

EQUAL VOICES

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European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
Agentur der Europäischen Union für Grundrechte
Agence des droits fondamentaux de l'Union européenne

Beyond Tolerance – Learning from Diversity

European Year of Intercultural Dialogue: Interview with Ján Figel

White Paper of the Council of Europe on Intercultural Dialogue

Cultural diversity and the media

Intercultural Education



Welcome to Equal Voices

The FRA team is pleased to welcome all readers to this issue of *Equal Voices*. *Equal Voices* consists of articles and features with analysis, new research, expert input, surveys, and good practice examples on a topic related to FRA's mandate. The opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect those of FRA.

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Bienvenue à notre magazine Equal Voices

L'équipe de FRA est heureuse d'accueillir tous les lecteurs de cette édition d'*Equal Voices*. *Equal Voices* contient des articles ainsi que des analyses, des nouvelles recherches, des contributions de spécialistes, des enquêtes, et des exemples de bonne pratique sur un sujet en relation avec le mandat de FRA. Les opinions exprimées par les auteurs ne reflètent pas nécessairement l'opinion de FRA.

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L'équipe de FRA



Willkommen bei Equal Voices

Das Team der FRA begrüßt alle Leserinnen und Leser zu dieser Ausgabe von *Equal Voices*. Der Inhalt besteht aus Artikeln und Dokumentationen mit Analysen, neuen Forschungsergebnissen, Beiträgen von Experten, Erhebungen sowie "good practice" Beispielen aus dem Themenbereich des Mandats der FRA. Die in diesem Magazin veröffentlichten Meinungen müssen nicht unbedingt mit denen der FRA übereinstimmen.

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Das FRA-Team

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Cover picture: Children from Dublin, Ireland, celebrate the launch of a new stamp to mark the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 2008. Many thanks to NCCRI and An Post (Irish Postal Service) for the photograph. For more information, see www.nccri.ie.

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EDITORIAL

The European Union has made 2008 the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. After the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, it is the second year in a row in which the EU puts the focus on the rich diversity of European societies. It is rather fitting that these two years directly succeed each other. Equal opportunities policies and intercultural initiatives mutually reinforce each other in helping to harness the tremendous resource that diversity can be for our societies.

The EU has taken significant steps in outlawing discrimination. But eradicating inequalities and deep-rooted prejudice that fuel discrimination need to be coupled with efforts to develop a genuine dialogue between different cultures and religions. “Intercultural dialogue has a central role to play in enabling us to live together as equals in dignity”, as Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni from the Council of Europe aptly puts it in this issue of *Equal Voices*.

In this issue of *Equal Voices* we give the floor to contributors who argue in favour of

an “intercultural” approach in promoting diversity. This seems to come closest to the EU’s credo of “unity in diversity” and encapsulates the need for cultural interaction and exchange for the purpose of learning from each other and creating a society based on shared common values and respect for differences.

The Fundamental Rights Agency believes that promoting respect for diversity goes hand in hand with fostering a common vision of society based on individual human rights. As the media have a central role to play in this respect we created a diversity toolkit for journalists that helps them in dealing responsibly with issues related to minorities and diversity. We also published an intercultural ‘school agenda’ that informs students about fundamental rights, and in 2007 we held a Diversity Day bringing together more than 2000 pupils from Vienna and neighbouring Hungarian towns to make young people more aware of the benefits of diversity and the consequences of discrimination.



With this issue of *Equal Voices*, we hope to further foster the debate on how intercultural dialogue can help promote a shared sense of belonging. I would like to thank everyone for their contributions and especially European Commissioner Ján Figel, EU Ambassador for Intercultural Dialogue Paulo Coelho, the Council of Europe, and Morten Kjaerum, the Agency’s newly appointed Director.

Constantinos Manolopoulos
Acting Director

“FRA should become a European beacon on fundamental rights”

Morten Kjærum was appointed first director of the Fundamental Rights Agency in March 2008. The Danish human rights expert will take up his post on 1 June 2008. Equal Voices spoke to Morten Kjærum about his vision and ambitions for the Agency.

EV: Mr Kjærum, what can FRA do for human rights in the European Union under your leadership?

Morten Kjærum: I believe that the Agency has a strong potential to strengthen the overall human rights protection of people living in Europe, and to promote a common understanding on fundamental rights. I would like FRA to become a European beacon on fundamental rights. People in Europe should turn to it for expertise and advice on fundamental rights. FRA is a unique institution that can interact with a wide range of stakeholders and many diverse networks. FRA is going to be in permanent dialogue with all those who bear responsibility for human rights protection in the European Union – the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission, and the EU Member States. For its reports, FRA can rely on varied expertise, including a Scientific Committee. It can tap into networks of human rights experts, benefits from its Management Board’s links to the national human rights institutions, and finally, it will exchange views with civil society through a Fundamental Rights Platform.

EV: What makes you believe that FRA’s voice will be heard? It does not have any sanctioning power.

Morten Kjærum: It is common for human rights bodies not to have sanctioning powers. In human rights matters, prevention is just as important as punishment. FRA points to challenges to fundamental rights, highlights who is responsible, and encourages the EU institutions and Member States to address these issues. Our power lies in the quality of our reports and the sharpness of our arguments. Unavoidably, the Agency’s reports will be controversial. After all, there are different views on many human rights concerns. However, I believe in a constructive debate and dialogue with the European institutions and the Member States.

EV: Which will be the priority areas of FRA?

Morten Kjærum: FRA’s topics are fixed in the Multiannual Framework, which was recently adopted and which I find well balanced. It cuts across the main challenges to fundamental rights in the EU today. It retains a focus on racism and related intolerance, while also listing some

of the most pressing issues on Europe’s human rights agenda – such as discrimination of all forms, the protection of personal data, rights of the child, asylum and immigration, access to justice, and the need for education on fundamental rights. In addition, FRA will work on the rights of minorities, including the Roma who are one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe.

EV: Why does FRA’s work matter to the citizen?

Morten Kjærum: FRA can engage with the citizen on areas that directly impact on his or her life choices. The strength of FRA’s mandate lies in its ability to address both equality and human rights issues that affect the life of everyone in the EU, such as fair employment opportunities for the elderly or access to justice. Human rights have traditionally been something that people in the EU associate with foreign policy. However, since the last decade, people have increasingly realised that fundamental rights protection is also a domestic issue. FRA can be a catalyst to make sure that our societies live up to the principles and values which we all take pride in.



Morten Kjærum, FRA's new director

Short biography of Morten Kjærum

Morten Kjærum (50) has 23 years of experience in the field of human rights. He was the Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Denmark's national human rights institution, and developed it from a small organisation to a large internationally recognised institution. He started his career in the non-governmental sector at the Danish Refugee Council. He is a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and was a member of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights (2002-2006). Morten Kjærum holds a Master of Law from Aarhus University, Denmark. He is married and has two grown-up children.

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EV: There have been concerns and critical remarks that FRA may be duplicating the work of others, such as the Council of Europe. How do you intend to avoid this?

Morten Kjærum: I always thought that this criticism was unjustified. The mandates of the Council of Europe and FRA are fundamentally different. FRA's main task is to advise in the implementation of European Community law. More and more areas of life are regulated by Community law, and we must make sure that fundamental rights are fully respected when this legislation is applied. FRA is a resource for the EU institutions and Member States. They can turn to the Agency for assistance and expertise on fundamental rights, for instance when they develop new Community legislation.

FRA will build on the important work of other organisations, the Council of Europe in particular, since this is the main standard-setting body on human rights in Europe. The fact that there are 100,000 cases pending before the European Court of Human Rights shows that there are enough problems to tackle for all of us. FRA can build on the very good working relations established by its predecessor, the EUMC, with the Council of

Europe and other intergovernmental organisations.

I think the EUMC's experience has shown that cooperation between intergovernmental organisations can reinforce, and add value to each other's action.

EV: This Equal Voices issue deals with the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. How important is intercultural dialogue in the context of FRA's work?

Morten Kjærum: Fundamental rights and intercultural dialogue are intrinsically linked. Intercultural dialogue has no basis when there is no respect to diversity and different identities. Yet, respect for diversity must not be used as an excuse to derogate from universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

FRA can provide evidence-based advice on how to deal with these apparent dilemmas. For instance, people are currently engaged in an intense debate on freedom of expression. What does this fundamental freedom entail, and where do its limits lie? Does it allow us to say all we would like to say, ignoring the fact that one might engage in hate speech? I don't think so, but there is a need to strike the right balance between the various fundamental rights.

“Intercultural Dialogue goes beyond mere tolerance”

Equal Voices speaks to Ján Figel, EU Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, about the goals and objectives of the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

EV: The importance of intercultural dialogue was formally recognised in May 2007 when it was adopted as one of the three objectives in the first ever European Agenda for Culture 2007. Why does Europe now need a Year of Intercultural Dialogue?

