

7 Cultural diversity and minorities

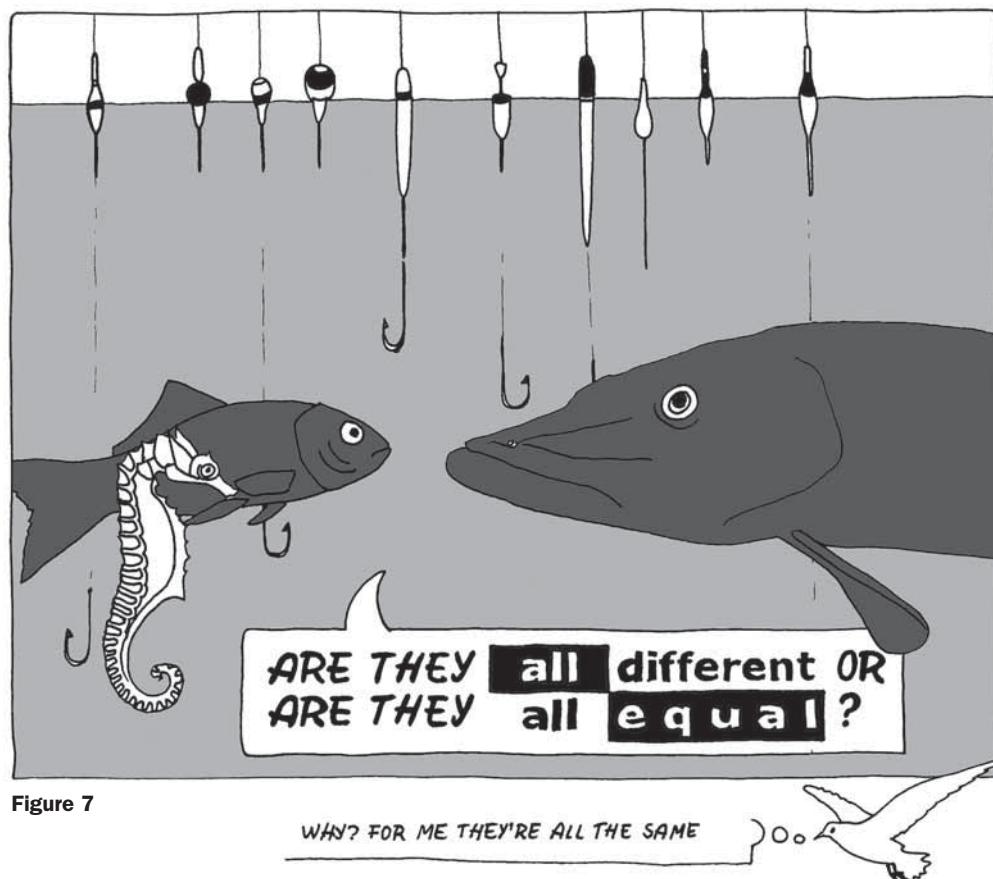


Figure 7

A single flower does not make a garden, nor does a single bird bring spring.

The Arab Human Development Report, 2003

7.1 Introduction¹

Sitting in Egypt, eating Italian food, listening to French songs with a group of friends from Jordan, Lebanon, Spain or Sweden is becoming more and more commonplace for some young people. The traditional nation state, a territorial unit covering people who share a common national identity (historically, culturally or ethnically),² faces new challenges – especially with people’s increasing mobility and globalisation, two factors which have helped to blur territorial boundaries and transform nation states, making them co-operate with each other. But still, the majority or dominant national cultures around the world are, in one way or another, imposing their identity on other groups at the nation state and global levels.

Multi-ethnic environments are often faced with an official mono-culturalism that frequently comes at the expense of minority rights. According to the *World directory*

of *minorities*, it is hard to pinpoint accurately the proportion of the world's population that identifies themselves as minorities or as belonging to minority communities. However, this proportion is estimated to be above 10% and statistics suggest that more than 20% of the world's population belongs to 6 000 different minority communities.³

As is the case all over the world, countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea contain diverse cultural, ethnic and religious groups.⁴ Berbers, Baha'is, Copts, Kurds, Saharawis, Roma, Jews, Indian, Alawites, Finns, Hungarians, Turks, Arabs, Catalans, Buddhists, Druze, Swedes, Italians and many more groups exist as minorities in some countries and regions, while they may belong to the "majority" in others. Imagine how many minority languages⁵ are spoken in those countries where Euro-Mediterranean youth work takes place: Arabic, Armenian, Assyrian, Basque, Gaelic, German, Kabardinian, Kurdish, Mansi, Mirandese, Romany, Saami, Swedish, Syriac, Tamazight or Yiddish, to mention only a few. This diversity is a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, but it requires a delicate balance that may easily be a cause of dispute and conflict. Cultural policies adopted by European and Mediterranean governments have implications not only in their own societies and territories, but also in other societies because of factors such as their history of colonialism, globalisation, increasing mobility, wars, partnerships and agreements.

Q: Which minorities exist in your society?

Trying to integrate while seeking to preserve their own identity, minorities are often faced with acts of intolerance and discrimination from the societies they are part of. This has sometimes led to armed conflicts. In order to prevent conflicts and further violations of human rights, the protection and promotion of the right of minorities have become essential for the sustainability of nations.

At the same time, minorities are the true human bridges over the Mediterranean. Many of them are the result of historical migrations and conflicts; others are simply the expression of modern social diversity and therefore are not defined by national borders. These are minorities such as people with disabilities, homosexuals and vegetarians.

