

**OSCE CONFERENCE**  
**on**  
**RACISM, XENOPHOBIA and DISCRIMINATION**

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**Session 2: The role of governments and civil society in promoting tolerance**

**Session 3: Education**

*Written contribution of Directorate General IV:  
Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport*

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

**Introduction**

As early as 1954, the European Cultural Convention defined mutual understanding as the central goal of co-operation in the field of culture. Originally focused on understanding between nations, this concern has progressively widened to include migrants, national minorities, linguistic and cultural communities, and religious groups. It has also become linked to the goal of social cohesion and the inclusion of all groups at risk of disadvantage.

The increase in recent years of social and political conflicts exacerbated by the malevolent exploitation of cultural differences gives even greater importance to the need for a "culture of peace". High-level political statements, notably the declarations and action plans of the Council of Europe Heads of State and Government (Vienna Summit of 1993), have repeatedly underlined the absolute necessity for tolerance and good-neighbourliness within the rich diversity out of which Europe's identity is made, under a shared commitment to the human rights of all.

As a result, a large number of the Council of Europe's activities in education, culture, heritage, sport and youth focus on fostering intercultural dialogue combating racism and xenophobia, mutual understanding and values such as tolerance, respect for others and participation in society. This document contains information on the most important programmes and activities in the Directorate General IV which contribute to these values.

## **I. Intercultural dialogue**

Individuals and communities need to be provided with tools and models for real dialogue on the sensitive issues that separate, but should not divide them. The Council of Europe projects in cultural policy, education and youth on the theme of intercultural dialogue, cover both the creation of a general openness to dialogue and specific action for conflict prevention and reconciliation.

### **1. Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention**

This project, launched in 2002, aims to secure intercultural dialogue, including the aspect of religious diversity. Its main objective is to provide policymakers, civil society and cultural actors with instruments and models for effective cultural action and co-operation to support dialogue in order to prevent violent conflict, manage and control conflicts and favour post-conflict reconciliation.

The Project set as its goal the creation of mutual respect between cultural and religious communities, by means of better knowledge, understanding and comprehension. The promotion and support of different types of dialogue help to create a “safe place” where prejudices linked to racism, xenophobia and discrimination can be debated and overcome.

The Project comprises five main priority areas:

- A reflection at ministerial level on the new role and new responsibilities of the Ministers of Cultural Affairs in initiating intercultural dialogue which will lead to the adoption of a Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention, due for adoption in October 2003.
- A think-tank associating researchers in intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, experts in conflict prevention and human rights, politicians from all levels of government (local, regional, national), NGOs and foundations, and cultural operators.
- The “Shared Cities” activity analyses the impact of cultural actions on the promotion/restoration of inter-community dialogue in cities that are shared (for political, administrative or cultural reasons), to draw up guidelines for policy-makers, civil society and cultural operators.
- The “Peace Enclaves/Cradles” activity, on the basis of observation and analysis of the various situations experienced or suffered by cultural communities in *peace cradles* and *conflict zones*, at the height of events in South-East Europe, aims at devising cultural policy strategies geared towards conflict prevention.
- The European flagship initiatives will, through a travelling exhibition on the “histories of dialogue”, raise the general public’s awareness on historically documented examples of dialogue throughout the ages.

In addition to these activities, the Project foresees the compilation of good practices of intercultural dialogue and supports cultural exchanges between different European regions.

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## **2. The challenge of intercultural education today**

The Council of Europe has dealt with many aspects of intercultural education over the years. In order to consolidate this longstanding work and, in particular, to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue, the project "The challenge of intercultural education today" was launched in 2002. It aims to raise the awareness of decision makers and teaching staff of the implications of the religious dimension of intercultural education, as well as of good practice, new methods and approaches of intercultural education in general, both in school and out-of-school education. Thus the project will attempt to be both theoretically innovative and practice orientated.

Two major achievements are expected:

- enabling individual Europeans to engage in intercultural dialogue based on mutual tolerance and understanding on matters involving religion;
- providing policymakers and practitioners in formal and non-formal education with concepts and tools for supporting the above goal.

The outputs of the project will include, *inter alia*, case studies (school practice), methodological guidelines, recommendations to governments.