Ján Figel: With the inclusion of intercultural dialogue into our main policy statement in the area of culture, the “Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world”, we are showing that the issue is a long-term priority for the European Commission. The priorities outlined in the communication were endorsed by the Member States in November 2007. Yet, a lot still needs to be done, even with this broad political support, especially regarding awareness-raising at the grassroots level. That is where the European Year comes into play. When I launched the idea of having a European Year dedicated to intercultural dialogue, my main motivation was based on the changes that are sweeping across Europe. The recent enlargements, coupled with greater mobility within the borders of the Union, and more intensive exchanges with the rest of the world, mean that

Europeans are interacting with ever more cultures, languages and religions. The European Year aims to promote intercultural dialogue as a tool that will equip Europeans to deal with these sweeping changes in their cultural environment. It will do this by raising awareness among people in the EU, particularly young people, that intercultural dialogue improves their daily lives and helps them integrate better in today’s complex societies.

dignity, respect of the principle of equality for all, active listening and an exchange with others that goes beyond mere tolerance. Let me underline the importance of listening if we are to have an effective dialogue. Dialogue is not simply one monologue plus another monologue. Dialogue is more than the sum of its parts, and all the more so when it is coupled with mutual understanding and respect. In other words, effective dialogue

“Europe is very much like a mosaic: close-up, it is a patchwork of different ways of life, different religions, and different histories. But seen from a distance, it is ‘Europe’.”

EV: What is meant by intercultural dialogue?

Ján Figel: There is no legally agreed definition of intercultural dialogue. It is a situation similar to the notion of “culture”: hundreds of definitions exist, but there is no single view among all stakeholders. The Commission’s view is that intercultural dialogue encompasses living together in diversity, respect of human

requires people to have an open mind and an open heart. If this is the case, dialogue unites. Europe is very much like a mosaic: close-up, it is a patchwork of different ways of life, different religions, and different histories. But seen from a distance, it is “Europe”, united in its internal diversity. Promoting intercultural dialogue helps Europeans access our rich cultural heritage, learn

more about and appreciate the many different layers of identity and heritage that we have.

EV: How is the Year organised? What will be the main areas for action?

Ján Figel: While the European Year is coordinated by the European Commission's services responsible for education and culture, its approach is mainly bottom-up with great reliance on civil society organisations across Europe. This is why the Civil Society Platform for Intercultural Dialogue is one of our main interlocutors, with an important contribution to the strategy and implementation of the European Year. Furthermore, the Member States have nominated National Coordinating Bodies to manage the European Year at national level. With all these different bodies involved, it comes as no surprise that the European Year features a wide range of activities, from a small number of pan-European projects, to national projects in each Member State, as well as a partner programme based on mobilising civil society organisations. The European Year will tackle an array of topics: arts and culture, multilingualism, migration, minorities, workplace, inter-religious dialogue, media, and education.

EV: Are there any limits to intercultural dialogue?

Do you think that dialogue can change extremist attitudes and can work for groups who are hostile towards each other?

Ján Figel: For intercultural dialogue to flourish, it is of course important that there is a legal framework in place which guarantees equal opportunities for all, and universal freedoms and human rights. This is a basic condition. On top of that there is the need to create the conditions that break down the barriers of ignorance that exist between people. Education is fundamentally important for that. Education not only gives access to knowledge about other cultures, but also creates the conditions for the development of intercultural skills. Secondly, the role of the media should not be underestimated. We are working with the media during the Year and are examining on how to give more space to diversity and dialogue and to offer truer images of different cultures in our societies.

EV: What do you say to those who have criticised that the European Year lays too much focus on cultural projects, the soft themes, rather than addressing the hard issues around participation, equality and respect for diversity?

Ján Figel: I disagree with this criticism. The main objective of culture is the promotion of



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**Ján Figel,
EU Commissioner for Education, Training,
Culture and Youth**

human dignity and creativity. Therefore intercultural dialogue addresses substantial issues and values for our common future – locally and globally. We do not leave any of the “hard issues” aside during the European Year. One can see that in the topics on which we focus during the year. For example, we are co-financing projects that are closely related to youth participation, ini-



tatives at the neighbourhood level, migration and media, etc. We are launching a series of Brussels Debates on key sensitive topics – such as the integration of migrants – that will act as a platform for exchanging ideas and giving an impulse to future policy making. I also believe that if we want to go beyond mere coexistence and tolerance we need to build on citizenship and participation, so that individual and collective identities can be transcended and that everyone can bring his or her contribution to the development of the society he or she lives in.

EV: By the end of this year what would you like to have achieved?

Ján Figel: The European Year represents an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about intercultural dialogue and its importance among citizens, and especially young people. My wish is that once the Euro-

pean Year is closed, the “inter-cultural network“ that we have established as a result of the year will remain in place and continue to develop activities in the years to come. The European Year should also launch and nurture a serious political process, leading to the formu-

“The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue should launch and nurture a serious political process, leading to the formulation and implementation of a sustainable policy strategy in intercultural dialogue.”

lation and implementation of a sustainable policy strategy in intercultural dialogue.

EV: What are the next steps in the Commission’s efforts to enhance intercultural dialogue beyond the European Year?

Ján Figel: Building on the

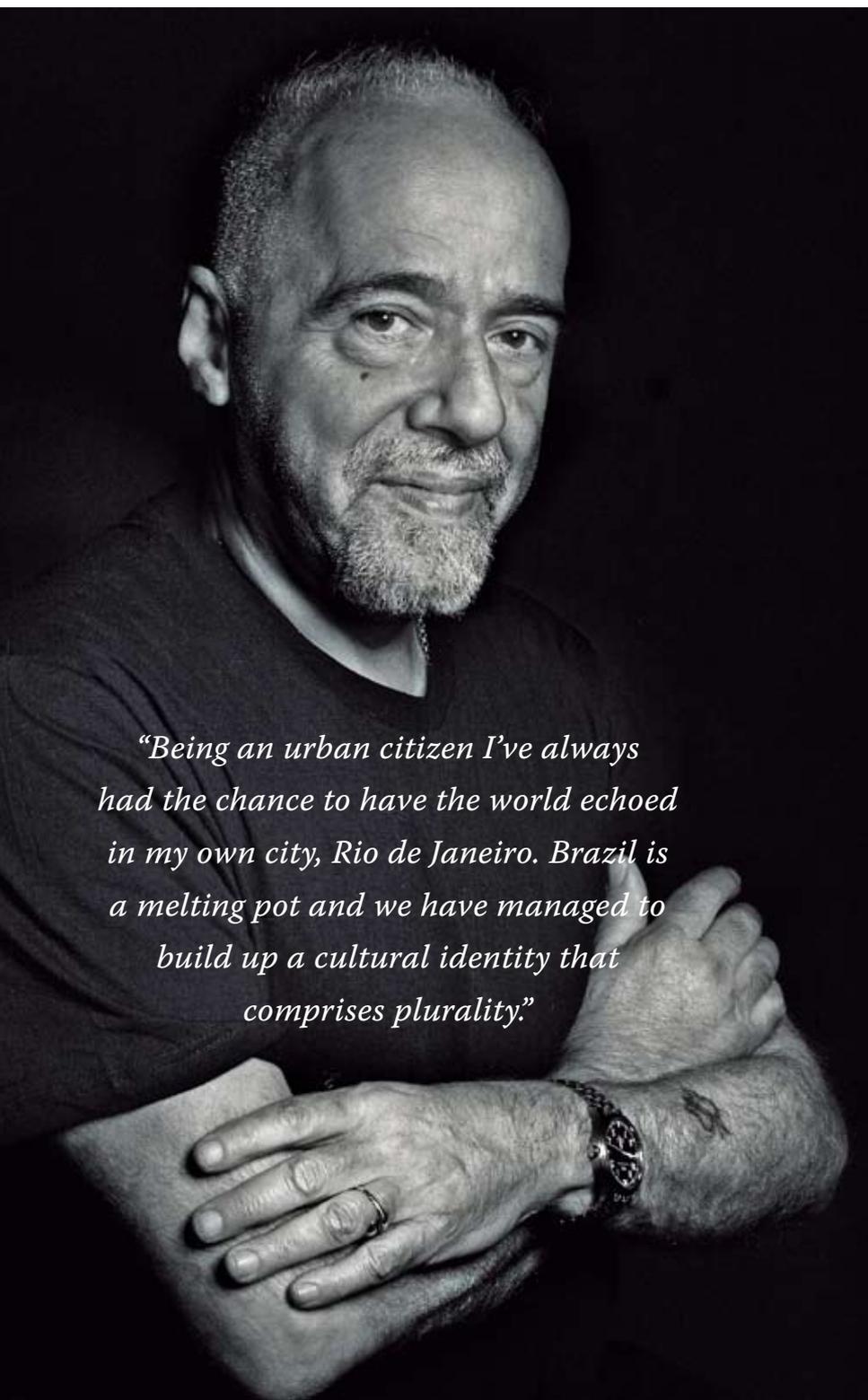
results of the European Year, the EU’s long-term priority is to elaborate a sustainable strategy for the future. For this, the issue has to be seriously addressed both at European and at national level.