This chapter deals with three main issues: cultural diversity, minorities and migration. These issues are often closely related to each other through a relation of cause and consequence, the effects and challenges of which are faced within Euro-Mediterranean youth work.

7.2 Efforts to ensure cultural diversity

At the beginning of the 21st century, the world has witnessed increased integration of markets, the emergence of new regional political alliances, and advances in telecommunication, biotechnology and transportation. As a result of these, populations have shifted, and people are moving from one region to another either voluntarily or involuntarily. Cultural diversity is a reality in the modern world and the richness that it brings is generally underestimated. The phenomenon should be addressed, not only to preserve people's rights and needs but also to underline the values that are attached to it.

Some notable statistics

What is the state of cultural diversity in the world?⁶ Although there are some 6 000 languages in the world, they do not have equal numbers of speakers. Only 4% of languages are used by 96% of the world's population; 50% of the world's languages are in danger of extinction; 90% of the world's languages are not represented on the Internet.

About five countries monopolise the world's cultural industries and trade. In the field of cinema, for instance, 88 countries out of 185 in the world have never had their own film-production facilities.

With the rapidly changing effects of globalisation, institutional and political preventive measures have been adopted to ensure and protect cultural diversity since the 1990s. Two of these are the United Nations Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2001, and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2005.

Other measures are stated in various declarations that highlight the importance of cultural expression and the promotion of pluralism: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. At the Council of Europe, standard-setting documents include the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) and the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008).

Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity⁷

The declaration aims to preserve cultural diversity as a necessity for the survival of humanity. It is a reaffirmation that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace, and a rejection of the theory of the inevitable clash of cultures and civilisations. The declaration supports cultural diversity, cultural rights and the role of culture in development, reaffirmed in Article 5 "Cultural rights as an enabling environment for cultural diversity" and as "an integral part of human rights". It also explores the issues of segregation and fundamentalism in order to make it clear that individuals must acknowledge and respect others in society to ensure cultural diversity, in addition to acknowledging the plurality of their own identity, within societies that are themselves plural.

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions⁸

The convention is the first of its kind in international relations, as it enshrines a consensus that the international community has never before reached on a variety of guiding principles and concepts related to cultural diversity. It addresses many forms of cultural expression that result from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies, and that convey cultural content with symbolic meaning, as well as artistic and cultural values that originate from or express cultural identities. The convention seeks to strengthen the five inseparable links of the same chain: creation, production, distribution/dissemination, access and enjoyment of cultural expressions, as conveyed by cultural activities, goods and services.⁹

In the Arab Human Development Report 2003¹⁰, the importance of cultural diversity was recognised for building knowledge in societies. The report states that each country represents a special cultural mix, because of the interaction of religious, ethnic and social diversity, through which the world is enriched.

From an institutional perspective, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Barcelona Declaration¹¹ emphasise the importance of respect for diversity and pluralism in Euro-Mediterranean societies; promotion of tolerance between different groups in society, and combating manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia. As a product of this Partnership, the Euro-Med Youth Programme focuses on priorities such as fighting racism and xenophobia, and minority rights.¹²

The Euromed Café

This has been established to provide a forum of images and sounds on the Internet to enable those on opposite shores of the Mediterranean to get to know each other. One of the functions of this site is to post every year a number of songs and movies on the theme of intercultural dialogue. A forum for discussion provides an open space for collaboration and for celebrating the diversity of the creative voices of the peoples of the southern and the northern shores of the Mediterranean.¹³

Despite the recognition of cultural diversity as a natural phenomenon and the existence of different declarations to ensure the protection of cultural diversity, much remains to be done to protect the rights of minorities. Part of the problem lies in addressing minorities as homogeneous entities rather than recognising the internal diversities within them. One suggestion is that the static recognition of cultural diversity should be broadened and replaced by a commitment to the opportunity for equal and full participation of all people with no exception.¹⁴

Q: Do all minorities in your country have the same possibilities for social and cultural participation and expression?

7.3 Cultural diversity within national and regional boundaries

The Human Development Report 2004,¹⁵ entitled “Cultural liberty in today’s diverse world”, advocates building inclusive societies and adopting multicultural policies that recognise and acknowledge cultural differences, in order to build a lasting peace. The report addresses certain reasons for the suppression of cultural diversity by nation states and portrays them as “myths”.

The report states that “struggles over cultural identity, if left unmanaged or managed poorly, can quickly become one of the greatest sources of instability within states and between them, and in so doing trigger conflict that takes development backwards. Identity politics that polarise people and groups are creating fault lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’.”¹⁶

Myths about the suppression of cultural diversity

People's ethnic identities compete with their attachment to the state, so there is a trade-off between recognising diversity and unifying the state.

Ethnic groups are prone to violent conflict with each other in clashes of values, so there is a trade-off between respecting diversity and sustaining peace.

Cultural liberty requires defending traditional practices, so there could be a trade-off between recognising cultural diversity and other human development priorities such as progress in development, democracy and human rights.

Ethnically diverse countries are less able to develop, so there is a trade-off between respecting diversity and promoting development.

Some cultures are more likely to make developmental progress than others, and some cultures have inherent democratic values while others do not, so there is a trade-off between accommodating certain cultures and promoting development and democracy.

Human Development Report, 2004

Q: Do you think that these are myths? If so, could you think of examples of how these myths might be present and presented in various youth activities?

Typically, individuals within their state can identify with many different groups, according to citizenship, race, gender, language, profession, location, hobbies and so on. There is a multitude of identity "tents" that people can belong to. Culture as one identity tent refers to the customs, practices, languages, values and world-views that define social groups, such as those based on nationality, ethnicity, religion or common interests. Identifying with a particular culture gives people feelings of belonging and security. It also gives people access to social networks and provides support and shared values and aspirations. These can help break down barriers and build a sense of trust between people.