A further element of this activity consists in the pursuit of a "Euro-Arab" intercultural dialogue as part of a new co-operative venture involving UNESCO, ALECSO (the Arab League's organisation for education and culture) and the Council of Europe.

The work of this project contributes also to the preparation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, which will be organised in Athens on 10-12 November 2003 on the theme "Intercultural education: managing diversity, strengthening democracy".

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## **3. Youth building peace and intercultural dialogue**

This three-year project (2003-2005) puts special emphasis on: the promotion of intercultural understanding between young people in Europe and further afield; the promotion of conflict transformation through multi-cultural youth activities; the development of confidence building measures and preventative strategies in conflict-risk areas and with "conflict-risk" youth groups; and the role of intercultural dialogue and inter-religious activities in the promotion of a culture of peace.

Activities of the project include a major Conference on "Youth, Intercultural Dialogue and Globalisation" which will be organised in Spring 2004 and provide support for youth organisations working for the reconciliation process, aiming to build peace and

intercultural dialogue. Seminars are being organised in conflict zones, and training courses in intercultural dialogue and Human Rights Education will be organised and training material made available. Adoption of political recommendations and follow-up plans are expected.

A number of activities are carried out within a Partnership Agreement with the European Commission on Euro-Mediterranean co-operation in the field of youth training and non-formal education.

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## **II. Education for democratic culture**

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This programme aims at making an important contribution to the main objectives of the Council of Europe, that is strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It addresses areas in which the education process should promote the learning of key skills for a democratic culture on a lifelong basis: citizenship and human rights education, history, languages and intercultural education.

### **1. Promoting linguistic diversity in multilingual society**

This medium term project (2002 – 2005) aims at encouraging and supporting more diversified language learning in view of European democratic citizenship.

Language education policies should promote plurilingualism and lifelong learning in order to foster intercultural competences and thus facilitate communication with others in all domains.

The activities include, among others

- assistance to member states analysing their language education policies;
- development of concrete strategies to promote more diversification, which includes the development and piloting of common European instruments of reference;
- further development and implementation of reference instruments.

Special importance is given to mutual recognition of competences which enhance mobility and employment possibilities, intercultural education and lifelong learning.

The project also focuses on policies for linguistic diversity as a component of successful interculturalism, and especially on language education for minorities and migrants in priority countries.

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### **2. Education policies and practice for democratic citizenship and human rights**

This has been a priority project for the Council of Europe since 1997. It has sought to identify how formal and informal education can help young people and adults to

acquire the motivation, knowledge and skills to manage democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law and promote human rights: a set of values and attitudes which includes tolerance, solidarity and respect for others.

Between 1997-2000, the EDC project's main contributions focused on definitions of EDC and concepts, on devising core competencies for democratic citizenship, as regards knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The project deals with citizenship education in the school context as well as with support systems for lifelong learning. The main results of the first phase of the project are set out in Committee of Ministers' Recommendation (2002) 12 on education for democratic citizenship, which also proposes strategies for implementing EDC policies at the national level.

This flagship project is now in its second phase and the major objective until the end of 2004 is assisting member states with the development of EDC policies and practice, both at multilateral and bilateral level. National strategies, curricula, tools and teacher training to facilitate the implementation of education policies and practice for democratic citizenship and human rights education are being devised, building on the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2002) 12. An all-European study on EDC policies in member States will be available soon. The EDC project has set up a network of coordinators (one from each member State) which meets regularly to facilitate the exchange of experiences, information and good practice. Human Rights Education for teacher trainers is being organised, in particular in South-East European countries.

A "European Year of Citizenship through Education" is planned for 2005.

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### **3. History education and its contribution to democratic society and citizenship**

In accordance with the policy of the Committee of Ministers set out in Recommendation REC (2001) 15 "History teaching in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe", this project focuses on the European dimension of History, especially on the following aspects:

- review curricula and standards for history teaching
- support the preparation and publication of new history textbooks
- help develop new approaches in the initial and in-service training of history teachers

with a view to the education of secondary school pupils in such skills as critical thinking, tolerance, mutual understanding multiperspectivity.

The work is being carried out through a series of seminars and workshops either on a bilateral or regional basis. History educators in many member States (East and South-East Europe): Ministers of Education, senior officials responsible for history education, university professors, teacher trainers, textbook authors and educational publishers, as well as history teachers, have all been involved in this work.