With the “Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world”, we have introduced a new way of working with the Member States in the field of culture that we call the “Open Method of Coordination”. This method, in which tangible Member State action is based on peer review and exchange of best practice, has already delivered lasting results in the area of education. I am confident that it will deliver concrete results also in the field of culture and intercultural dialogue. In parallel, I shall also be working with my colleagues in the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament, to ensure that intercultural dialogue is fully mainstreamed into our policy developments in education, citizenship and youth, employment, integration, migration, the fight against racism, external relations, minorities and the media.

Read more about the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue:
www.dialogue2008.eu.

“Living together in multicultural societies is a blessing“

15 prominent figures have lent their support to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. As Ambassadors of Intercultural Dialogue, they are committed to, and share, the aims of the year. Equal Voices speaks to Paulo Coelho, one of the EU Ambassadors of Intercultural Dialogue.



“Being an urban citizen I’ve always had the chance to have the world echoed in my own city, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil is a melting pot and we have managed to build up a cultural identity that comprises plurality.”

EV: How do you see your role as an Ambassador for this European Year and what does intercultural dialogue mean to your life and work?

Paulo Coelho: Every ambassador is an artist by him/herself, and whatever we do, we should stress in our task that the only way to create a peaceful environment today is through art. In my childhood books were the vessels that brought me treasures from far away lands. A book that has had an enormous impact on my life is “The Arabian Nights”, which opened the doors of the Arabian culture for me. Later, I read Khalil Gibran and explored the teachings of the Persian poet Rumi, which influenced my life and consequently my books. Then I was interested in Jewish stories, legends from Asia, and many more. My book “The Alchemist” is a very telling example of the importance of foreign literature to my own work. All writers know that we are intimately bound to other writers. And in my case, I was (and still am) extremely influenced by the Arabian culture and Hassidic tales.

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Paulo Coelho,
Brazilian writer and Ambassador for the
European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

EV: On the website of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (www.intercultural-dialogue2008.eu) you say that culture can act as a bridge, bringing people together instead of separating them.

How do you see this working in practice?

Paulo Coelho: I take a very simple example: storytelling. It's a fact that we can all understand each other's stories – even if certain details may differ from culture to culture. Recently I've re-read a book called *Shogun*, written by the English author James Clavell. This book tells the story of a 17th century English captain who arrives in Japan. What is striking in this book is the fact that Clavell not only is able to enter the mind of a 17th century sailor but also the minds of 17th century samurais and geishas. I have Japanese friends that were utterly impressed by the accurateness of this book. This for instance shows that cultures are not closed to each other. On the contrary, we can always dive into the psyche of man as long as we are able to understand certain basic values such as love, power, greed, honour, etc. Why is this? We all share a common background, which Carl Jung calls "numinous" values. These are unconscious values that run deep down in our psyche and that have been passed on

throughout centuries through symbols. This common heritage that we possess as human beings are the mortar and the bricks in building this bridge, which we are naming "culture".

EV: Is intercultural dialogue the peaceful solution to the so-called "clash of civilisations" that Samuel Huntington has postulated?

Paulo Coelho: First of all, I believe that Samuel Huntington's concept of a "Clash of Civilisations" is wrong. I've read the book and found that the way he would segment cultures was too rigid and sometimes even utterly wrong. The way he opposes Islam and Christianity for instance doesn't account for the mutual enrichments both cultures brought to each other. This is but one example and there are many others throughout the book that I find misplaced. I think it's important to

If the common goal is peace, then all efforts will be taken in order to reach this goal. When people don't try to proselytise others, but pay real deference for the other person's culture and heritage, it is possible to find common points on which we can all agree.

EV: Critics say that there is a danger that intercultural dialogue legitimates cultural relativism. How can intercultural dialogue help to ease tensions between cultural relativism and international human rights?

Paulo Coelho: What is the alternative given by people that believe that tolerating our differences is alienating? Do people truly think that by assimilating or totally excluding individuals of another culture you can reach a consensus? In my view, in the long run, the only outcome of this is

"Cultures are not set in stone, but are malleable since they are alive, part of a way of living. Dialogue then, between people of different cultures, is only natural, especially in our present age of globalisation."

stress the following: to make dialogue possible, both parties have to want the same thing.

the breeding of extremism. Cultures are not set in stone, but are malleable since they

are alive, part of a way of living. Dialogue then, between people of different cultures, is only natural, especially in our present age of globalisation. This doesn't mean that we have to tolerate the intolerable. I think that the boundary rests on dignity. When both parties feel that their dignity is not attacked, then we are able to ease this artificial tension between cultural relativism and international human rights.

EV: What is your personal vision of living together in multicultural societies?

Paulo Coelho: I view this as a source of enrichment, as a blessing. Being an urban citizen, I've always had the chance to have the world echoed in my own city, Rio de Janeiro. Brazil is a melting pot and we have managed to build up a cultural identity that comprises plurality. You can even see this in the way we deal with religion. A perfect Catholic is not rebuked by the cult of African deities. For instance, all of us gather on New Year's Eve to send white flowers to the goddess of the sea. There is no contradiction in this since we consider that this experience is a manifesta-

tion of the same source, the same God. Living together in a pluralistic universe is what enables cultures to breathe, grow and ultimately survive.

EV: And how far has the European Union come in fulfilling this vision? What else is still to be done?

Paulo Coelho: The European Union has come a long way. If



"We can all understand each other's stories, even if certain details may differ from culture to culture."

we look back we cannot but notice that Europe has always been an extremely unstable region. In a continent that for centuries was torn by savage and fratricide wars, the idea of a united Europe seemed the wild dream of dictators or idealists. And here we are in a united Europe where the memory of war has been erased from the

minds of the younger generations. Of course there are still regions, such as the Balkans that are fragile, but on the whole one cannot but admire what has been achieved. But I think that more should be done with regards to the understanding of Middle Eastern culture. Too often I see that Westerners have no clue of what Islam truly is and too quickly reduce this

religion to the extremists' propaganda. More should be done to promote the voices of the moderate and true Islam in Europe.

Brazilian lyricist and novelist Paulo Coelho is one of the most widely read writers today. His works have been translated into 67 languages and published in over 150 countries.

Coelho has sold over 100 million books and is the all-time best-selling Portuguese language author. His novel "The Alchemist" reached the first place in best-selling lists in 18 countries. Coelho received numerous literary awards from a variety of countries. Coelho is UNESCO Special Counsellor for Intercultural Dialogues and Spiritual Convergences, United Nations Messenger of Peace and EU Ambassador of Intercultural Dialogue.

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“Living together as equals in dignity” – The White Paper of the Council of Europe

By Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni

Intercultural dialogue is a topic of utmost importance for everyone living in Europe today. How shall we respond to diversity, what is our vision of the society of the future? Is it a society of separated life worlds, marked by the coexistence of majorities and minorities loosely held together by mutual ignorance and stereotypes? Or should we work towards a vibrant and open society without discrimination, including all residents in full respect of their human rights, inviting everyone to contribute to our living together?

Broadly speaking, everything the Council of Europe is doing and has done since its creation in 1949 is directly or indirectly related to the management and promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Our core mandate is to defend and extend human rights, democracy and the rule of law across our 47 member states, thus promoting values that are vital preconditions for a thriving, culturally diverse society, in which people live with each other, not against each other.

However, every case of discrimination, every occurrence of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia or indeed any form of racism and intolerance demonstrates that the legal protection of rights alone is not sufficient to safeguard the freedom and integrity of every individual. An active and positive approach is required, a commitment of all social actors to cultural diversity based on shared values, to enable us to live together as equals in dignity. Intercultural dialogue has a central role to play in this regard.

The backbone of any policy favouring intercultural dialogue are the international legal standards developed by the Council of Europe during more than five decades, starting with the European Convention of Human Rights. In a series of declarations, European governments committed themselves to the promotion of diversity, e.g. in the important declarations of Opatija and Athens (2003) relating to the cultural and educational aspects of intercultural dialogue. Policies in this area can also draw ample inspiration from a long series of projects organised by the Council of Europe, addressing important aspects such as the promotion of intercultural skills and democratic citizenship in formal and non-formal education, including youth work; the shared interpretation of history and its implications for history teaching; the role of language learning and the importance of multilingualism; or the accommodation of diversity in social service provision.

Based on these experiences, the Council of Europe formulated



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“The knowledge of other cultures and religions, of history and heritage, languages and life-styles, compromise and conflict-resolution are essential.”

its strategy for the promotion of intercultural dialogue (the “Faro Strategy”) in 2005. In the same year, the organisation also took the decision to bring its entire acquis into focus and to develop a “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue”, explaining the policy principles, making recommendations to all stakeholders and presenting examples of good practice.

The drafting of the White Paper was preceded by a wide-scale consultation within and outside the Council of Europe. Member state governments, members of national

parliaments, local and regional authorities, religious communities, migrant communities, cultural, youth and other non-governmental organisations, media professionals as well as other international institutions were all involved in this process. Their responses were substantial and overwhelmingly positive, and they will all find their way into the final document, expected to be approved by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Council of Europe in May 2008.

