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EXISTING AND POTENTIAL FORA FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN THE EU

ABSTRACT

The paper concentrates on the review of existing and potential institutional fora for intercultural dialogue, both in the sense of characteristics and activities of individual EU institutions and the Community action programmes. Main observations are those of existence of considerable number of Community initiatives and programmes (especially in the field of education, culture, media, youth and citizens' participation) yet perhaps inevitably dispersed alongside various sectors and financing lines. Moreover, it seems that with the Community action in place less importance is attached in practice to regional and local level activities, where the Community competence does not reach and where exactly the intercultural dialogue should actually be taking prominent place as a daily phenomenon in Europe's citizens lives. Therefore, it is proposed that more potential for the action within intercultural dialogue domain could be searched within the activities transgressing the policy sectors naturally involving intercultural dialogue and that the intercultural dialogue can build also on hard projects producing soft dialogue-related effects or soft value added from exploitation of vast potential of EU funding in other than culture, education and social policy spheres.

NEW MOMENTUM FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND INTRA-COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Although the issue of intercultural dialogue is neither a new nor unexplored phenomenon it seems to have gained a new momentum in recent decades. The intensified debate on intercultural dialogue

including a number of European initiatives, research and discussion fora has been triggered by a number of recent developments both those of internal and those occurring in the global context. In short, we mean here the globalisation process, September 11, 2001 and its global and local scale consequences for dialogue between nations, ethnic and religious communities, the 2004 and forthcoming 2007 enlargement rounds and last but not least the follow up of the failed Constitutional Treaty and the necessity of long-term democratisation-oriented process of EU reform.

In the light of these mutually reinforcing trends and developments the reflection period announced by EU institutions after the failed exercise in EU deepening meant not a to be «a rescue operation for the Constitution, nor [...] limited in time to the reflection period», but constitutes «a starting point for a long term democratic reform process»¹. The proposals of reforms to be undertaken by the EU meant to provide the EU with the new directions and strategy refer to building up of the sustainable democratic public sphere based on increased civic participation, solidarity and inclusiveness are to be achieved through increased openness and transparency of EU action and by civil society dialogue and debate².

Without prejudice to the importance of dialogue of the EU outside its borders, the unprecedented nature of the 2004 enlargement and the upcoming accession of Bulgaria and Romania add enough of additional pressure on the question of internal coherence and convergence of the EU not only in economic terms but also in widely understood socio-cultural terms, by intensifying the hitherto existing cultural diversity within the EU to make intercultural dialogue an important strand of Union's domestic preoccupations.

COMMUNITY ACTION IN SUPPORT OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

The notion *dialogue of cultures* seems to carry a lot of metaphorical meaning³: even if we think about culture in the understanding of simple dictionary meaning as «the ideas, beliefs and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a society»⁴ and a set of *collective* attitudes towards the reality, the actual dialogue and building up mutual understanding and tolerance can

in reality take place by encounters between the individuals⁵. The dialogue then should take place as close as possible to citizens, in the place of living where they are actually exposed to contact with other cultures – in short the dialogue should take place «on the streets»⁶, within one's local community, his/her workplace, school or university.

Yet still for such grass-roots actions to appear instigators are needed in order to raise awareness, propose directions as well as visibility and – last but not least – financial support. To this end – in the multinational and multiethnic EU reality – various initiatives have been developed through numerous Community actions and programmes in the area of education, life-long learning, vocational training, culture, media and youth, being – by the same token the instruments serving the realisation of the treaties provisions. The activities in the field of promotion of intercultural dialogue on Community level are taking place in somewhat paradoxical situation of disparity between the Union's/Communities' responsibility for respect and preservation of cultural diversities within the EU and the limited scope of action left in the hands of the Communities. With Article 151 excluding explicitly «any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States» the Community institutions can only adopt *incentive measures* and recommendations. With no regulatory framework accessible for the EU in the field of action aimed at the facilitation of intercultural exchanges the EU institutions – themselves intercultural in nature – have proved and still reinforce their proactive stance in providing incentive and supportive measures for intercultural encounters within and outside the EU through a system of programmes, administered by the European Commission.