Special regional initiatives are being developed, bringing together history educators from several countries to discuss different aspects of their shared history (the Tbilisi initiative, the Black Sea initiative).

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#### **4. Teaching remembrance – Education for the prevention of crimes against humanity**

This project also has its origin in Recommendation (2001) 15 “History teaching in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe”. According to this Recommendation, history teaching must not be an instrument of ideological manipulation, of propaganda or used for the promotion of intolerant and ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic, racist or anti-semitic ideas. On the contrary, everything possible should be done in the educational sphere to prevent recurrence or denial of the devastating events that have marked this century.

Consequently, the objectives of this project are

- a. to assist member States in organising a “Day of Remembrance” in memory of the Holocaust, all the genocides and crimes against humanity that left their mark on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The various themes and dates chosen should be linked to the history of the countries concerned;
- b. to pass knowledge of these tragedies on to pupils and educate them in the prevention of crimes against humanity. In order to achieve these aims, teaching material will be produced, teachers will be trained in these subjects and given the possibility to exchange information and experiences.

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### **III. Education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe**

Roma/Gypsy communities are seriously affected by the day-to-day difficulties. Rejection is still a dominant factor in relations between Roma/Gypsies and their immediate environment. Tension quickly develops into conflict, resulting in harsh treatment and constant lack of security. School results are affected, with illiteracy becoming a severe handicap in an environment where reading and writing are an everyday requirement: the future of Roma/Gypsy communities greatly depends on their children’s schooling.

Recommendation N° R (2000) 4 of the Committee of Ministers to the member States on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe recognises that there is an urgent need to build new foundations for future educational strategies toward the Roma/Gypsy people and proposes to enable children to benefit from equal opportunities in the field of education, taking into account economic, social and cultural aspects, and the fight against racism and discrimination.

The new project on Education for Roma children aims at familiarising all their teachers, including Roma teachers, with innovative practice and with Roma history

and culture. Special care is being taken to co-operate with other sectors in the Council of Europe dealing with Roma questions and with Organisations such as UNESCO, OSCE and international NGOs.

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#### **IV. Towards a European Higher Education area**

##### **Public responsibility for higher education and research**

This project was launched in 2003, as a key element of the Bologna Process, to discuss and define the responsibility of public authorities for higher education. It concerns both the higher education framework, equal access to and equal opportunities in higher education, and thus combating discrimination. It will also deal with the important but not exclusive role which public authorities must play in the provision of higher education, as well as the fact that public authorities should have an important financial responsibility for higher education.

Activities within the Project will comprise a major conference on the public responsibility for higher education in 2004. Expected outputs are a policy recommendation, a position paper, a guide to or compendium of good practice.

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#### **V. Visions of Europe**

This programme aims to enable Europeans to appreciate their diverse cultural achievements as a common heritage, through wide public participation in highly visible and high quality events and projects.

The activities organised in this framework are the European Heritage Days (jointly with the European Union), Cultural Routes and Arts Exhibitions, educational activities for mutual understanding through heritage and cross-border activities to test the contribution of heritage education to intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention.

The idea is not only to mobilize European citizens to go and visit a variety of sites, monuments and works of art, but in so doing meet other Europeans, and to make, out of travel and tourism, an intercultural (and in some cases inter-religious) human experience. Cooperative activities involving youth focus more on the quality of human participation and civilized encounters around innovative and widely distributed heritage projects.

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## **VI. Sport in modern society**

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Sport has a distinctive role to play for social integration and understanding. The Council of Europe programme on sport policies has long emphasized the necessity of keeping the sport movement mobilized against racism, xenophobia and discrimination, and to use sport gatherings as opportunities to promote positive inter-cultural experience.

The activities developed within the framework of the European Convention on Spectator Violence put a special emphasis on measure to fight racism, xenophobia and hooliganism. This includes monitoring sport legislations and initiatives to fight racism and xenophobia in sport and gathering of good practice.

This question has been identified as a key issue to prevent violence in stadiums and their surroundings. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted in 2001 a Recommendation on the prevention of racism, xenophobia and racial intolerance in sport.

A network of “Ambassadors for Sport, Tolerance and Fair Play” is being co-ordinated by the Council of Europe. It consists of top athletes who are appointed by their governments for promoting fair play and tolerance in sport. This network should be developed in the coming years.

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