The White Paper is in the first place inspired by the values which make up the basis of intercultural dialogue. Thus it expresses the conviction that reconciling respect for different identities with the need to strengthen social cohesion can only succeed if we base our policy on universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. They are the common denominator holding together our societies. They are the precondition for social trust. They are the values that everyone can share, regardless of ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural identity. The White Paper also argues that intercultural dialogue is the method of choice for overcoming the limitations of previous policy approaches to manage cultural diversity, i.e.

assimilation (which sharply reduces the ability to freely develop one's own cultural identity) and multiculturalism (which often leads to parallel life worlds and works against interaction, co-operation and the sharing of values). It is intercultural dialogue that enables us to engage in a process of mutual learning and change.

Intercultural dialogue is a transversal task that cannot be allotted to only one policy area or stakeholder group alone. It is a long-term and positive concept, benefiting the whole society, enabling us to benefit from cultural diversity and to increase our social, cultural and economic vitality. It should not be seen as a short-term, defensive concept or a remedy against violence and terrorism (although this may of course be one of its long-term effects).

Key elements of the White Paper

The White Paper will set out, in some detail, what is needed to promote intercultural dialogue in five broad policy areas:

- ★ Intercultural dialogue will only thrive if we develop the democratic governance of cultural diversity, by building a political culture of diversity that recognises the rights of minorities and migrants; and

by promoting policies and, if necessary, by taking positive action for the equal enjoyment of rights by everyone. A national High Commissioner for Intercultural Dialogue, such as in Portugal, or similar



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“Intercultural dialogue enables us to engage in a process of mutual learning and change.”

arrangements are good examples for practical action.

- ★ Secondly, we must strengthen the democratic citizenship and participation for all. Spain, for instance, has adopted a “Strategic Plan on Citizenship and Integration”.
- ★ Thirdly, we must do more to support the learning and teaching of intercultural competences. The knowledge of other cultures and religions, of history and heritage, languages and life-styles, compromise and conflict-resolution is essential here. Examples of good practice

abound in all parts of the education sector, including NGO activities such as those of AEGEE.

- ★ Efforts must be made to create more – and more accessible – spaces for intercultural dialogue, be it physical or virtual spaces e.g. in the media, in organisations or the arts. Examples can be found in the world of sports (e.g. the “Intercultural Football Plan” in Ireland), in cultural initiatives, in the industry (e.g. the “Charter of Diversity” in France and other countries) or among religious communities everywhere in Europe.
- ★ And finally, the principles of intercultural dialogue must also inspire for instance the contributions, which local and regional authorities, the media or civil society and religious communities can make in this context.

Contribution of the Council of Europe

Intercultural dialogue is a common responsibility that needs to be shared by all. This includes the Council of Europe. Our organisation will therefore commit itself to a number of initiatives that implement the messages of the White Paper in several areas:

- ★ The “Intercultural Cities” project, co-funded by the European Commission, will assist cities across the continent to excel as spaces of intercultural dialogue, through peer review and the exchange of good practice on governance, media, mediation and cultural policy.
- ★ The Council of Europe is about to start a Europe-wide anti-discrimination campaign together with major media and networks of media professionals devoted to the promotion of diversity. A major focus will lie on the role of the media in the face of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and persistent prejudices against the Roma.
- ★ The Committee of Ministers is organising an experimental exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, concentrating particularly on the teaching of religious and convictional facts. This event involves religious communities, independent experts and civil society organisations including organisations representing humanistic, atheistic, agnostic and sceptical convictions.
- ★ A new “European Resource Centre on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Intercultural Education”

will soon be opened in Oslo, transmitting intercultural competencies to educators.

- ★ We are also preparing a publication of the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights on issues relating to intercultural dialogue.

The Council of Europe regards all these projects as contributions to the “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue”. However, they are pan-European in character and look beyond the limits of the year 2008, well ahead into the future.

The promotion of intercultural dialogue will remain high on the agenda of the international community. It will stay among the shared tasks that oblige international institutions to work together, to pool their resources and to share their know-how. We hope that the White Paper of the Council of Europe will make its way as a useful reference and orientation tool for everyone committed to furthering intercultural dialogue.

Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni is the Co-ordinator for Intercultural Dialogue at the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe.

Intercultural Education – Preparing Europe’s young of today for the challenges of tomorrow

By Barry van Driel

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is an important moment in the history of Europe, especially if it can stimulate continual reflection on how best to meet the challenges of diversity and make sure that all children reach their full potential and become active, responsible citizens.

Even though diversity is not new in Europe and people from different cultures have had to find ways to live together (or more often alongside one another) for centuries, the second half of the twentieth century led to many new forms of diversity on European soil. De-colonisation, the arrival of so-called ‘guest workers’, political refugees from conflict zones and increasing income differences between the West and the rest of the world have changed the face of Europe forever.

As is the case for all institutions in society, schools have had to adjust to the new situation. This has been highly challenging since for the most part European school systems have operated in mono-cultural ways. Studies from across Europe show that schools and teachers are ill-prepared to cope with the type of diversity and degree of diversity that has been almost literally “dumped in their lap”.

Europe’s young of today are the voters, teachers and policy makers of the future. It is therefore important that they learn the competences needed to function successfully in a multicultural and globalising

world at an early age. It might not even be too strong a statement that all education in Europe today has to have a solid Intercultural Education core.

What is Intercultural Education?

I would like to define effective Intercultural Education as follows: “Intercultural Education aims to develop, among people from different backgrounds, the knowledge, attitudes and skills which are necessary to communicate and collaborate with others who come from a different background. It starts from the philosophical assumption that human beings are interconnected, that diversity is a positive characteristic and that all human beings benefit from being exposed to diversity.” This definition highlights the fact that Intercultural Education, as it is practiced at its best in some schools in Europe, is not only aimed at immigrant, refugee or minority students, but all students. This definition also makes a distinction from how multicultural education is often defined in the United States, where a stronger emphasis is put on empowerment of minority



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**Barry van Driel,
Secretary General of the
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for Intercultural Education**

groups, diversity for diversity’s sake, and social justice issues. Such an exclusive focus on “multiculturalism” has been criticised as leading to separatism and ghettoisation. This is the reason why Intercultural Education has stressed interaction, dialogue and discussion among different individuals and communities, while also addressing empowerment and social justice issues.

Some examples of good practice

To characterise the way in which Intercultural Educa-

tion has been implemented across Europe so far, one could say that it has been done in a bumpy, ad-hoc and challenging manner, yet in some cases producing spectacular results. In the best cases, Intercultural Education has been able to broaden the horizons of young people, resolve conflicts, create dynamic school environments, promote leadership skills and help pupils become young adults who feel comfortable in various linguistic, social and cultural situations – true cosmopolitans in an ever-changing and multi-cultural world. There are thousands of excellent examples of projects, policies, practices and curricula across Europe – at international, national and local level. I want to mention just a few.

At the international level, organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and UNESCO all drafted documents that emphasise the importance of Intercultural Education.

A key emphasis in recent years has been on combating religious tensions in Europe. Most recently, the OSCE launched its long awaited

“Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools”, which emphasise a human rights and inclusive approach to teaching about religions and beliefs. The CoE has also developed an excellent manual,

“Intercultural Education is not only aimed at immigrant, refugee or minority students, but all students.”

called “Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools”, made for teachers who want to teach about religion, belief and diversity in a fair and balanced way. Countries such as Norway and Bulgaria indicated that they want to redesign how they teach religion and belief to reflect today’s globalised world. Some policy makers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are making efforts to teach about these issues in a way that can help the diverse religious communities learn to live together in a peaceful and respectful way.

At the community level, organisations such as CEJI (A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive

Europe) in Brussels have attempted to promote dialogue and cooperation between Jews and Muslims. ARABIA in Poland organises workshops in schools to address stereotypes and prejudices about Muslims and also to educate about the vast variety of religious and cultural expressions within Islam.

Educators are just starting to find ways of plugging into the expectations of the “MTV generation”, a generation where the students are more computer savvy than their teachers. “The Big Myth” (www.bigmyth.com) is an Internet based curriculum in English and Dutch that is intended to encourage discussion in classrooms about religious diversity. Using flash animation it shows 25 creation myths from around the world. It allows teachers to discuss with children the many ways in which people around the world experience their culture and religion.

Bringing communities together

There have been many worthwhile efforts to bring people from different backgrounds together and to help them reflect on their role in today’s society. The first attempts at “community service learning”, which originated in the United States, have now been initiated

in Germany and in the UK. Such initiatives, for instance by the German University of Trier, connect schools and universities with the wider community. Pupils and students work together with community members on projects which will bring a benefit to both parties, mostly to the community itself. This goes one step further than “community schools” which open their doors to the entire community so that they can partake in education.

