



by Hanjo Schild

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At the heart of European **policies**

Both, the European Union and the Council of Europe, within their own areas of responsibility, are involved in building a multicultural Europe and in developing strategies and concrete action for achieving this objective. The European Youth Campaign **ALL DIFFERENT – ALL EQUAL for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation**¹ is just one, prominent example of how action can be taken. However, no single activity ever would make a real change in fighting discrimination, xenophobia and racism and in promoting diversity and tolerance. The following examples show the focus on activities in the field of diversity and intercultural dialogue; other relevant actions which are related to the campaign in the field of participation and active citizenship are not covered here.

► The European Commission

For the European Commission the **Youth Programme** in general, (and the yearly published call for pilot projects in particular), is devoted to diversity, mutual respect and the fight against racism. In 2001, when the **White Paper on Youth** was adopted, the fight against racism and xenophobia was identified as one of the key priorities also in youth policy. Since then various actions have been taken, including the organisation of two youth conferences entitled “**Youth for Tolerance and Democracy**” in 2001 and “**European Youth in Action for Diversity and Tolerance**” in 2005²; A **Declaration of Youth Ministers on Racism and Intolerance** in relation to young people was published in 2004³; not to forget the strategies and actions which have a clear relationship between diversity and non-discrimination on the one hand and the priorities for closer cooperation such as active citizenship and participation, social inclusion and mainstreaming youth in other policies on the other hand.

In the employment and social affairs policy sector the Member States of the European Union have adopted two **Directives against discrimination**⁴, one on the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, and another one on a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

As part of its Action Programme to combat Discrimination, the European Commission is running a five-year pan-European information campaign on combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age,

disability and sexual orientation. Youth is an important target group of this **campaign** called “**For Diversity – Against Discrimination**”⁵. The first year of the campaign focused primarily on promoting diversity in the workplace. Measures for the second year of the campaign included mainly visibility and awareness activities. These activities were maintained in the third campaign year and extended by measures targeting youth, such as a mobile photo contest and local events. The campaign, which is being developed in close co-operation with EU governments, trade unions, employers’ organisations and NGOs, was launched on 16th June 2003 and is scheduled to run until 2008.

The initiative for the **European Year of Equal Opportunities**⁶ comes exactly a decade after the European Year Against Racism and the introduction into the EC Treaty of Article 13 - allowing the EU to combat discrimination (1997). The aim of the Year in 2007 is to launch a major debate on the benefits of diversity for European societies. It will also seek to make people in the European Union more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination. The activities undertaken during the Year will focus on the discrimination individuals or groups may suffer owing to their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, age, sexual orientation or disability, all of which are grounds for discrimination that can be addressed at European level (article 13 Amsterdam Treaty). Most activities will take place at national level, under the guidance of a national implementing body. Activities at European level will include a pan-European information and promotional campaign, Eurobarometer surveys, numerous conferences and studies.

The 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is run by the European Commission, DG EMPL, Unit G 4 – contact persons:

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The Year will be followed in 2008 with the **European Year of intercultural dialogue**⁷. The Year should provide major opportunities to raise awareness of all people living in the European Union, particularly the young, that intercultural dialogue is the most relevant process to address an increasingly multicultural environment. It is widely recognised that most of the experience in the field of promotion of intercultural dialogue lies at local level in the Member States and involves the active participation of the civil society in the widest sense: the cultural sector, the education community, youth organisations, sport organisations, cities, the media and the business community. The European Commission is therefore launching various initiatives aimed at stimulating interested parties to engage in a sustainable process for which the year would provide momentum and visibility. The Commission also will highlight intercultural dialogue as a horizontal priority in all relevant Community programmes, leading to new projects focusing on intercultural dialogue in different sectors from Life Long Learning to Culture, Youth or Citizenship. The challenge is to bring the dialogue where it matters, at school or in the education and training environments, at work and in entertainment, cultural or sporting activities. Intercultural dialogue is relevant not only within the European Union but also in its relations with third countries. This is particularly so with respect to candidate countries, but also in the relationship between the EU and EFTA countries Parties to the EEA agreement, the Western Balkans as well as third countries which are EU partners within the new European neighbourhood policy.

The 2008 European Year of inter-cultural dialogue is run by the European Commission, DG EAC, Directorate C - contact person:
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The European Commission's website on non-discrimination in the European Union provides information on all aspects of EU action – both laws and policies – to combat discrimination. You can find out more about European non-discrimination legislation, activities supported under the Community Action Programme to combat discrimination etc in the Equal Rights in Practice newsletter at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/index_en.htm.

The Council of Europe

A much longer tradition in the fight against discrimination and intolerance, human rights violation and xenophobia is on the side of the Council of Europe, set up in 1949 to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law and to promote awareness of a European identity based on shared values and cutting across different cultures. Obviously the general key

objectives and fields of activities of the organisation are closely linked to the focus of today's campaign for diversity, human rights and participation; nevertheless some specific further activities must be highlighted as an extraordinary contribution to the fight against discrimination and the promotion of intercultural understanding.

Since the very beginning in the 1960⁸, the Council of Europe's **youth policy** has been committed to the mission of the whole organization, namely to safeguard fundamental European values. In the 1970s strong youth movements asked for more participation, democratic citizenship, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion and in 1989 a new Europe without dividing lines brought new challenges as well for the youth field, particularly with regard to diversity and the fight against discrimination.