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS - THEIR ROLE AND ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF SUPPORT FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND RELATED ISSUES

Apart from being the fora for drafting the EC/EU policy and implementing the Treaties provisions, the EU institutions – like the whole European integration project – for over fifty years have been themselves an example of successful exercise of intercultural dialogue. Even if the current distribution of administrative seats in EU does not entirely correspond to the percentage of population of

individual member states in the EU⁷, still the Union's institutions constitute a perfectly multicultural environment, which accounts obviously not only for mix of nationalities and languages but also differentiated administrative traditions and cultures together with varied patterns of collective work within institutional structures. The status of the institutions themselves provides a good example of upholding basic and fundamental rights underlying the foundations of the EU system in daily practice and lives of the institutions and their officials⁸.

Of particular importance in this context is also the multiculturalism of elected bodies such as the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions as well as the issue of multiculturalism with regard to intra-institutional decision-taking in all institutions. This adds up more complexity to institutions' decision-making (already being a compromise between diverged economic, socio-economic and political interests) by differentiated state/parliamentary traditions and modes of arrival at collective decisions. However, even if the operability of EU institutions is based on (also intercultural) compromise and to some extent – perhaps in the negative sense – on lowest common denominator principle (sometimes diluting the quality of legislation and other acts quantity of acts needed for the achievements of common goals), the EC/EU institutions – except for the intervals of apparently highly politicised crisis and despite its deficiencies – proved to be operational in multinational and multicultural reality.

By virtue of the constitutional responsibilities the EU supranational institutions are most naturally the fora for dealing with the measures necessary for the implementation of the treaties provisions including those regarding multiculturalism, multilingualism or cultural diversities with the EU through the concrete policies in particular in the domain of education, training, life-long learning, culture and media.

The EU institutions provide also the conceptual and organisational framework for long-term policy strategies and initiatives in the field of intercultural learning, promotion of active and inclusive citizenship. Furthermore they stimulate debate and develop innovative solutions in the field of intercultural education with the goal of transforming multiculturalism into interculturalism⁹, which altogether would provide *value added* of European intercultural dialogue.

While bearing the responsibility for designing and execution of Communities' and Union's policies, the EU institutions – at the same time constitute – the discussion fora and the channels for voicing various – including those of civil society – interests through the «Brussels route» of influence¹⁰. Increased scope of policy consultations with the civil society and number of new initiatives adopted recently seem to stress their proactive stance towards the current challenges of multiculturalism and diversity.

European Commission and the New Policy Instruments Proposals in the Area of Intercultural Dialogue and Multiculturalism

Due to its «statutory» responsibility of policy initiator the European Commission has been responsible for devising new policy instruments which however do not minimise the virtue of its activities in the field of promotion of intercultural dialogue, intercultural education and wide range of policy proposals providing linkages between the EU democratisation processes and the question of human rights, fundamental values and interculturalism. In this strand the Commission has been particularly active in the recent years via organisation of conferences, discussion fora and panels of experts and – last but not least – a series of Community action proposals.

Since 2002 the Commission has been organiser and/or supporter of the following actions within the intercultural dialogue context:

- EC/Jean Monnet Action Conference «Intercultural Dialogue» (2002);
- Conference «Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures: Actors in the Dialogue» (2004);
- Sixth World ECSA Conference on «Peace Security and Stability, International Dialogue and the Role of the European Union» (2002);
- Report of the Committee of Wise Men on «Dialogue between Cultures and Peoples» (2003);
- European Commission Conference «The European Union and Emerging World Orders Perception and Strategies» (2004);
- European Commission Conference «Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures: The Role of Artists and Cultural Actors» (2005); and
- Valorisation Conference on «Intercultural Dialogue - Best Practices at Community Level» (Brussels, 22-23 November 2006).

All the above mentioned EU level activities together with a number of reports prepared by various DGS of the Commission and Community agencies¹¹ provide for creating appropriate intellectual frame for the formulation of new Community policy strategies in the field of intercultural cooperation, integration, solidarity and inclusiveness as well as preservation and promotion of European heritage of multiculturalism and multilingualism.