Hence, cultural identity is important for people's sense of self and how they relate to others. However, excessively strong cultural identity may contribute to barriers between groups. Conversely, members of minority cultures can feel excluded from society if the majority of those in authority obstruct, or are intolerant of, their cultural practices and the development of that individual identity and collective sense of belonging. This is because cultural identity is characterised by belonging to or identifying with various groups and cultures, not just one.

Learning to bridge and negotiate contrasting cultural identities is a fundamental concern for young people, especially those young people who have recently migrated or whose parents are immigrants. They have to negotiate their parents' culture while embodying the majority cultures that they are exposed to where they live. This mix often gives minority young people multiple cultural competences, communication styles and interpersonal relationship norms that may differ from the majority of young people, when and if the majority is defined as people who are either greatest in number or have the most political and economic power.

Moreover, young people from culturally diverse backgrounds, whether native or migrants, often face contrasting notions of their own self because they must function in schools and educational systems that are organised around the values of the dominant culture. Thus,

minority young people might go through a process of indirect victimisation where their own development and personal cultural identity are not addressed or not considered.¹⁷

Recognising the existence of multiple cultural identities within national and regional boundaries, and adopting actions and policies to address them, are vital to eliminate prejudice, stereotypes and conflicts, in order to ensure a healthy cultural diversity.

Celebrating cultural diversity

Further to the adoption of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in November 2001, the General Assembly of the United Nations welcomed the declaration and the main lines of the action plan, and proclaimed 21 May as World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, as an opportunity to deepen understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together better.

At the regional level, there are institutional and political frameworks which emphasise the importance of cultural diversity and dialogue within and between the regions. The Barcelona Declaration¹⁸ stresses the need to guarantee cultural and religious diversity in the countries of Europe and the Mediterranean within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, and it establishes some initiatives to develop cultural and religious dialogue between the two groups of partner countries. The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures¹⁹ is one of those initiatives which works for the elimination of prejudice and stereotypes, enhancing pluralism and respect for multiple cultural identities and projecting the common heritage of the Euro-Mediterranean region as a pillar for development, modernisation and mutual understanding and respect.

There are also institutionally established platforms for exchanging information and stimulating cultural dialogue among and between European and Mediterranean young people. On the southern side of the Mediterranean, and specifically in the Arab region, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has established an Arab Youth Directory to promote co-operation and partnership among young people at local and regional levels. This directory also provides a forum for Arab youth to put in perspective the diversity and complexity of the region.²⁰

7.4 The concept of minority

At first glance, it would seem that a minority group is fairly straightforward to identify and define. Most dictionaries and encyclopaedias refer to a minority as a small group of people that is part of much larger group of people. Essentially, "minority" is a neutral concept that refers to an ethnic, religious or other interest group that is smaller in numbers than another group or groups in a given region.

However, looking only at the numbers and demographics would neglect many important complexities. There are, for example, groups who are a minority in one state, but a majority in another, and therefore may not be a minority in a region as a whole. While this is often due to migration, it can also be due to the politics of border divisions. For example, while the majority of Slovenia's population is Slovene (over 87%), Hungarians and Italians have the status of indigenous minorities under the Slovenian Constitution, which guarantees them seats in the national assembly. Slovenia has other minority groups too, particularly those from the former Yugoslavia who have migrated since the First World War.²¹

At the same time, there are also groups who are a minority in all countries in Europe and the Mediterranean. Since their numbers are small, their population is spread over a larger region or they have not currently achieved political statehood. The Roma, for example, face serious problems of marginalisation and discrimination in virtually every European and Mediterranean country, within which most of them have been settled for centuries. This is also often the case with indigenous communities who have been suppressed by other nationalist movements.

Q: How are Roma people perceived and treated in your country?

Most of the time, the word “minority” is assumed to refer to ethnic group distinctions, which encompass cultural, linguistic, religious, behavioural and biological traits, usually on the basis of a common genealogy or ancestry.²² However, there are many categories in which people place themselves or others. Some of these distinctive categories have very little political or social consequence, such as being a vegetarian. At other times, these distinctions, such as a group’s sexual identity and choice of lifestyle, political party, language or religious affiliation, can place them at odds with a dominant majority and have very significant implications. In addition, these identifications are sometimes visible (disabilities, skin colour) and sometimes less visible or not visible at all (sexual orientation, political beliefs, being a vegetarian). Depending on the social climate of a region or even on the larger global context, each of these can also lead to discrimination and the need for political or legal redress.

Sometimes, a minority religious group that is quite free to practise their faith in one country may face significant persecution in another, especially if the religious identity is associated with a group’s ethnicity or nationalism. However, even if a particular group does not fall under a government’s definition of “minority”, it is still important, at the grassroots level and especially in working with young people, to be aware of the various ways in which such a group can be affected by societal norms and expectations.

Q: Are Baha’is and Jehovah’s Witnesses considered as minorities in your country?

In the face of these complexities, the possibility of being defined as a minority can have implications for a group’s status. Often the problem arises of who defines minority groups. While many European countries feared an influx of Roma immigrants with the EU enlargement in 2005, Roma spokespersons pointed out that this fear stemmed largely from the misconception that Roma are still nomadic and identify only with their own group, rather than with the societies where they have been living for centuries.²³

However, in other cases, failure to acknowledge the importance of a minority group’s distinctiveness can also be a form of marginalisation. In an extreme form, a state may not even define a minority group as officially existing and therefore ignore any responsibility to seek provision for the group. Individuals and civil society organisations have the right and often the responsibility to challenge these definitions when such marginalisation occurs.