The arts can play an important role in getting people to better understand each other. Music, drama, poetry and other forms of cultural expression have a tendency of creating a positive atmosphere. For example, the Norwegian “Intermusiccenter” attempts to bring young people together from various backgrounds in order to explore their common and diverse musical roots. In many ways, young people are creating their own new cultural expressions, a hybrid culture containing elements of all the many cultures which make up the kaleidoscope of Europe today.

Responsible and active citizens in a multicultural and globalised world do not only need to respect each other, but they also need to develop critical thinking skills. The project Free2Choose, a debate

project developed by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam in cooperation with 13 partners from around Europe, uses short videoclips, which challenge young people to explore their understanding of what is acceptable and unacceptable in today’s society. The videoclips all focus on dilemmas that ask the young people to debate where they draw the line when it comes to human rights and democratic principles: Should neo-Nazis be allowed to march in front of a synagogue? Should people be allowed to threaten others in their song lyrics? Should people be allowed to express whatever they want in public, even if it was insulting?

Intercultural Education can also imply coming to terms with controversial and painful histories. The Anne Frank House has developed a “border tour” of its well-known exhibition about Anne Frank, the Holocaust and human rights, entitled “Anne Frank: A History for Today”. School pupils from the border areas of two countries (such as Holland and Germany, or Germany and Poland) worked together on various projects in each other’s communities to help educating their peers about the issues of tolerance and intolerance.

Educators in the Czech Republic have developed a project

called “Disappeared Neighbours”. To make today’s youth aware of their histories, pupils research the lives of Jews from their own community who disappeared (were killed) during the Holocaust. This brings back the life stories of people, often at school age at the time, who were persecuted because of their presumed inferiority. The project is now being taken on board in other countries as well.

All of these projects attempt to promote understanding and provide opportunities for people from different backgrounds to get to know each other better, learn to respect each other and to live together as Europeans. Do we really have any other choice?

Barry van Driel has been the Secretary General of the International Association for Intercultural Education and Editor-in-Chief of the journal Intercultural Education since 2000. He is responsible for international teacher education at the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam and is also a senior education consultant at the ODIHR/OSCE. International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) brings together professional educators interested in diversity and equity issues in education. For more information, see www.iaie.org.

FRA's educational projects for young people



S'COOL AGENDA – an awareness-raising calendar

FRA's S'COOL AGENDA is an awareness-raising tool to inform young people about racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. The S'COOL AGENDA includes examples and useful internet links on how to live in diversity, learn languages, start up own projects, or check the human rights temperature at one's school. The agenda can be downloaded at: http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/dday/agenda_en.pdf

Diversity Day – a youth event on equal opportunities

Societal diversity is enriching and vibrant – that was the message which nearly 2000 school pupils picked up during FRA's first Diversity Day, which took place in Vienna on 14 November 2007. The aim of the youth event was to make young people aware of the importance of equal opportunities for all and to celebrate diversity. The Diversity Day transformed the norms of the EU's anti-discrimination legislation into real-life experiences. The young participants navigated through a wheelchair parcours and surfed the Internet with gadgets for blind people. Workshops gave the opportunity to delve into topics such as anti-racism, discrimination, gender stereotypes, homophobia and integration. The participants learned sign language, simulated asylum procedures, experienced acoustically the impact of racist slogans, and much more.



Holocaust education

To sensitise young people to the lessons from the Shoah, FRA cooperates with Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel (<http://www.yad-vashem.org>). In 2007 FRA and Yad Vashem brought together Austrian pupils to speak, via video conference, with Holocaust survivors in Israel. In 2008, a joint seminar for teachers from EU Member States will examine practicalities of education about the Shoah. The aim is to explore ways of making lessons from the Shoah relevant to raising awareness about fundamental rights and about human dignity, equality, non-discrimination as basic European values. This aims to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead young people to be more involved in both sustainable development and democratic citizenship.

More information about FRA's work: <http://fra.europa.eu>

“Us and them” or “all of us”? Cultural diversity and public service television

By Pierre Duret

Cultural diversity – “Well, yes, but what does that have to do with our job?” an inexperienced TV-journalist might ask.

An adequate answer was given, for example, by the BBC which “is committed to reflecting the diversity of the UK audience in its workforce, as well as in its output on TV, on radio and online. It aims to reflect the population of modern Britain...” Many Public Service Broadcasters (PSBs) do indeed have such formal commitments. Meanwhile, taking cultural diversity into account is also a political responsibility for European TV professionals. Isn't it in the very nature of Public Service media to feed intercultural dialogue? Public Service Television is not just “for us”. Neither is it just “for them”. It is, by nature, for all of us.

But who are “they” actually? “Diversity” covers differences “through gender, age, ethnicity and cultural diversity, disability, faith and social background, and sexual orientation” (BBC). PSBs are nowadays especially concerned with ethnic diversity. This is nothing new in Central European countries, where “they” are “historical” minorities. ORF in Austria, HRT in Croatia, or MTV in Hungary produce special programmes for and about these audiences. Elsewhere in Europe, “they” are first of all “people with an

immigration background”, as you would say in a politically correct way.

“It has become clear that television cannot be for ‘all of us’ if it is just made by a few of ‘us.’ ”

Do PSB programmes carry prejudices and stereotypes about these people – or do they include them? Are these – mostly young – people watching national European PSBs? Can they identify themselves with what they see on screen? Hey, this is also a question of market share! And this of course means a lot to companies, which are worried about their audiences getting older, and face many competitors. The most engaged “big players” (BBC, France Télévisions, some of the German ARD-channels, NPS in the Netherlands) are well aware that competitive necessity comes in addition to their legal and political mandate.

Information programmes are often the first answer to such challenges. “Dedicated

programmes”, for and about “them” is an old model that still exists. However, programmes “for all and about them” are nowadays a more usual approach. Eleven PSBs recently joined forces within the framework of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) to produce a documentary series about “Muslims in Europe”, initiated by UR in Sweden. But the most engaged PSBs are now actively taking care that all segments of their population are reflected on screen in all kind of programmes and in all kind of roles: anchors, comedians, people interviewed. One remarkable recent initiative is the talk show recently aired by the Dutch NPS on prime time under the provocative title “Bimbos and Burkhas”. It gathered in a studio an orthodox Muslim followed by his wife covered by a burkha, a white gay leader, three veiled young women as interviewers and a very politically incorrect local comedian, all of them discussing individual freedom and religious values ... live! Isn't that intercultural dialogue?!

Mainstreaming Diversity

It has become clear that television cannot be for “all of us” if it is just made by a few of “us”.



EBU•UER

Many initiatives have been taken to include and train “them” as part of the staff. Let’s just mention the recent “Boundless Academy”, launched by WDR in Germany, the various training opportunities offered by VRT (Belgium) to minority groups, or the very successful “Mundo” project of YLE (Finland), linking programming, training and hiring to the benefit of immigrants. The Swedish SVT is a typical example of such a development: it went first from niche programming to a multicultural centre; then their human resources department started to monitor the

enactment of diversity policies, which were defined by the top management.

“Mainstreaming Diversity” is the name of such policies that take diversity into account in all on- and off-screen activities – and it has become THE keyword for PSBs seeking to make television for all of us – which is a work in progress, of course.

Measuring progress is a difficult issue (“ethnic monitoring” is a real taboo in some countries). But international cooperation is one of the most productive resources. All above-mentioned channels have shared experiences, through the EBU Intercultural and Diversity Group. The “Diversity Toolkit”, which they elaborated together, was recently published by the EBU in cooperation with FRA. It covers all aspects of diversity

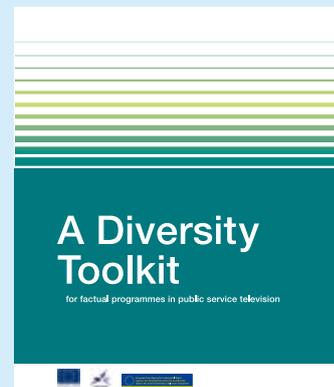
policies in television and may offer some good advice.

Shouldn’t public television stop thinking about diversity in terms of constraints, necessity or duty and rather see it as an opportunity to increase its audience and to enhance its creativity?

Pierre Duret is the Coordinator of the Intercultural and Diversity Group at the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). EBU is the largest association of national broadcasters in the world, with 75 active members, from 56 countries in and around Europe. It promotes cooperation between broadcasters and facilitates the exchange of audiovisual content. The EBU works to ensure that the crucial role of public service broadcasters is recognised and taken into consideration by decision-makers. For more information, see www.ebu.ch.

The Diversity Toolkit for journalists

The Diversity Toolkit, a joint initiative by EBU and FRA, is an interactive instrument that seeks to equip TV professionals to promote the principles of cultural diversity across their services. The toolkit brings together elements of practical information (checklists, references) and good practice advice that can be used, applied and learned from. It includes a DVD with extracts from news and current affairs programmes from a dozen European countries illustrating some of the difficulties which journalists face when reporting on minorities. Journalists can order the Diversity Toolkit free-of-charge by writing to media@fra.europa.eu.



