

Editorial



Europe is becoming more culturally diverse. The enlargement of the European Union, the deregulation of employment laws and globalisation have increased the multicultural character of many countries, adding to the number of languages, religions, ethnic and cultural backgrounds found on the continent. The intercultural dialogue has an increasingly important role to play in fostering European identity and citizenship. Europe's cultural diversity represents a unique advantage. How can intercultural dialogue help us make the most of those activities organised during the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (EYID 2008) established by the European Parliament and the Council, are an opportunity to explore answers to this question. It will encourage all those living in Europe to explore the benefits of our rich cultural heritage and opportunities to learn from different cultural traditions. Detailed information about it can be found on the suitable website of the European Union out of which come all the information gathered in the given Editorial. To foster better understanding and communication between the diverse crowd that makes up European citizens, Brussels has launched also a media campaign about its forthcoming 2008 EYID.

Six debates will be held at the Residence Palace in Brussels throughout EYID 2008, covering a range of intercultural dialogue issues from interfaith dialogue to multilingualism and the role of the media. The debates, which will be held on a bi-monthly basis, are designed to provide a platform for reflection and exchange of ideas which can contribute to policy discussion on intercultural dialogue. In each debate, high-level speakers will introduce their views and experience of intercultural dialogue in Europe. Each debate will last one hour and include a question/comment session with the audience. A reception will provide a possibility for informal discussions following each debate. The debates are intended above all for journalists and for civil society stakeholders, who will receive direct invitations. However, places will also be available for the public, in particular students.

The Year will feature a small number of flagship projects on a European level, as well as EU support for a national project in each Member State, and a Partner programme aimed at mobilising a civil society. The active involvement of a civil society will be essential in highlighting good practices and identifying needs in the intercultural dialogue. Well-known ambassadors have also been appointed to raise awareness of the importance and benefits of the intercultural dialogue. The intercultural dialogue is a wide-ranging transversal priority of the European Union. To illustrate more concretely what it may cover in the context of the EYID 2008, eight major topics have been selected: Culture and the Media, Education and Science, Migration, Minorities, Multilingualism, Religion, the Workplace and Youth.

Artists and cultural actors have for many years benefited from a creative dialogue with other cultures. Cultural expression is a key for mutual understanding and cultural cooperation can contribute to Europe-wide cohesion and identity. The intercultural dialogue in the arts achieves such outcomes not just by the strength and freedom of cultural expressions, but also through engaging all levels of society in the creative process. The media also play a major role in the development of European citizens' vision of the world. The way different cultural backgrounds may be depicted or explained by the media greatly influences individual representations, thus confirming or deconstructing stereotypes. The media can also offer many opportunities for the expression of those who are marginalised or excluded in our societies.

It is especially important to encourage the intercultural dialogue among young people, at a time they are still developing their own vision of the world and acquiring skills and competences for their future. Contact and interaction with cultures other than their own stimulates their curiosity and the desire to connect with peers from around the world. The intercultural dialogue also generates new ideas and fosters an understanding of the society. It allows them to discover the richness of cultural diversity for their own development as well as for society. EU policy recognises the valuable contribution that young people can make through their active participation in the society and encourages young people to travel and experience new cultures.

In the education sector, the intercultural dialogue aims to equip individuals with the knowledge and skills – so-called "intercultural competences" – to participate in increasingly diverse societies. Knowledge of democratic values, citizenship and civil

rights are essential elements of dialogue in this sector. Knowledge about other cultures, as well as languages, can also contribute to mutual respect and understanding. It is also important to develop our capacity to be able to stand back

from our own specific cultural and social background in order to listen actively to what people from other backgrounds can bring to us. These aspects are a key in life long learning, both in formal and informal education, not only for personal development, citizenship but also, increasingly, for employability.

In the background of given information the broader reflection concerning scientific and academic environment is worth trying to be done. For a long time it is obvious that achievements in those fields are closely related to the international cooperation. The policy of the creation of the European Educational Area and the European Research Area carried out for years is conducive to it. The close cooperation between scientific units and universities of 27 member countries of the European Union and other entitled countries is the necessary condition of the realisation of that plan. The 7th Framework Programme serves for it in the field of scientific researches and educational programmes as for example the programme Erasmus, realised for many years. Of course, the important elements of that programme serving for the development of the dialogue between nations of the united Europe are scientific conferences, the exchange of academic staff and students. Surely the publication of scientific works from various European countries serves also the great masterpiece – the European intercultural dialogue. Surely our scientific WAMME Academy and the Editorial Board of our Journal JAMME participate modestly in that activity.

Mr Ján Figel - the EU's commissioner for culture says, "Business is 'not enough' to keep Europeans together". They are stick together by science and education. Then we invite to the publication of their scientific achievements in the Journal JAMME and to the participation in the consecutive 16th International Scientific Conference on Achievements in Mechanical and Materials Engineering AMME'2008, which will take place in Ryn near Olsztyn in Masuria, known as a region of thousands of lakes in Poland on 22nd -25th June 2008. Let it be our contribution to the development of the European intercultural dialogue in EYID 2008. "Dialogue is not mathematics, it is not one monologue plus another monologue. In dialogue, one plus one is more than two," says Mr Ján Figel. This synergic action will surely bring very useful results. The effect of that action will be bigger than activeness of the WAMME Academy and includes ca. 50 countries of all continents. In such a way the dissemination of idea of the EYID 2008 in the framework of Education and Science will broaden its range including people not only from Europe, but also from Asia, both Americas, Africa and Australia. Then all the interested are invited for active cooperation.

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