7.5 Issues related to minorities

In 2003, Minority Rights Group International²⁴ highlighted some points for the European Commission that should be addressed from a minority rights perspective in order to foster the enhancement of minority groups' living conditions within a national context.²⁵

- **Education.** Several steps should be taken to ensure the integration of minorities: the availability of primary school education in mother tongues; the reforming of curricula in order to reflect minority cultures and to promote non-discrimination; the hiring of teachers from minority backgrounds.
- **Employment.** To avoid high levels of underemployment, minorities' work status should be more accurately assessed and they should be provided with equal access to job opportunities, with specially targeted employment options for minorities.
- **Recognition of minority presence.** The above efforts would be supported by the recognition of the rights of minorities and the inclusion of this in legislative systems.
- **Governance.** There should be legal and constitutional reforms, to build capacity for minority governance structures, coupled with greater representation of, and participation by, minorities in legislative bodies to provide equality for all citizens.
- **Health care.** There should be access to healthcare services without discrimination, in addition to sufficient services being available in areas largely inhabited by minorities.
- **Environment.** Encompassing agriculture and rural development, this refers to the need to ensure access to biodiversity; to review environmental conditions, with the aim of ensuring that minority areas are not disproportionately damaged and that conservation measures do not prohibit minority groups from access to and use of traditional lands and territories.

Young people constitute a significant minority group in the world. According to Oxfam,²⁶ 41% of the world's unemployed people are young people and they live in extreme poverty on less than a dollar a day. Also, political instability and conflict leave young people especially vulnerable to violence. Young men make up a large proportion of those recruited or forced to fight in conflicts and wars, and male children are not exempt – there are more than 300 000 child soldiers around the world. Girls and young women are especially vulnerable to rape and sex slavery. Violence and conflicts affect young people by interrupting access to school, disrupting basic health services and inflicting psychological trauma.

Minority and immigrant women are vulnerable to multiple inequalities, discrimination and racism. Because of being both women and immigrants, they face disadvantages in entering labour markets or mostly work in undervalued jobs. It is not only young women but also young disabled people, youngsters from different religious backgrounds, gays and lesbians who may suffer the consequences of discrimination.

It is estimated that 10% of the world's population has a disability and they are faced with barriers of equal opportunities and full participation in life of the community, such as high unemployment rates, low income, obstacles in the physical environment and social exclusion.²⁷ In many parts of the world, individuals with a different sexual orientation (that is, different from the majority) are subjected to discrimination, which

ranges from being insulted to being murdered. Lesbian and gay couples are also victims of legal discrimination in areas such as the right to marry or to adopt children.²⁸ Members of different religions have been widely discriminated against throughout history, everywhere in the world.

The Euro-Med Youth Programme²⁹ has defined five thematic priorities, one of which is minority rights. It is a means by which youth work can facilitate the integration of young people into social and professional life, ensuring democratic processes of civil societies among Mediterranean partners.

Q: Do you think these measures are enough?

7.6 Minorities' rights within the framework of human rights

As a further step to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities in 1992. This action was taken to recognise the need for, and was meant to ensure, a more effective implementation of international human rights instruments, and to emphasise the promotion of the rights of people as an integral part of the development of society as a whole.³⁰

Another initiative on minorities' rights is the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1998.³¹ This is the first ever legally binding multilateral instrument devoted to the protection of national minorities in general and makes it clear that this protection is an integral part of the protection of human rights. The convention seeks to promote full and effective equality of national minorities by creating appropriate conditions for them to preserve and develop their culture and retain their identity.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities sets out principles relating to people belonging to national minorities in the public sphere:³²

- non-discrimination
- promotion of effective equality,
- promotion and preservation of culture, religion, language and traditions,
- freedom of peaceful assembly,
- freedom of association,
- freedom of expression,
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion,
- the right to access to and use of the media,
- freedoms relating to language and education,
- trans-frontier contacts and co-operation,
- participation in economic, cultural and social life,
- prohibition of forced assimilation.

Problems within and between north and south communities in the Euro-Mediterranean region are inter-related; their members have not always interacted in a positive way. Past conflicts have left a legacy of mutually negative imagery and fear of colonialism, a legacy which hinders co-operation between the different shores of the Mediterranean. With this in mind, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network³³ considers that there is a need to reinforce co-operation and exchanges between human rights organisations in the region and to develop a constructive dialogue with governments. The Euro-Med Network supports local and regional human rights organisations in empowering civil society and creating a network among the key players of the societal pyramid, including minorities in the region.

On a different note, the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) 2003,³⁴ as a part of the efforts to build human development in the Arab world, mentioned ameliorations in the status of minorities in the Arab World, for example, the classification of some minority languages as national languages and teaching in those languages within state educational curricula.

One of the Council of Europe's most successful campaigns was All Different – All Equal, a youth campaign³⁵ first launched in 1995 to reinforce the fight against racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance. From June 2006 to September 2007, the Council of Europe ran a new All Different – All Equal youth campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation to encourage and enable young people to participate in building peaceful societies based on diversity and inclusion, in a spirit of respect, tolerance and mutual understanding.