Cultural diversity and ethical journalism

By Marc Gruber

Why should the sensitive handling of diversity and intercultural dialogue be an intrinsic part of the armoury of a good journalist?

The current environment is both difficult and challenging for journalists. In addition to coverage of wars, civil conflicts, terrorism, foreign relations and economic developments, journalists are faced with the task of reporting on social changes taking place across the globe and which often have an impact on domestic politics or opinions.

On the one hand we see frictions between different cultures, faiths and traditions as they adjust to live together. On the other hand, however, this diversity creates a new political, economic and cultural dynamic across the globe. At the same time, we see intolerance on the rise, with racism and xenophobia re-emerging as powerful perils and anti-foreigner political parties gaining in popularity. Politicians are also putting pressure on the media in the name of a so-called “war on terror.”

Finally, the Internet and User Generated Content (UGC) are real challenges: media content is provided by unprofessional and inexperienced people, sometimes spreading hate speech, violence, intolerance and war-mongering. Websites which are quasi-journalistic

often use unverified information and give voice to rumours and speculations. Most of the credible news sources available on the Internet are provided by traditional media outlets and by journalists who lead the community of quality web logs.

For all these reasons the position of journalists has never been more difficult or dangerous than today.

Standards can be enhanced with the identification of best practices, practical tips and advice to encourage a culture of sound, considerate judgment in the newsroom. There is good practice in this field, not only in “niche markets” or in public broadcasting, and we need to promote these models throughout journalism.

Media could also establish networks that will collect informa-

“If journalists make progress in dealing with intercultural dialogue, there is no doubt that quality will be improved in terms of impartiality, public service mission and avoiding of harm.”

What can journalists do to enhance their standards when reporting on issues of cultural diversity?

First of all, we have to insist that all journalists, including those who work in online or “new” media, have to be reliable and ethical. In order to report better on cultural diversity, journalists need to focus on editorial decision-making, how news are selected and presented.

tion on existing intercultural initiatives, provide journalists with links to resources and information websites, and serve as a forum for exchange of information among journalists and media professionals.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) thinks that, for instance, a good way of training consists in bringing together journalists from different cultures and backgrounds. By working together

in teams with journalists from different cultures, countries and backgrounds, we can create more awareness of processes of editorial decision-making and encourage a willingness to question the editorial choices.

And how can this lead to better journalism in terms of quality?

This raises the following question: what is quality journalism? We can identify basic principles such as: to respect the truth; to be independent and impartial; to seek to do no harm; to be open, transparent and accountable to peers; to act in the public interest.

“All types of media, whether local, national or global, can provide a bridge between different communities.”

There is a real danger of the discrimination or misrepresentation of minorities being furthered by media. If journalists make progress in dealing with intercultural dialogue, there is no doubt that quality will be improved in terms of impartiality, public service mission and avoiding of harm.

Although more reporters are challenging prejudice and many broadcasters are increasingly focusing on minority issues in their programmes, sometimes just for commercial reasons, often there is an alarmist and even hysterical coverage of minorities. Media are still guilty of providing a simplistic, one-sided view of “the other.”

The issue of plurality of opinion remains a crucial question in the age of global media, where sources of information and the news agenda remain dominated by a small number of key news agencies and satellite television channels.

What is the journalist’s role in intercultural dialogue?

All types of media, whether local, national or global, can provide a bridge between different communities. The role of journalists is to reflect opinions, to follow public interest and to provide reliable information to societies made up of a mosaic of languages, religions and cultures with different historical perspectives.

During this Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ/IFJ) and publishers and broadcasters organisations¹



are therefore launching a global campaign to highlight the continuing need for respect of quality in information made available in the public space. This campaign is called the “Ethical Journalism Initiative”.

Journalism is needed more than ever. But without strengthening ethical principles, its credibility will decline.

Marc Gruber is the Director of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ). The EFJ, being a regional organisation of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), is Europe’s largest organisation of journalists, representing about 260,000 journalists in over thirty countries. For more information, see www.ifj-europe.org.

¹ Those involved are European Broadcasting Union, Association of Commercial Television, European Publishers Council, European Newspaper Publishers Association, International Federation of Journalists/European Federation of Journalists, Association of European Radio, and European Federation of Magazine Publishers.

Engaging with intercultural dialogue on a practical and a political level – The Rainbow Platform

By Sabine Frank and Isabelle Schwarz

The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) and the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) have jointly initiated a platform for civic engagement in intercultural dialogue.

Both organisations understand cultural diversity as a richness and opportunity for exploration and inspiration for practitioners and decision-makers:

- ★ ECF promotes European integration through support of trans-national artistic creation and cooperation, and cultural policy development.
- ★ EFAH draws on the extensive experience of its members to advocate for cultural diversity in Europe.

The conviction underlying their joint initiative is that arts and culture can facilitate intercultural dialogue and ease tensions and conflicts by connecting different stakeholders and sectors. When the European Commission proposed the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID), the two organisations saw an opportunity to widen and strengthen their activities in favour of cultural diversity and to establish crucial links with relevant actors and organisations from other policy areas.

Like a Rainbow – Emerging from the Ground

The Civil Society Platform for Intercultural Dialogue was

launched in October 2006 with the idea of exchanging best practices in intercultural dialogue and formulating cross-sector policy recommendations for the political system from which the EYID initiative emanated, namely the European Union. A group of seven foundations, united in the Culture Cluster of the Network of European Foundations¹ – took the risk to support this pioneering project and invested in its development. Subsequently, a small secretariat was set up within EFAH and operations began.

While intercultural dialogue is already happening all over Europe, the Civil Society Platform is particularly interested in fostering intercultural dialogue and actions in areas which face social and economic challenges. It has brought together people involved in an array of projects including community art programmes for immigrants and asylum seekers (such as the UK Foundation for Community Dance), neighbourhood artistic parades gathering people from different ethnic backgrounds (such as the Parad’Eur network), or social service organisations exploring new ways of help-

ing people with recent, distant or no migration background (such as the EU Office of the Red Cross), to name only a few projects.

In its first year of operation, the Civil Society Platform organised two plenary meetings, conducted a Europe-wide consultation, held a policy reflection seminar and undertook a multi-stage drafting process leading to the Rainbow Paper. In January 2008, this paper “Practice Makes Perfect

“Arts and culture can facilitate intercultural dialogue and ease tensions”

– A Learning Framework for Intercultural Dialogue” was presented at the EYID opening in Ljubljana. The Civil Society Platform also contributed to the Council of Europe’s consultation for its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue and is part of the European Commission’s EYID Contact Group, together with the Youth Forum and the Social Platform. By the end of 2007, more than 200

¹ Compagnia di San Paolo, European Cultural Foundation, Evens Foundation, Freudentberg Stiftung, King Baudouin Foundation, Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, van Leer Group Foundation. In March 2008, the Bernheim Foundation joined the partnership.

organisations from various sectors (youth, culture, migration, anti-discrimination, life long learning etc.) had participated in one or several activities of the Civil Society Platform. The demand for participation is constantly increasing.

NGOs – why their participation is important

NGOs mostly operate at the grass roots. This is where people and projects come together and where successes and failures can be directly experienced and shared. The Civil Society Platform drew attention to the EYID before its national preparations had sprung into action. Admittedly, we do not have a full picture of the involvement of NGOs in designing the national strategies, organising events and selecting projects. However, now that the Open Method of Coordination has been launched in the area of culture – a part of which is intercultural dialogue

– the Civil Society Platform will lend its voice to demands for national NGO consultation. Participation in the Rainbow Platform is based on interest and commitment and remains informal to this day. A simple expression of interest gets any NGO from any territorial level onto its mailing list. This has saved time regarding the definition of membership criteria. Nevertheless, the broad range of participants also brings challenges.

With its European and national flagship projects and its colourful communication campaign, the EYID is obviously a means to raise awareness and to celebrate diversity. Yet policy-making is more than celebration. Therefore the Civil Society Platform aims to contribute to the EYID with concrete political recommendations on intercultural dialogue, which are addressed to the EU institutions, on the one hand, and to civil society, on the other hand.

The Civil Society Platform’s definition of intercultural dialogue is “a series of specific encounters, anchored in real space and time between individuals and/or groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, with the aim of exploring, testing

and increasing understanding, awareness, empathy, and respect. The ultimate purpose of intercultural dialogue is to create a cooperative and willing environment for overcoming political and social tensions, whether through new or existing structures (administration, governance, public opinion, values, attitudes).”

Plans for the future

The Civil Society Platform is a learning experience, and as every good teacher knows, we learn from our mistakes! Our ambition is to encourage and support the exchange of effective practices, but uniting behind a single understanding of intercultural dialogue is already a big challenge. Balancing expectations and resources is a further challenge. Agreeing on a set of political recommendations (by the end of this year) between grassroots practitioners and politically minded representatives of organisations, is complex too. The recommendations must be ready for discussion at the EYID closing conference under the French Presidency on 17-19 November 2008 in Paris. The dual purpose of the Platform– creating reverberations of a European Commission initiative across the European ground plus achieving “a shared expertise of practice”



RAINBOW PLATFORM
civil society platform for intercultural dialogue

– is a major task that requires more investment and time than a one-year initiative.

