



FACT SHEET 31

The 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

March 2007

This Fact Sheet aims to give an overview of the objectives of the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, as well as the activities foreseen during this Year and how NGOs can be involved in these activities.

Introduction

2008 has been declared the “**European Year of Intercultural Dialogue**”¹. This initiative comes from an idea launched in 2004 by the European Commissioner responsible for education and culture, Ján Figel, to complement existing Community programmes and raise awareness among European citizens, especially the youth, of the importance of intercultural dialogue.

As underlined in the European Commission Proposal for the European Year², intercultural dialogue is a fundamental tool for constructing an inclusive European society, bringing together the peoples of Europe and implementing the EU’s motto “Unity in Diversity”.

Legal Background

The founding treaties give the European Community and the European Union the task of creating an ever-closer union between the peoples of Europe: the EU shall respect the history, culture and traditions of Member States (see preamble of the Treaty on the European Union) and contribute to the flowering of their cultures, both respecting their national and regional diversity and highlighting their common heritage (article 151 of the TEC, in the consolidated version³). Moreover, the Preamble of the Charter of

¹ Decision No. 1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008). The text is available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:412:0044:0050:EN:PDF>.

² COM (2005) 467 final, Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008). The text is available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0467:FIN:EN:PDF>.

³ The Treaty on European Union (TEU) was signed in Maastricht in 1992 to create the European Union from the pre-existing European Community. The Treaty introduced a three-pillar structure including economic and political cooperation and was later amended by the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2000). The Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice also amended the former Treaty establishing the European Community (TEC), signed in Rome in

Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that the EU, founded on the respect of human rights and on the principles of equality, solidarity, democracy and the rule of law, “contributes to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States”.

With regard to intercultural dialogue as such, there is no specific legal base for European action. Still, many projects financed under various Community programmes contribute directly or indirectly to the development of such a dialogue.

Previous Actions and Programmes

Given the mandate of the European Union to create an “ever-closer union”, the European Commission has, for many years, been working on the issue of intercultural dialogue, encouraging cooperation both inside Member States and in third countries. It has emphasised that cultural diversity is a rich asset for peoples and societies in Europe. Various initiatives have been developed through programmes and Community actions. These include academic conferences, cultural projects and education initiatives. Other programmes, developed by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education and Culture (such as Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Jean Monnet, youth programmes and Culture 2000) and by other Directorates-General (for example the EQUAL programme of Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) have all contributed to the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

The enlargement of the European Union, coupled with increasing migratory flows and mobility, as well as the broader globalisation of contemporary trends, have led to increased contacts between cultures, languages, religions, ethnic and national groups. As a result, deeper and more structured dialogue between cultures has emerged as a priority in the context of an increasingly multicultural European Union. Such dialogue has involved not only public authorities but also civil society: projects on the local and national levels have created successful examples of positive interchange between groups.

The 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

A European Year dedicated to intercultural dialogue constitutes a tool for underlining the European Union’s commitment in this area and for involving citizens. Until now, intercultural dialogue has been, to a certain extent, taken into consideration in broader EU political agendas and implemented through the different policies and Community programmes. However, this “mainstreamed” approach has not given sufficient visibility to intercultural dialogue. This is one of the reasons why the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue has been declared - it should highlight the relevance of the intercultural dialogue in the EU.

The main aims of the European Year can be summarised as follows:

- to encourage and promote intercultural dialogue as an instrument to acquire mutual knowledge and better understanding of different cultures among the Member States and the different communities living in the Member States, in order to build a more open society and to create ways of peaceful coexistence;

1957. The consolidated version of the TEC contains the text of the TEC amended by the TEU, as well as the TEU’s amending treaties.

- to raise the awareness among European citizens, and all those living in the European Union, of the importance of developing an inclusive European citizenship that is open to the world, respectful of cultural diversities and based on common values.

Specific objectives (as defined in article 2 of the Decision 1983/2006/EC) are to:

- raise the awareness of all those living in the EU, in particular young people, of the importance of engaging in intercultural dialogue, also in their daily life;
- identify and share best practices in promoting and facilitating intercultural dialogue;
- promote the role of education as an important tool for fostering an inclusive society;
- underline the contributions of different cultures in the European cultural heritage;
- stress the importance of active European citizenship, involving participation of civil society in intercultural dialogue and cooperating on this with different groups and stakeholders;
- promote and integrate intercultural dialogue in Community policies;
- highlight the role of intercultural dialogue in the EU's external relationships.

Actions and Measures during the Year

The European Commission has engaged in a long preparation process preceding the launch of the Year. As early as August 2006, a "Call for Ideas" was meant to collect civil society's views about intercultural dialogue, its meaning and the possibilities for its implementation, in order to inform the design of the Year and respond as much as possible to the expectations of civil society and its different stakeholders.

This consultation process was also backed up by regular meetings with organisations participating in the Civil Society Platform for Intercultural Dialogue, a loose network of local, national and international NGOs (see below). This consultation became more structured in 2006 and is meant to accompany the whole process of the Year throughout its full implementation and beyond.

A Communication on the role of culture and intercultural dialogue in Europe is due to be issued in the next couple of months. It aims to propose a set of objectives for Member States in this area and methods to help them devote resources to achieve those objectives.

With an overall budget of €10 million, the European Year will support a number of specific projects to be implemented during 2008 through programmes and other Community actions, primarily in the areas of culture, education, youth, sport and citizenship.