Activities in the new campaign were based around three main poles: young people promoting dialogue; young people promoting participatory democracy; and young people celebrating diversity. Among the successes of the campaign, two were of particular importance: firstly, the strong role played by the youth field, which helped create minority networks such as Minorities of Europe, Young Women from Minorities and the Forum of Young Roma People in Europe; and, secondly, the role of anti-racism and minority issues in the domains of international youth policy reviews, peace and conflict education programmes and regional work, such as that in south-east Europe and the Euro-Mediterranean region.³⁶

7.7 Discrimination and racial discrimination

Being a minority does not necessarily imply that one is disempowered or discriminated against. Of course, in a democratic system where the majority rules, being in the majority brings a certain degree of power or representation by means of votes. However, there are many other types of power as well, namely economic status and influence, education level, language fluency, longevity of establishment in a place, and the privilege of enjoying a general cultural acceptance of one's identity on a larger societal level. Some minorities are privileged in having – or being able to obtain – some of this power; others are not.

Therefore, being a minority does not necessarily mean that one will face discrimination. Conversely, being the object of another's prejudice does not necessarily imply that one is facing racist discrimination on account of identity, particularly if the person is in a position of power or privilege. In reality, racism goes beyond the everyday discrimination that continues to affect the children and grandchildren of immigrants

and indigenous minorities.³⁷ Rather, racial and ethnic discrimination requires two factors:³⁸ conscious or unconscious belief in the superiority of one race over another, which also affects the thoughts, feelings, language and behaviour of individuals and groups; and the power that an individual or group has to discriminate against, or in some other way to harm, the people of another disempowered racial or ethnic group.

Belonging to a minority is not a fixed status. Since it is also a cultural or social construct, or rather a fluid appreciation or configuration of the self, it depends on the context one is developing in. A minority that is discriminated against in one context may be a majority that commits an act of discrimination in another context. However, discrimination does not always manifest itself in intentional acts of harm and prejudice. In fact, it is rather more often present, despite the best intentions of most people, at all levels of society, from grassroots to governments. Such discrimination at the systemic level is referred to as institutionalised racism, a particular kind of discrimination, and encompasses the established laws, customs, traditions and practices which systematically result in racial inequalities and discrimination in a society, organisations or institutions.³⁹

Racism can be so integrated into policies and practices that individual acts of racism do not have to be intentional, and are often not even on the level of awareness of the dominant population.⁴⁰ Though this may often be revealed in tangible policies such as the allocation of resources, institutional racism can also be integrated into the aesthetics and cultural contributions of a dominant social group and manifest itself in a variety of subtle assumptions and inequalities.

There are many critics of the word “minority” because it has mainly been used literally of the number of people that form a part of the society; but it also has other implications related to power, social status and prestige.⁴¹ From this angle, women in societies around the world can be seen as a minority: they suffer from high illiteracy rates, poor access to health and lower pay for work of equal value. Race, ethnicity, religion and culture are all reasons that lead to inequality, but gender is in a class of its own. Indeed, too often these reasons intersect, leading to multiple levels of discrimination.⁴² In the same way, children and young people may be numerous but still be discriminated against for reasons such as age, conflicts, poor legislation, poverty and inequality. In particular, young people from minority backgrounds, including refugees and immigrants, suffer from daily discrimination and various degrees of harassment.

Despite the different actions taken to fight discrimination, there are a myriad of injustices that persist for many minorities across the European and Mediterranean countries. UNITED for Intercultural Action⁴³ – a European network against nationalism, racism and fascism, and in support of migrants and refugees – suggests that European countries in particular have been experiencing a rise in racism and xenophobia because of economic recession, unemployment and social and cultural marginalisation, and that in this context there has been an increasing temptation to find scapegoats for these problems, such as immigrants, refugees, foreigners and ethnic minorities.⁴⁴

As John Andrews states “A recent Eurobarometer survey shows a worrying ambivalence among EU citizens. Only 21% are ‘actively tolerant’ toward minorities and migrants; 39% consider themselves ‘passively tolerant’. That leaves 25% who admit to being ‘ambivalent’ and 14% who are frankly ‘intolerant’.”⁴⁵ A similar piece of research suggests that it may be possible to break down the population into four main groups:⁴⁶

- people who are already aware of the problems of racism and more or less actively involved in anti-racist activities (about 10%);

- people who are tolerant but do not engage in anti-racist activities (about 40%);
- those who have racist tendencies, but do not commit racist acts (about 40%);
- racists who openly show their attitude (about 10%).

These attitudes and structures are often deeply entrenched in the individuals and exist everywhere. They require continued strong will, hard work (including youth work) and persistence to overcome.

Q: Do you think this is a fair picture of your society?

Good governance – through policies or action described as positive discrimination or affirmative action – also plays a vital role in involving individuals or groups who have been discriminated against in society, and protecting their rights and interests. The aim is to overcome structural forms of discrimination (usually against a specific social group) and eliminate the negative consequences of widespread forms of overt and covert discrimination. Thus, positive discrimination deliberately favours or gives preference to a certain group or groups such as women, disabled people or specific ethnic groups.⁴⁷

In order to fight discrimination there should be acknowledgment of, respect for and appreciation of diversity. Yet diversity is more than just being in a room with people from many places. It means the willingness to sit at the same table and engage with the other, without running away when the conversation turns uncomfortable or difficult. It means truly listening to the stories of the other, even when they challenge one's own world-view or even implicate oneself in the process.

Q: What can youth work do to counter negative perceptions about minorities in the mass media or by public authorities?