The Platform has developed into a prototype for “structured dialogue” between the EU and civil society. The Communication “A European agenda for culture in a globalising world” (10 May 2007) spells out the EU’s first strategy for culture (Intercultural Dialogue being one of three priority areas) and highlights the crucial role of civil society. Since the adoption of this strategy by the Council of the European Union in November 2007, the European Commission has moved ahead in designing the structured dialogue. In the Rainbow Platform, it sees a model for setting up two further civil society platforms: one focusing

on access to culture, and the other one on innovation and creativity. The interaction and cross-fertilisation of these platforms will need to be subject to scrutiny. However, all three platforms are to contribute to the Cultural Forum during the second half of 2009 and ought to provide synergies within the Open Method of Coordination.

We believe it is possible to achieve connectivity, solidarity, consensus, collaboration, cooperation and other valuable outputs through the Rainbow Platform – but only with the right investment. The European Commission’s interest in further platforms indicates political support for networks of different stakeholders. But yet this interest needs to be complemented by

financial support. The structured dialogue between civil society and EU institutions is still fragile, but in the process of leading to new avenues of consultation, cooperation, and partnership. The future will tell how substantial the impact of this development on European governance and policy-making will be.

Sabine Frank is the Civil Society Platform Coordinator and Deputy Secretary General of the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH). Isabelle Schwarz is the Head of the Cultural Policy Development Department of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF). For further information, see www.efah.org and www.eurocult.org.



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Jewish Muslim Co-operation: A reality on the ground

By Bashy Quraishy

The European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation was launched in November 2007 at the European Parliament – shortly preceding the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue.



The European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation brings together Jewish and Muslim NGOs and resourceful individuals.

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are tired of the “I am OK, who cares about the rest” mentality.

At the Parliament ceremony, some participants, however, openly expressed the view that such a platform should have been established long ago, considering the genuine need for Jews and Muslims to shed prejudices and create a climate of mutual trust, recognition and understanding.

Origin of the European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation

While there are many local dialogue initiatives throughout the European Union between Jews and Muslims, these generally remain grassroots projects with little visibility at the European level. There was a lack of sustainability, and there was no overview of the activities or exchange of good practices. In view of the anti-Semitism and Islamophobia present in Europe today, this situation required mending. The logical next step was for Muslims and Jews to join forces, for the good of their people and also to create harmony in society.

To make this process possible, CEJI – A Jewish Contribution

to an Inclusive Europe, brought together Jewish and Muslim NGOs and resourceful individuals. They met and discussed what the two communities needed and how they could support each other in fighting prejudices and replacing them with respect and acceptance. Since dialogue was considered crucial, one of the suggestions was to establish a European Jewish Muslim Dialogue Project.

It became clear that partners in this dialogue should come from the whole spectrum of European Jews and Muslims, the main requirement being that they be willing to collaborate. Since the intention was not to compare notes on theology, we had to start with a meeting of hearts to win over the minds.

To enable a fruitful dialogue and create a progressive interaction, two vital factors were looked at closely and agreed upon:

- ★ De-linking of the Middle East conflict from European issues of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; and
- ★ Practice of neutrality by intellectuals and academics

among Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe, when European societies discuss Islam, terrorism or Middle Eastern cultures and Israel

Setting up the European Platform

An initial steering group of Jewish and Muslim individuals with experience in inter-faith dialogue was started in 2005. To find out about developments in the field, we established local contacts. These used a network of activists on the ground to create Mapping Reports, which were completed in 2006 for five European countries¹.

It should be noted here even though some mapping exercises and surveys of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia had been carried out, for example by the EUMC (predecessor of FRA), there was essentially no information available on dialogue initiatives between the Muslim and Jewish communities. The Mapping Reports, while not exhaustive, were therefore an important first step towards discovering grassroots activism. We were pleasantly surprised to find that there are many positive activities. This demonstrated that many Jews and Muslims are eager to meet and discuss issues that concern them.

These examples of practice on the ground were published in the Mapping Reports to empower and encourage other people, and also to raise attention for them in the European institutions. These reports intend to be a source of inspiration for what is possible elsewhere, as they can pave the way to the creation of new projects, based on experiences by other activists.

In April 2007, the first-ever European-level Conference on Jewish Muslim Dialogue was held. 70 grassroots dialogue practitioners from the five countries participated, coming together in Brussels to network, exchange ideas and conduct dialogue. Good and bad experiences were shared so that existing work can inspire and motivate other initiatives and help to prevent that mistakes are being repeated.

Moreover, the conference was a chance to showcase grassroots initiatives to the European institutions – which is an especially relevant aspect in the run-up to the European Year 2008 on Intercultural Dialogue. Based on the European Commission's interest in the conference, and on the large attendance at the November launch of the European Platform, we think we have made a real step towards the goal of

raising awareness among European-level officials that local activities are key to dialogue.

Besides the political aims of the platform, we also struck a chord with the delegates, based on their own feedback, leading us to think that the conference should not be a one-off event. Thus, one of the outcomes of the conference was the creation of a Steering Group, which brings together people from all the countries involved, hoping to lead the way to further and deeper collaboration. We have already established partnerships with Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and we have identified partners in Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Building and enlarging the platform is a slow but necessary process based on consensus. As the saying goes: Rome was not built in one day.



¹ Namely Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.



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“We have no doubt that a common destiny is powerful enough to shape the future course of the relationship between Muslim and Jewish communities in Europe”

CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe has so far hosted the secretariat of the platform.

From dialogue to co-operation

In the early days of the initiative, we talked about “dialogue”, whereas now we speak about “co-operation”. While dialogue is an important step, it is equally important to take the next step – moving from discussion to common action. Co-operation is about the creation of something new, something tangible. We want to work together in solidarity towards shared goals.

Since mutual support is necessary for true co-operation, we needed to move beyond dialogue and to work together towards a more inclusive Europe, facilitating understanding,

strengthening mutual respect and standing in unity in each other’s hours of need. This includes a common fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in society-at-large, but also confronting prejudices within our own communities.

To us, a peaceful and inclusive Europe is not a pipe dream. One has to travel only to such places as Cordoba, Spain, to see what a great Islamic civilisation achieved in Europe during its heyday. Common interests, mutual admiration and shared values helped Jews to integrate and contribute more effectively than was possible in pagan or Christian Europe at that time. In times of openness and enlightenment among Muslim regimes, Jews contributed in no small measure to the furtherance of culture. The areas of mutual enrichment included religious and secular sciences, including theology, philosophy, ethics, medicine, mathematics and also poetry. As translators of Arabic works into Hebrew, and through their border-crossing connections with Jews under Christian rule, Jews became some of the prime transmitters of Islamic knowledge to “the West”.

To continue such historic co-operation and to capitalise on the potential richness of today’s European diversity, we

founded the European Platform with the explicit aim of bringing people together, helping to fulfil a long-term vision of peace and mutual respect. The platform is open to any organisation that is involved in Jewish Muslim dialogue and co-operation initiatives.

Moreover, the Steering Group created a Declaration of Support for Jewish Muslim Co-operation², which all Europeans are invited to sign to declare their support for co-operation through the platform.

Rising to the challenge

Judging by history, co-operation between Jewish and Muslim communities is possible. Today, however, it is not only possible, it is acutely necessary. We have no doubt that a common destiny is powerful enough to shape the future course of the relationship between Muslim and Jewish communities in Europe.

Let us help each other to create an inclusive Europe, a Europe where we are not judged by colour, creed, culture or religion, but by what we contribute to society for the common good.

We know that there are groups and individuals among our communities who do not want to work together. They certainly

² Available at: <http://www.ceji.org/dialogue/declaration.php>

may have their own political, religious or cultural agenda, which prevents them from realising the need of the hour. But most of us want peace and co-operation and we base our work on this majority. Their positive energy is our driving force.

We are wholeheartedly convinced that successful partnerships, constructive actions and positive and equitable inter-cultural relations will lead to the

emergence of a new generation that will be more receptive to listening than to shouting. With our European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation being a reality, we hope to serve as a space for resolving differences and the sharing of innovative approaches to peace and understanding, locally and throughout the European Union.

Bashy Quraishy is Chair of the European Platform for Jew-

ish Muslim Co-operation, and Chair of the Advisory Council of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR). The European Platform for Jewish Muslim Cooperation is currently facilitated by CEJI and is guided by a joint Jewish Muslim Steering Group. CEJI is a Jewish anti-discrimination organisation active in 12 EU countries, for more information, see www.ceji.org.

Broadcasting Dialogue: Radio Salaam Shalom

Launched in February 2007, Bristol-based internet radio station Salaam Shalom was developed as a broadcast platform for discussion, debate and new ideas between local Jewish and Muslim communities.