The 1995 campaign **All Different – All Equal against Racism, Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and Intolerance** (RAXI) brought a new quality and impetus in the actions and strategies in the youth field. It focused on the struggle against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism & Intolerance and was in favour of a tolerant society based on the equal dignity of all its members. The campaign in 1995 was a real milestone in the Council of Europe's activities in the fight against all forms of intolerance and brought new networks with new partners, created new alliances and a better cooperation between NGOs, governments and the Council and achieved a high visibility and media awareness.

In 2000 the Council of Europe's Directorate of Youth and Sport launched a youth programme on **Human Rights Education**⁸, set up as an important opportunity to consolidate and to establish education and learning about, for and in Human Rights throughout Europe. The programme built upon the achievements of the Council of Europe youth sector in the fields of intercultural learning, participation and empowerment of minority youth and its expertise in developing educational approaches and materials for practitioners in youth work. In 2006– 2008 this priority puts special emphasis on intercultural dialogue, inter-religious co-operation and respect for cultural difference.

The Directorate of Youth and Sport has also an outstanding record of activities in the areas of **intercultural learning, intercultural and inter-religious cooperation / dialogue**. One of the projects of the Directorate has been focusing on "Youth promoting peace and intercultural dialogue". Activities in this field are also found in other sectors of work, notably in the Partnership on Youth with the European Union. Particular attention is given to young people from regions that have suffered from armed conflict (namely the Balkans and the Caucasus). A Euro-Mediterranean dimension of cooperation explores dialogue in a broader framework by associating young people from Europe and all the sides of the Mediterranean.

The **European Youth Foundation** (EYF)⁹, a fund established in 1972 provides financial support for European youth activities. Its purpose is to encourage co-operation among young people in Europe by providing financial support to

such European youth activities which serve the promotion of peace, understanding and co-operation in a spirit of respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance and solidarity. In 2006/07 projects must contribute to the objectives and priorities defined for the *programmes of the Council of Europe's youth sector 2006-2008*. In addition, in 2007, projects linked to the themes of the *European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation "All Different - All Equal"* will be given priority for EYF funding.

Combating racism and intolerance is at the heart of the organisations' key objectives. For that reason the Council of Europe established in 1993 the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)¹⁰. ECRI is an independent monitoring mechanism, whose task is to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance in all Council of Europe member States from the perspective of the protection of human rights. Its action covers all necessary measures to combat violence, discrimination and prejudice faced by persons or groups of persons, on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality and national or ethnic origin.

Through its **Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention Project**¹¹, begun in 2002, the Council of Europe intends to help policy-makers, civil society and all who play a part in culture to devise a policy of dialogue which respects every aspect of cultural diversity. With this in mind, the Council of Europe undertakes to analyse the sources of conflict between cultural and religious communities and the mechanisms which stir such conflict, to define cultural activities with a preventive aim and to identify actions to promote reconciliation. The overall aim is to promote intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and mutual respect and understanding between the different communities and to prevent conflicts through cultural policies and cultural action.

In 2005, the European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs asked the Council of Europe to prepare a **White Paper on cultural diversity through intercultural dialogue and conflict prevention**¹². The White Paper should review the conceptual and operational achievements and propose orientations for future action. By identifying ways and means to respond to the need for intensified intercultural dialogue within and between European societies, it should enhance the ability for everyone to contribute to, and benefit from, the cultural diversity of our continent in daily life and to promote active citizenship especially among young people. It aims to ensure cohesion of our societies and to respond to the need for structured dialogue between Europe and its neighbours as a means to further co-operation and mutual understanding. It is also intended to provide policy makers and civil society organisations with guidelines for the development and implementation of intercultural dialogue. A secretariat at the Council of Europe co-ordinates the elaboration of the White Paper. Institutional partners of the Council of Europe, representatives of public authorities, members of different ethnic and religious communities and relevant civil society organisations should be

consulted, ensuring a most open and inclusive approach. To this end, the Council of Europe web site is used to invite for spontaneous and unstructured contributions. The publication is foreseen for November 2007.

The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue is published by the Council of Europe, General Directorate for Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (DG IV)
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Conclusion

All the examples above show the strong commitment of both the European Union and the Council of Europe to promote diversity and human rights and to fight against all forms of discrimination. The list of activities would have been even longer if the third campaign topic "participation" had been included, ranging from the current strategy in the Union to foster active citizenship and participation through priority setting in youth policy and the Youth in Action program, to the unique co-management system in the Council of Europe where youth organisations and ministries responsible for youth decide jointly on programmes and actions of the European Charter on the Participation of young people in local and regional life – just to mention some.

However, these initiatives can only serve as a frame; when it comes to concrete action – and this is particularly true for the campaign All Different – All Equal – nothing is more important than the grassroots level: Youth initiatives and youth NGO's, schools, universities, enterprises, culture and sports, social work, all can get involved and be engaged in the fight for a more peaceful and democratic world, for diversity, human rights and participation.

Notes and references :

1. <http://alldifferent-allequal.info/>
2. <http://youth-against-racism.net/>
3. DECLARATION of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Racism and Intolerance in relation to Young People; see: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/whitepaper/post-launch/post_en_1_en.html
4. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/policy/policy_en.htm
5. http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/policy/awraais/div_en.htm
6. <http://equality2007.europa.eu>
7. http://ec.europa.eu/culture/portal/events/current/dialogue2008_en.htm
8. http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/youth/2_Priorities/hrsc.asp#TopOfPage
9. http://galadriel.coe.int/fej/portal/media-type/html/country/null/user/anon/page/default.psm?js_language=en
10. http://www.coe.int/T/e/human_rights/ecri/3-Educational_resources/
11. http://www.coe.int/t/e/cultural_co-operation/culture/action/dialogue_Summary.asp#TopOfPage
12. http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/

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