Activities to be promoted during the Year may include:

- events and initiatives on a European scale aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue and raising awareness;
- events and initiatives aimed at promoting the objectives of the European Year, with particular attention to civic education and learning;
- information and promotion campaigns, both at Community and national levels, to disseminate key messages and information on the European Year, as well as best practices;
- surveys and studies on a Community or national scale and consultation with transnational networks and social partners, in order to lay the basis for the follow-up of intercultural dialogue.

The European Year's budget will fund a limited number of symbolic actions at the European level (8 to 10 actions; the publication of the call for tender is planned for the end of March); actions on a Community scale, for example information campaigns coordinated at the Community level and implemented in the Member States; as well as actions at the national level. Actions at the national level will be funded up to 50% from EU funds, while European-level projects will be funded up to 80% through EU funds.

With regard to activities at national level, each Member State is expected to appoint a National Coordination Body, responsible for organising activities of the European Year and submitting grant applications to the Commission. Decisions on awarding grants shall be taken by the Commission, who shall ensure a balanced and fair distribution between the Member States and among the different fields of activity involved, while taking into consideration the quality of the projects proposed. A Committee will also be established at European level to assist the Commission in the implementation of the Year.

As a number of Community actions have already contributed to fostering intercultural dialogue, the initiatives taken during 2008 should be developed with reference to previous actions. Linking activities during the Year to other relevant Community programmes and policies will increase their impact and long-term sustainability. In addition, the objective of enhancing intercultural dialogue is intended to contribute to the achievement of many of the EU's strategic priorities, particularly with regard to the Lisbon strategy for growth and employment, policies on asylum and the integration of immigrants, and to the EU's commitment to social cohesion and combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia. In other words: the approach which is being adopted is not intended to dramatically increase the number of new initiatives during the Year, but rather to galvanize existing policies and programmes, in order to promote and mainstream the objectives of intercultural dialogue.

A number of principles will underpin the European Year. These principles are: respect for diversity; non-discrimination; and inclusion, openness and participation of civil society.

Opportunities for national and local NGOs

The 2008 Year presents an opportunity to engage with the debate on intercultural dialogue at the national and local levels, and provides a context in which local, regional and national civil society organisations can promote objectives of inclusion.

In preparation for the Year, NGOs can:

- Contact the relevant ministry to find out whether a National Coordination Body has been appointed.
- Advocate for the appointment of specific bodies, such as equality bodies, to be appointed as the National Coordination Body.
- Seek to be consulted in the development of Member State activities for the Year – advocate for the establishment of a steering committee to oversee the implementation of the Year's activities so that it is inclusive of NGOs.
- Ensure that the government and/or other private donors will make matching funds available for NGO activities during the Year.
- Ask local and city authorities what activities they plan to undertake to mark the 2008 Year.
- If necessary, write to the European Commission to find out what is going on in their Member State regarding the European Year.

- Start planning projects and activities which could be funded during the Year.
- Consult the list of **Cultural Contact Points** (created for the implementation of the “Culture” Programme, but which might provide relevant information about the activities of the European Year), available at http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/culture2007/contacts/national_pts_en.html
- Cooperate with initiatives launched by European foundations or networks.

Opportunities for European NGOs

Some funding will be available during the Year for civil society projects on the European level. NGOs that work on the international level can start planning projects and activities that could be funded during the Year.

European NGOs can also stay abreast of current developments regarding the Year by following the following two initiatives that have already been launched by European foundations in connection with the European Year:

- The European Cultural Foundation (ECF www.eurocult.org/home/) and the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH www.efah.org/) have launched a **civil society platform** for intercultural dialogue. The platform is supported by the Network of European Foundations (NEF www.nefic.org/) and is open to all organisations willing to participate in the Year, network together to develop projects and share good practices as well as to exchange views with the European Commission regarding the development and implementation of the Year.
- Various European foundations, supported by the Network of European Foundations (NEF www.nefic.org/), have jointly launched a cluster of initiatives designed to provide a decisive contribution to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008. The **NEF Cultural Cluster** is led by the [European Cultural Foundation](#) (Netherlands) and supported by the [Compagnia di San Paolo](#) (Italy), the [Evens Stichting](#) (Belgium/France/Poland), the [Van Leer Group Foundation](#) (Netherlands), the [King Baudouin Foundation](#) (Belgium), the [Riksbankens Jubileumsfond](#) (Sweden) and the [European Forum for the Arts and Heritage](#) (Belgium). Cooperation with other foundations is welcomed (for info: www.nefic.org/culclust.htm and www.nefic.org/members.htm).

Key Documents

The Commission Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0467:FIN:EN:PDF>.

The Decision concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) (as adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 18th December 2006)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:412:0044:0050:EN:PDF>.

ENAR policy response “‘Call for Ideas’ for promoting intercultural dialogue in Europe”

http://www.enar-eu.org/en/policy/oct06_ENAR_Intercultural_dialogue.pdf

European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/index_en.html

Resources on Intercultural Dialogue

<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/new/intercultural-dialogue-resources.php>

For further information contact:

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CEJI - A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe

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ENAR is a network of some 600 European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU Member States. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year against Racism. ENAR is determined to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives.



ENAR is funded by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Anti-Discrimination Unit.



CEJI – a Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe stands with individuals and organisations of all religions, cultures and backgrounds to promote a diverse and inclusive Europe. Our activities include delivering diversity education, facilitating and contributing to networks, advocacy at a European level, enhancing inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue and facilitating Jewish participation.