A growing city with around 500,000 inhabitants, Bristol's diversity is reflected also in its Muslim population, which hails from all over the world. The Jewish community also has a wide spectrum, and includes liberal, orthodox and secular Jews, who all have their own institutions and affiliations.

Incorporating these multiple perspectives, Radio Salaam Shalom covers diverse subjects, including music documentaries and online discussions. Many of the presenters are Bristol-based, but they come from as far afield as Singapore, Israel and Iraq. The station reaches listeners in the USA, the Middle and Far East and Australia. Station Manager, Kyle Hannan said: "The commitment of our volunteers has been extraordinary and we are gaining the respect of both the Muslim and Jewish communities, with more volunteers joining us all the time."

Originally set up with help from the British government's Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund and the Community Development Foundation, it received additional funding from Bristol City Council's anti-islamophobia

PREVENT fund and the Clore Duffield Foundation. Today the project is fighting to secure its future through a fundraising campaign.

On the occasion of the station's first birthday, Peter Brill, Chair of Salaam Shalom said, "We're delighted with our first year of broadcasting but we also know that we have only scratched the surface in helping develop further understanding between Muslim and Jewish communities."



Radio Salaam Shalom has received significant media attention and was awarded Highly Commended status in the prestigious Clarion Awards for social responsibility in broadcasting. Representatives from the station formed part of the UK delegation to the European Conference on Jewish Muslim Dialogue.

Farooq Siddique, the station's Vice-Chair and Director of the Bristol Muslim Cultural Society, said, "Not only are we reaching the Jewish and Muslim communities, but people of other cultures and faiths are becoming involved with the station. In the current political and social climate developing understanding is more important than ever."

For more information on Radio Salaam Shalom, one of the media partners of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, see www.salaamshalom.org.uk.

Promoting community cohesion through intercultural dialogue – Examples from the City of Mannheim

By Claus Preißler

Dialogue and continuous cooperation with Muslim communities at local level are essential for successful integration and peaceful coexistence. For Muslims in many European towns, this process begins with the building of their own representative mosque.

The example of Mannheim, Germany, shows that the building of a mosque, despite initial conflicts, can be a way to promote the participation of Muslims in civil society and to bring Muslims and non-Muslims together. Mannheim now has Germany's largest mosque. As experience has shown over the past ten years, the unanimous decision of the authorities to have the mosque built in the centre of Mannheim, directly opposite a Catholic church, and in the face of fierce local opposition, had been the right one. The mosque, known by its Turkish name Yavuz Sultan Selim Cami, is owned by the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB).

Today, it is one of the city's tourist attractions and forms an integral part of its cultural life. The yearly nationwide night-time opening of museums regularly attracts 30,000 visitors in Mannheim and on average 5,000 visitors to the mosque on a single evening. A decisive factor for the success of the new mosque was that both the needs of the D T B community and the fears and reservations of the non-Muslim population were taken seriously and discussed in detail at

a round-table debate.

One of the main outcomes was the setting-up of an Institute for German-Turkish Integration Studies and Interfaith Activity, which is independent of the mosque and subsidised by the city council. The mission of the institute is to inform the non-Muslim public about Islam and the diverse religious, ritual and cultural forms of expression it takes. For example, over 250,000 visitors to date have attended the "Open Mosque" at Mannheim, and numerous seminars and events have been held dealing with interfaith topics.

Another outcome of the talks leading up to the Mosque-building was the foundation of the Christian-Islamic Society, which acts as a permanent forum for interfaith dialogue between the two religions. The highlight of these talks was the creation of a project to mark Mannheim's 400th anniversary in 2007 entitled "Mile of Religions", in which the Jewish community also participated. Many guests were invited by the Jewish community, the Protestant and Catholic churches and by the Muslim communities (DITIB, Milli Görüs, the Alevi and the Bosnian mosque) to join a festive

meal and to exchange ideas at over 100 tables. In addition, local sacred buildings and prayer houses of all three religions were open to visitors.

The mosque symbolises the changes that have taken place in the demography of Mannheim in the last few decades, while confirming that Islam has become established as a permanent and solid element of the religious culture of Germany and Europe. It is a recognition and affirmation of the needs of the city's Muslim population.

Fostering a sense of belonging

Positive initiatives have fostered a greater sense of belonging among the Muslim population of Mannheim and a desire to play a greater role in public life. For example, the city council set up the project "Creating Prospects for Young Muslims", which is unique of its kind in Germany. More than 18 participants of both sexes from five mosque-based associations received 100 hours of training in organisational planning and implementation of measures and small-scale projects, and they also learned about the



One of Mannheim's main tourist attractions: the mosque Yavuz Sultan Selim Cami

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New Report: Community cohesion at local level (March 2008)

Without much public visibility, cities across Europe have been developing innovative practices and initiatives to deliver equality and address the needs emanating from the diversity of city residents. While public attention all too often focuses on inter-community tensions, violent radicalisation or impoverished urban ghettos, local authorities are finding ways to promote more cohesive communities through strategies that address the needs of all city residents, irrespective of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. Such experiences and lessons learned have now been collated for a report, which was launched at the Committee of the Regions in March 2008.

The report "Community Cohesion at local level: Addressing the needs of Muslim Communities" is a product of the Local Community Network (LCN) project and provides examples of "good practice" initiatives from across European cities. It focuses on fields such as education, employment and the provision of public services, which all remain critical for the success of building cohesive communities.

Download the report from FRA's website: <http://fra.europa.eu>

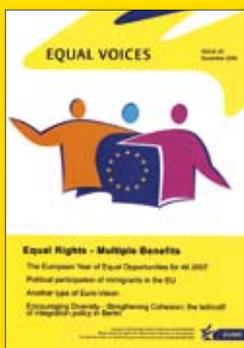
essentials of educational work with children and adolescents. Furthermore, young people were encouraged to connect with existing networks in the district and with youth welfare groups, and were given the opportunity to set up their own youth work in the mosques. Up to now, two out of five youth groups have already passed their own constitution, received their own premises and obtained a group's membership in the 'Stadtjugendring' (city youth council).

To sum up, the Mannheim experience has shown that a "policy of small steps" is the best way to achieve constructive cooperation with the Muslim community at local level. Visible, public recognition of Muslims as a vital part of our community generates trust and a sense of belonging. By

participating in local activities and being incorporated into existing structures, Muslim associations become more open and are more willing to play an active role in society.

Claus Preißler is Project Officer at the City of Mannheim, which is part of the Local Communities Network (LCN) project. Further partners are FRA, the Committee of the Regions, and the cities of Aarhus, Antwerp, Bradford, Genk, Nantes, Sheffield, Rotterdam, and Turin. The LCN maintains a dialogue and exchange of good practice with regards to addressing racism and discrimination, as well as issues specific to the situation of Muslims.

For further information in regard to the City of Mannheim, see www.mannheim.de/integration, or contact Claus Preißler at claus.preissler@mannheim.de.



“Equal rights – multiple benefits” was published in January 2007 on the occasion of the launch of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Equal opportunities are enshrined in law across the EU. But to what extent is this right on paper a right in practice? This issue asks how far we have come in breaking the circle of deprivation, prejudice and discrimination. It discusses strategies to promote equal opportunities and participation of disadvantaged groups in society, the media, politics, and at the local level.



The first issue of Equal Voices published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights dealt with the Agency itself. “EU launches new Agency for Fundamental Rights” was published in October 2007. It is devoted to the inauguration of the new agency and features speeches by Commission President José Manuel Barroso, Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and many others. It also includes views on the possible impact of the new EU fundamental rights body, by the Council of Europe, civil society, equality bodies and national human rights institutions.



The December 2007 edition of Equal Voices “Equality and discrimination through ‘gender lens’” applies a gender perspective on racism and discrimination. Women’s experiences of racism and discrimination often differ from those of men because they suffer from multiple discrimination due to their sex as well as on the basis of their ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. The authors in this edition highlight the challenges of migrant and minority women – in education, employment, health and in political life - and indicate what policies are needed to correct and prevent such grievances.

Get a free subscription of Equal Voices at media@fra.europa.eu

This edition of FRA’s magazine deals with intercultural dialogue as a way to reap the benefits of diversity. The importance of intercultural dialogue was formally recognised by the EU in May 2007 when it was adopted as one of the three objectives in the first ever European Agenda for Culture. Following this, 2008 has been declared the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue “to promote intercultural dialogue as a tool that will equip Europeans to deal with the sweeping changes in their cultural environment”, as European Commissioner Ján Figel says in this Equal Voices issue.

Taking this European Year as a starting point, this Equal Voices edition presents varied perspectives on intercultural dialogue, from world known novelist Paulo Coelho to intergovernmental organisations and civil society. The themes include intercultural education, cultural diversity in the media, inter-faith dialogue, and the role of civil society in promoting an intercultural approach. While giving insights and outlining policy recommendations, the authors all agree that intercultural dialogue can play a central role in building a society, which is based on shared values, respect for diversity and learning from each other’s differences.

