to such a result of which the INGOs and their conference have been advocates for so many years! Civil society and the INGOs are firmly convinced that Intercultural Dialogue, in all its forms, is vital for our common future. The interreligious dimension follows from it. It would, therefore have been a strategic mistake not to regard it as an element of intercultural dialogue, particularly when fundamentalism and radical extremism of all forms are becoming more prevalent. That is particularly the case because the second meeting on the religious Dimension of the Dialogue on the 8 April, with its theme of “teaching religious facts and those concerned with conviction” has demonstrated its current relevance.

It was timely and clearly necessary to situate continuing and enriching dialogue in a real and not just a relative framework of fundamental common values, on which we draw and for which we strive; those are the values of human rights.

So, with this white paper, we have a a coherent body of proposals based on values which influence our daily life in good democratic style.

The INGOs can be pleased at having played an active role in the preparation and the writing of this White Paper through their many contributions.

The work does not end there! If we aim to give it real effect, substance and long term influence it follows that, at all levels of the European Institutions, care should be taken to ensure that they foster intercultural dialogue by word and deed in their daily activity. The dialogue should be aimed at producing conditions that will guarantee full rights to all citizens, without discrimination; our task is to be vigilant.

It is absolutely fundamental to our future together that every man and every women throughout Europe, for example, should be really equal. To make this a reality we must therefore value the stance taken by the white paper, which effectively forbids cultural relativism in favour of universal values as “a prior condition for intercultural Dialogue”. It really is not a question of accepting that women are not regarded as equal to men because of custom, tradition, outlook or religion, with the consequence that they endure being set apart or subjection to discrimination or indeed to violence.

We must do everything possible to ensure that the conditions for dialogue are fulfilled and to identify those who, through intolerance, do not accept this. Furthermore it is essential that all who have an influence in society and public opinion should be made aware of the need to “live together”, though, seemingly they are aware and indeed in favour of the process as is evident from a recent opinion poll (*see below in this Bulletin*).

It is absolutely necessary that people should be convinced of the need for intercultural dialogue while the practice is in no wise less important!

The INGOs in the Council of Europe, with their long involvement with Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights, with Teaching of History programmes and with initiatives against exclusion, know this well. They are working for the development of partnerships to ensure that the content of educational programmes at all levels will incorporate this dimension of human dignity: that we should know one another better, that there should be mutual respect and that people should live together in diversity.

In respect of formal and informal education there is, no doubt, room for development in the field of intercultural dialogue, whether in affirming the principles and the received tradition of democracy, in acquiring key skills, in renewal of the teaching of history or in teaching teachers and others involved in education.

This white paper calls to mind the legal principle, it offers suggestions, it identifies paths to follow and activities to undertake. These are long term activities; we must take up the task without delay so that our fellow citizens can link up with the values that they espouse and the the reality of their daily life.

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### In this edition :

Editorial	1
Intercultural dialogue - statistics	2
The image of the other in the teaching of history	2
Cultural Activity in the Council of Europe	3
Interreligious dialogue 8 April 2008	3
Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights	4

## INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

### *An interesting survey*

At present we are discussing Intercultural dialogue, so here are the results of a recent survey published by the European Commission. Even if they are only concerned with the 27 countries of the EU, there are a number of significant answers about which we should think and which we can use.

Nearly three quarters of the citizens of Europe think that people of foreign origin (ethnic or religious...) enrich the culture of a country; the most "equivocal" reactions are those from Malta, Cyprus Bulgaria and Rumania. 83%(!) of citizens accept the potential benefit of contacts and intercultural dialogue; at the same time nearly two thirds say that it is important to preserve cultural traditions as well as those of the family, and to pass them on to the young generation.

**Alain Mouchoux**

### "THE IMAGE OF THE OTHER IN THE TEACHING OF HISTORY" - FOLLOW ON FROM THE PROJECT

Remember that the project was launched in 2006 by the Council of Europe's Education Committee. It is an aspect of the work undertaken on the development and strengthening of intercultural dialogue.

Two preliminary expert seminars (in 2006 and 2007) organised a first symposium which took place on the 29 and 30 October 2007. The subject was "Learning history to understand to live in a context of cultural diversity today". At the end of the forum, a number of recommendations were adopted to follow on the work, among others:

- History is an essential element of intercultural dialogue and in the development of active citizenship.
- In view of its complexity, this aspect of teaching history requires the application of specific methods and strategies.
- The training of people involved - teachers and those engaged in non formal education - should change and renew a number of ideas in the teaching of history
- Other aspects should be taken into account in the teaching of history through activities outside school, in culture and the media.

At the beginning of 2008 there was a new meeting of the project group which introduced the second phase of the project: "The image of the other and one's self image in the globalisation process" has been given substance in an expert seminar held at the end of March 2008. The work was centred around two approaches:

- Differing views of Europe and the rest of the world in the teaching of history.
- Images of Europe within Europe and among its immediate neighbours.

On 23 and 24 April the project group paid particular attention to the preparation of the second symposium which will be held in Istanbul next October. It will examine a number of themes and questions, among others: "Globalisation means that the greatest distances have been reduced to proximity" how can we relate this process to practice? - the place of Europe and of civil society in this process - the individual and collective image... In another respect, the group has also been involved in the chief aspects of a final report expected to be available at the end of 2009. It will be concerned with methods, forms and the target group (politicians, those who work in the field and teachers). Its message will be about innovative teaching of history.

In representing the Education and Culture grouping I invite its members to contribute to this work which goes much further than the particular interest of historians.

Contact for further information

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## CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

There is not doubt that the Council of Europe's activities in the field of culture should be better known and more highly regarded.