7.8 Migration issues in European and Mediterranean countries: challenges and opportunities for multicultural societies and regions

Throughout history, many reasons have led people to move from one place to another and leave their own country: a search for a better life, economic expectations, civil conflicts and insecurity, persecution and/or discrimination. Mediterranean and European countries have not been exceptions to these trends. For example, “the increasing restrictions on immigration leads to increased trafficking of migrants often with tragic personal consequences”.⁴⁸

The UN International Migration Report mentions positive and negative impacts of migration on the communities of origin and destination. Migration can facilitate transfer of skills and result in cultural enrichment, and migrants can make a meaningful contribution to their host country. At the same time, migration entails a loss of human resources for many countries of origin and may cause political, economic or social tension in countries of destination.⁴⁹

Statistical facts

The figures come from the United Nations International Migration Report 2002 and 2006.⁵⁰ In 2005, 191 million persons, representing 3% of world population, lived outside their country of birth; 60% of the world's migrants were living in one of the more developed regions. Almost one in 10 persons living in more developed regions is a migrant, compared to one in 70 persons in developing regions.

Most of the world's migrants live in Europe (64 million), followed by Asia (53 million) and northern America (45 million). Three quarters of all international migrants are concentrated in just 28 countries. Nearly half of all international migrants are female, and female migrants outnumber male migrants in developed countries. Migrants tend to come from countries that are farther away, rather than neighbouring countries.

In 2002, the United Arab Emirates was the country with the highest percentage of migrants, who represented 73.8% of its population, followed by Kuwait with 57.9%, then Jordan and Israel with percentages of 39.6 and 37.4% respectively.⁵¹ In terms of numbers of migrants, the United States contains the largest number (35 million), followed by the Russian Federation with 13 million and Germany with 7 million.

According to the same report, different forms of international migration have been highly debated, especially in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. Many countries receiving migrants have further tightened their policies on people's mobility. There has also been increased implementation of national policies designed to affect levels and patterns of international migration because of the problems that can result from excessive mobility: low birth rates, population ageing, unemployment, brain-drain, brain-gain, worker remittances, human rights, social integration, xenophobia and human trafficking.⁵² This approach has also affected people's short-term mobility for purposes such as tourism, leisure visits, education, international activities and meetings. The most obvious repercussion of these tighter policies is stricter visa requirements for participants in such short-term activities.

Migration is rarely a voluntary act, and it often takes the form of forced migration. Three notable categories of migrants are refugees, asylum seekers and guest workers.

Refugees

According to the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees (also called the Geneva Convention), a refugee is a person residing outside his or her country of nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return because of a "well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion".⁵³ The global refugee population in the world grew from 2.4 million in 1975 to 10.5 million in 1985 and 14.9 million in 1990, and the number of refugees in the world at the end of 2004 stood at 13.5 million.⁵⁴ The largest number of refugees was in Asia (7.7 million); Africa hosted the second largest refugee population (3 million).⁵⁵ For example, with the establishment of the state of Israel, Palestinian Arabs were displaced, which led to the world's longest-standing refugee situation, with over 4 million refugees still displaced today.⁵⁶ In addition, the UN International Migration Report of 2002 said the numbers of intra-state displaced people for 2001 were 20 to 25 million, and rising.

Asylum seekers

These are people who move across international borders in search of protection, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been decided. Under the 1951 Geneva

Convention, people who claim that they have been persecuted in their country of origin for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion have the right to seek asylum in another country. By the end of the 1990s, governments tended to be very strict in granting asylum because of the financial cost and national security concerns. However, according to the UN International Migration Report of 2002, governments seem to view the restrictions on granting asylum as an appropriate response to growing anti-immigrant feelings in large segments of their populations and the politicisation of asylum.

Guest workers

The Mediterranean and Middle East constitute probably the most remarkable geographical region of the world for labour migration on a large scale. The demand for labour in Europe in the 1960s and the oil-financed economic expansion of the Gulf countries, resulting in labour shortages and massive guest-worker programmes, played a role in this kind of migration. Currently, with the surplus of labour in the Middle East and northern Africa and high levels of unemployment, there is a continuous flux of migrants, especially to Europe and the Gulf countries. Countries in the north of the Mediterranean have shown in recent years a demographic decline and labour-market shortages, but have not yet shown any signs of welcoming labour migrants from the south. On the other hand, as new members have joined the EU, they have been forced rapidly to align their immigration policies to norms of the Schengen treaty and of the EU.⁵⁷

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership places a special importance on the social integration of migrants, migration and movements of people. The Euro-Med report of 2002 underlines the importance of the regional co-operation programme in the field of justice, and co-operation in the treatment of issues of social integration of migrants, migration and the movement of people. With this aim, measures were targeted at promoting the social integration of the migrants concerned, setting up dialogue and co-operation on the management of migration flows, and combating illegal immigration and trafficking.⁵⁸

7.9 Effects of migration and discrimination among young people on both sides of the Mediterranean

Because of young people's vulnerability, and also because of an often undervalued power and their remarkable responsiveness to change, the effects of migration on young people can be dramatic and long-lasting. Besides the general upheaval and possible trauma that moving to a new country and culture can create for first-generation immigrants, second- and third-generation minorities can also feel these effects and face significant challenges of their own, notably discrimination in different forms as well as specific challenges related to social and cultural integration and equality of opportunities. This often results in additional pressures for integration or choosing between cultures, and it may be made more difficult when combined with religious diversity.

A particular challenge for young immigrants lies in the struggle to decide whether or not to assimilate and/or be granted citizenship, especially when the situation confronts or conflicts with parents' expectations or government policy. For example, German policy has generally been reluctant to grant political rights (including naturalisation) to

foreign guest-workers and their German-born children. Young people seeking naturalisation are prone to face double discrimination, from a society that is not tolerant of immigrant descendants and from their families who might not be tolerant enough to embrace a different culture from their own.

Q: What is needed for a young person born of foreign parents to become a national of your country?