The meeting of the Steering Committee on Culture on the 5 and 6 May is evidence of this, in particular because a number of its activities are related to the Dialogue between cultures and the need to promote cultural and natural diversity.

At the last meeting 40 countries were represented in the steering committee from the 49 countries that have signed up to the cultural Convention. The discussion showed, for example, that it was necessary to strengthen the economic base of cultural creation, to develop regional cooperation especially in Europe's North-South Centre and to develop further activities in 2009.

All this is happening despite financial constraint in the Council of Europe, with zero growth, which will entail finding outside resources for current and future programmes.

Since 1985 the Council of Europe has implemented a programme of assessment of member states' cultural policies: 28 assessments have so far been carried out and they have contributed to modernisation in the field of culture in these countries. For the Council it is a matter of strengthening the organisation of cultural issues in the context of human rights and of maintaining a coherence and follow up, particularly thanks to the development of a unit to monitor culture (Culture Watch Europe). The "Compendium of cultural policy and tendencies in Europe", which is an information system as well as one for monitoring national cultural policy in Europe is one aspect of the process. At present the Compendium includes 41 national profiles.

It is clear from the adoption of the White Paper that the development of intercultural dialogue is a major activity of the steering committee on culture, together with the follow up of its recommendation and the strengthening of partnership with educational organisations, with INGOs and with those working in the field of culture.

In this context we should underline the implementation of a pilot stage in the programme on "intercultural cities" 2008/9 - which should mobilise civil society at the local level, as well as the media and territorial collectives so as "to bring about a change in the perception of diversity and of current divisions".

The cultural route programme celebrated its twentieth anniversary at the end of 2007: at present it includes 24 cultural routes; a project on the cultural journey and the heritage of ROMs is currently being developed.

The objective of these cultural routes is to develop awareness of European culture, of the diversity of different cultures, as well as historical knowledge and the development of Intercultural Dialogue. Unfortunately these routes continue to be too little known; they are not sufficiently highly regarded, howbeit they are organised around a theme and they bear current witness to our past, to our history and to our common life and values. They should be valued and broadened, for example by being better and more frequently connected to education so as to give more place to cultural and educational exchanges... Without forgetting their touristic and economic dimension.

**Alain MOUCHOUX**

## INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND 8 APRIL 2008 CONTINUATION

An evaluation meeting on the second meeting on interreligious dialogue organised by the Committee of Ministers was held on 29 May. Annelise OESCHGER and Alain MOUCHOUX took part.

It was a matter of a preliminary assessment of the Meeting, of deciding whether it provided added value to the current debate and of whether the process should become a continuing one or not.

On the whole the ministers delegates took a positive view of the second meeting and expressed their wish to carry on. A number were more guarded saying that the evaluation of the day was incomplete and that the cost was a factor. There are hopes that the length and conduct of the meetings may be improved; there was also reference to the difference in quality of the contributions and speeches, the absence of real dialogue at the meeting and the need to look again at the people to be invited and the extent to which they are representative of the situation...

Annelise Oeschger emphasised the involvement of INGOs, the importance of continuing the process with a three year commitment that would include 2009 and 2010. She suggested some themes for future meetings: freedom of expression and its limits, religion and discrimination, the view of women in religion, the relationship of morality to human rights.

It was decided that there should be a thorough analysis of the responses to the questionnaire. Following on from an observation by Alain Mouchoux DGIV will prepare a document on potential aspects of the teaching of religious facts (the theme of this second meeting) looking at added value for Council of Europe activities as much in the field of Intercultural Dialogue as in Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights.

The next meeting will take place on 4 July 2008 in view of a decision by the Committee of Ministers on 9 July 2009

**Alain MOUCHOUX**

## DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP AND HUMAN RIGHTS

On 28 May 2008 there was a pleasant ceremony in the Council of Europe: Edouard Jagodnik, President of the European Schools' Association, presented certificates to sixty pupils from the Second Class of the Lycée ORT in Strasbourg and from the MERZ SCHOOL in Stuttgart, who had succeeded in an examination on "Democratic Citizenship and Human rights".

These two establishments have taken account of the interest in going beyond compulsory courses or of anticipating developments, so that their young students may work in areas essential for their future.

### Political Culture with:

- Learning about social, political and civic institutions, as well as about human rights
- Study of conditions that enable individuals to live in harmony, social questions and current social problems
- Preparing young people to exercise their rights and responsibilities defined in national constitutions
- Promotion of the recognition of cultural and historical heritage
- Promotion of the recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity in society

### Critical thought with:

- Acquiring the necessary competence to take part in public life
- The development of recognition and self respect and of respect for others with the aim of developing greater mutual understanding
- Learning about social and moral responsibility, including self-confidence and responsible attitudes to others
- The development of values that take full account of the existence of different points of view and social outlooks
- Learning about listening and about peaceful resolution of conflict
- Learning about the contribution of a safe environment
- The implementation of more effective strategies to combat racism and xenophobia

We are particularly grateful to

The schools represented in particular by Mr Jean-Hugues LEOPOLD-METZGER (ORT), well known among the INGOs of the Council of Europe, et Mme Marie-José LOWE (Merz Schule)

Among those in charge of different areas of the Council of Europe's work we mention the presence of Mme Anne Lise OESCHGER, President of the INGO Conference, Mme Marie-Pierre MAGNILLAT, Déléguée Générale of the FEDE, Mr Gabriele MAZZA, Director of Education – DG IV of the Council of Europe, Mr Vincent BERGER, representing the European Court of Human Rights, Mr Claude-Laurent GENTY, Honorary President of the INGOs, et Mr Alain MOUCHOUX, President of the Education and Culture Grouping of INGOs

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