Related to the issue of integration of immigrant young people is the tendency for succeeding generations to lose their native language. Language proficiency is seen as a key indicator of minority identity and so language education is especially important for healthy development and group identification. The introduction to the World Directory of Minorities states that “A child’s first language is normally the best medium for learning, especially in the early stages of education. Minority language teaching is necessary for the development of a positive self-image and for children to know about their history and culture. In addition, ... [it] enhances second language learning rather than detracting from it”.⁵⁹

In other instances, living as a minority can lead to ambiguity among youth over cultural and national identity. One study on Bedouin Arab youth revealed a range of responses about their individual and collective identities as Israeli citizens within the larger Israeli/Palestinian context, revealing a great deal of uncertainty over self-definition.⁶⁰ Another study of a minority in Israeli society, immigrant Jews from Ethiopia, suggested a slightly different nuance to this ambiguity in identity among youth: young members of the Ethiopian community, who have seen a previously unknown form of cultural racism in the country, “have not forsaken their Israeliness. In fact, they have developed a hybrid identity that meshes Israeliness, Jewishness, and blackness.”⁶¹

Young people who face daily challenges as a result of their minority identity can also struggle with their self-esteem as a result of degrading and disempowering messages repeated and reinforced by peers and society. A study conducted among Dutch and Turkish youth in the Netherlands⁶² suggests that, while this is the case, the strong cohesive aspects of an ethnic community rich in culture and traditions can mediate these effects. In the study, the minority (1.5%) Turkish young people, though often from socially disadvantaged, migrant worker families, actually had a more positive evaluation of themselves and a higher ethnic self-esteem than their Dutch contemporaries. In fact, the significant finding was that those Dutch young people who held highly xenophobic attitudes tended to have a very low evaluation even of their own group, and they defined themselves mostly in contra-distinction to their Turkish counterparts. This suggests that if one has a negative evaluation of oneself, then one tends to project that outwards onto all groups.

The results of the aforementioned study highlight an important finding: that improving inter-ethnic relations among young people has something to do with the social majority group as well as with the minority young people.⁶³ Changing the disadvantaged situation of minority youth facing injustice and discrimination also depends on working with the attitudes and self-esteem of the majority. Helping to raise self-esteem among all young people can have a positive impact on their attitudes and prejudices, thereby being an indirect method of reducing xenophobia and discrimination. Youth work should serve as a perfect means for such an aim, through local and international youth activities.

7.10 Challenges for Euro-Mediterranean youth work and some suggestions

People do not only reflect their personal characteristics, but also those of the region they grew up in, the languages they learned, the tales they heard, the narratives they grew up with and many other elements that form their identity. Hence, generalising a minority or a majority with a specific label to confine them to one particular “identity box” leads to a set of problems that in turn create challenges to working with young people in the Euro-Mediterranean context.

In *Coyote*, Demetrio Gomez Avila, a Roma from Spain, wrote an article about his experiences of being involved with other Roma communities from different areas, and whose history was not the same all over Europe. Referring to the fact that Roma people from different regions have various dialects, languages, and cultural traditions, Avila stated when he attended the first meeting with Roma from other countries: “I was very keen to get to know these other Roma, who, although I was one of their kind, seemed so different.”⁶⁴

Similarly, there are different challenges to be addressed specifically in the Euro-Mediterranean context in order to protect cultural diversity:

- the tendency to generalise people as minorities v. majorities without taking into consideration the differences within minorities and within majorities;
- the absence of consideration of minority youth issues in youth policies;
- despite some debates and policies that address minority rights, a lack of awareness about involving young people in this process;
- the lack of youth participation structures in many Mediterranean countries;
- the lack of a consolidated network of organisations linking European and Mediterranean countries and specialising in youth minority issues;
- the lack of follow-up to activities and programmes that aim to create awareness and enhance minorities’ status;
- increased feelings of resignation about incidents of social exclusion and discrimination against young people from Arab or Muslim backgrounds, especially after the events such as September 11 and the bombings in London in July 2005.

A very real and practical challenge should also be mentioned as an obstacle to the development of Euro-Mediterranean youth work: visas. The difficulties in even requesting a visa to some European countries can discourage the bravest of young people and overshadow the most noble intentions of Euro-Mediterranean youth co-operation. The restrictions to freedom of movement from the southern countries to the northern countries have created an obstacle for civil society to become fully engaged in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, as well as lessening intercultural learning and limiting diversity in the youth work.⁶⁵

In practice, the issue of visas as a legal obstacle to youth work affects both short-term and long-term youth mobility activities. While many international institutions and organisations try to promote co-operation and interaction among young people, youth NGOs and participants in youth activities are often discouraged by strict visa procedures, because, at the level of national policies, young people’s access to mobility very much depends on their national origin. For example, following the strict procedures can mean a delay in the visa being obtained or even that the visa is not issued and the individual cannot attend the event.⁶⁶

The European Youth Forum states that many examples of discrimination, xenophobia and racism start in the long queues of some embassies and consulates. The difficulties do not end with obtaining the visa. Detailed questioning and mistrustful treatment at border checkpoints has often been experienced by young people taking part in international youth work.⁶⁷ In terms of international long-term youth activities such as volunteering, studying and working in another country, the picture gets even more difficult with residence permits.

Q: What does a young person from a Mediterranean country need to do to get a visa to enter your country? And what are the requirements for a national of the European Union to do the same?

Going back to the actions geared towards youth minorities, certain recommendations can be highlighted to raise the quality of youth activities such as training courses and exchanges:

- recognising the diversity of Euro-Mediterranean countries as well as their similarities;
- dealing with issues of values, identities, labels, stereotyping and terminology;
- emphasising the importance of intercultural and experiential learning;
- inviting experts who are working in the field of cultural diversity (better still if the experts are themselves from a range of countries);
- taking into consideration the different languages of the participants in a training course, to cater for the linguistic needs of all participants.

Youth leaders and civil society activists can empower young people from minorities by using tools and mechanisms that increase their involvement in society and hence protect and empower cultural diversity. They can:

- refer to institutionalised frameworks that aim to protect minorities, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, the Barcelona Declaration, the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity;
- initiate public awareness campaigns to highlight current forms of discrimination and racism against minorities at local and regional levels;
- participate actively in maximising the impact of existing initiatives geared towards equal rights, such as the All Different – All Equal youth campaign;
- strengthen co-ordination and networking among different organisations that specialise in minority rights;
- facilitate constructive youth dialogues between the various communities in the Euro-Mediterranean region through youth activities;
- encourage youth minorities to use media and digital technologies to broadcast their needs and to create greater awareness of their living conditions, culture, language, traditions and history;

- adopt non-formal education in addition to formal education as means of equipping trainers and multipliers in the field of minority rights and cultural diversity;
- strengthen the current Euro-Med strategy to enhance capacity building at the level of youth structures and policies in the thematic priority of minorities and minority rights.

Training the trainers

A training seminar entitled “The place and role of minorities in the Euro-Med context: ethnic, linguistic and religious”⁶⁸ took place in the Basque Country, Spain, in September 2007. The idea behind the seminar was that, in the Euro-Mediterranean area, a high percentage of minorities with unique features have co-existed, but – due to different social, cultural and political factors – some minorities become extinct while others survive. The activity aimed to increase participants’ knowledge of the situation of minorities in the Euro-Med context (history, law, existing and persecuted minorities), to facilitate the sharing of experiences and realities about minorities, and to provide a special focus on ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities.

7.11 Conclusion

Changes do not happen overnight, but significant progress has been made in the last decade towards awareness of minority rights and needs, with events and legislation creating a more just space for diversity. A lot remains to be done in advocacy, political action, education and training to confront negative discrimination against diverse groups and minorities.

For society to accept cultural diversity – and hence prevent racism, xenophobia and discrimination – requires the recognition and integration of minorities that have become alienated in modern societies. Integration into society should not be one-sided, a task only for the minority; the majority in a society and the government should respond to integration with acceptance by enacting legislation that addresses minorities’ needs and effectively prevents discrimination. Otherwise, as Lentin suggests, mere acceptance of cultural diversity will not solve problems between immigrants and states, nor prevent similar problems in the future.⁶⁹

Youth work in European and Mediterranean countries has challenges and opportunities to explore, because their people, culture and history are so rich and diverse. Instead of closing the doors on minorities and putting up a façade of cultural diversity, people should confront xenophobia, racism (especially institutionalised racism) and discrimination, while increasing awareness of cultural diversity and knowledge of other regions and peoples. International youth work can provide opportunities for such a change because it places all young people in a situation of majority and minority. But this requires sustained action and competent facilitators of such learning processes. Otherwise, there is always a risk that they will confirm previous stereotyping and prejudice.

Part of the duty of youth work – of youth workers, in particular – is to make sure that the same standards for recognition and acceptance of minorities are used across all societies and, similarly, that respect for diversity is understood, dealt with and discussed according to common standards and criteria. This means, of course, avoiding

double standards and being able to advocate the same levels of equality of opportunity and treatment everywhere. Discriminatory and racist practices are not, unfortunately, the monopoly of any single country, nation, religion or culture. They are found everywhere across the Euro-Mediterranean social spectrum and all of them represent an offence to human dignity. What may vary is the degree of acceptance of such practices by public authorities and society at large. One role of Euro-Mediterranean youth work is to help every society achieve similar levels of awareness and intolerance of discrimination and humiliation, regardless of where they happen, whom they target or the grounds on which they are based.

Notes

1. The definition of culture from different theoretical perspectives, with the values and elements attached to it, can also be discussed in youth work in relation to the concept of 'intercultural learning'. Not necessarily being exclusive of other definitions, the discussion within this chapter focuses on the concept of 'cultural diversity' and its relevance to equal opportunities for minorities. For ideas like what culture is, the elements of culture, relative notions of culture, the relationship between culture and globalisation, and cultural specificities in relation to Euro-Mediterranean interaction, see Chapter 3: Intercultural learning.
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7. Adopted by the 31st Session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 2 November 2001.
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11. Available at <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/r15001.htm>.
12. See www.salto-youth.net/euromedyouthprogramme.
13. See www.euromedcafe.org.
14. This suggestion derives from Dr Gavan Titley's question on intercultural learning at www.alanalentin.net/ (accessed 10 March 2006).
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Quoted in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_group#_note-Smith.
23. Robert Nurden, "Apartheid in the heart of Europe", *New Statesman*, 23 February 2004, p. 30.
24. Minority Rights Group International, an NGO based in the UK, advocates the securing of rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide, and the promotion of co-operation and understanding between communities. Over the last 30 years, they have worked closely with the United Nations and the European Union to promote international human rights standards and to promote dialogue between minorities and decision makers of majority communities. See www.minorityrights.org.
25. Adapted from "Assessing the framework for country strategy papers: a minority rights perspective" – a Minority Rights Group International Briefing. March 2003.
Available at: www.minorityrights.org/Advocacy/advocacy_cspbrieffing.htm (accessed in October 2006).
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28. *Ibid.*, p. 340.
29. See www.euromedyouth.net. For more information about the programme, see Chapter 1 of this T-Kit.
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