The number and content of Commission proposals in recent years seem to have answered the need of creating a linkage between democratisation-oriented action and widely understood promotion of intercultural dialogue, EU cultural diversity and support for preservation and development of EU cultural heritage. In the recent four years the Commission produced a considerable number of documents (mainly in form of non-legislative form of communications from the Commission and consultancy documents) in which it has included the basic principles of proposed reforms and action to be taken by the Communities within the context of intercultural dialogue and building a new, inclusive European public sphere:

- designing the future programme of cultural cooperation for the European Union after 2006, public consultation document¹²;
- making citizenship work: fostering European culture and diversity through programmes for youth, culture, audiovisual and civic participation¹³;
- Green Paper on equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged European Union¹⁴;
- promoting language learning and linguistic diversity, an action plan¹⁵;
- towards and international instrument on cultural diversity¹⁶;
- White Paper on a European communication policy (presented by the Commission)¹⁷;
- the new generation of community education and training programmes after 2006¹⁸;
- a Citizens' Agenda, *Delivering Results for Europe*¹⁹;
- the Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond, *Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate*²⁰;
- *The Period of Reflection and Plan D*²¹;
- *Adult Learning: It Is Never Too Late to Learn*²².

Part of the earlier initiatives have already taken form of concrete legislative proposals by the European Commission as e.g. proposals

for new generation of programmes in the field of education, culture and media:

- proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and the Council concerning the implementation of a programme of support for the European audiovisual sector (Media 2007)²³;
- proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning²⁴;
- proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Culture 2007 Programme (2007-2013)²⁵;
- proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council creating the «Youth in Action» Programme for the period 2007-2013²⁶;
- proposal for a Council regulation establishing a European Agency for Fundamental Rights and proposal for a Council decision empowering the European Agency for Fundamental Rights to pursue its activities in areas referred to in Title VI of the Treaty of the European Union²⁷;
- proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing for the period 2007-2013 the Programme «Citizens for Europe» to promote active European citizenship²⁸;
- proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue²⁹.

The above mentioned Commission's documents³⁰ and policy instruments proposals, present the EU offer of specific actions or instruments addressing directly the issues of education including intercultural dialogue, support for cultural diversity or multilingualism and the wider-scale Community action in the field of European public sphere and citizens participation. Altogether they propose a summary of the current Community/Union strategy towards civic participation and active, inclusive citizenship, including – as part of the strategy – the measures aimed at support and intensification of intercultural dialogue.

European Parliament

Like other EU institutions the EP constitutes a *sui generis* lens reflecting in miniature the national diversities present in the EU. By its nature of supranational elected body composed of represen-

tatives of the peoples of EU member states the European Parliament itself, within its internal *modus operandi*, attaches particular importance to all member states' identities and cultural diversity being respected and upholds the principle of multilingualism in translations of EP documents and the use of language by its members³¹. This principle can be regarded as a good example of practicing intercultural dialogue. Similarly, the rules for Chamber seats occupancy and the existence of supranational party representation in the EP constitute again an intra-parliamentary forum for intercultural exchange and promote support for building up of coalitions centred around Europe-wide issues and transgressing national interests.

Within execution of its remit, the European Parliament is often seen as home for various interest, but more naturally – due to its democratic credentials – for public interests³². The sectoral committees structure allows for voicing various types of sectoral interests as well as those broadly understood interests of civil society, including the issues of intercultural dialogue and interrelated issues of culture, equal opportunities, respect for religious, ethnic and linguistic origins. It would require a separate and perhaps a difficult study on how and if the civil society interest can impact the EU institutions, yet still it is useful to point out to initiatives undertaken by the European Parliament's selected committees (whose constitutional remit refers to issues of culture, education, human rights, civil liberties, immigration policy and external relations of the EU) that can be the exemplification of the EP involvement in intercultural issues³³.

The current Culture and Education Committee adopted from the beginning of its term 34 reports out of which 12 were own-initiatives reports, which concerned the issues of:

- multilingualism and language learning;
- European dimension in schools curricula and education as a cornerstone of Lisbon process and European schools system;
- natural, architectural and cultural heritage;
- role of digital broadcasting in intercultural audiovisual and cultural diversity;
- EU communication policy.

Within the same time span, the Committee of Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted altogether 88 reports out of

which 20 were the own-initiative reports and concerned the following issues:

- framework strategy *Equal Opportunities for All*;
- protection of minorities and anti-discrimination policies in an enlarged Europe;
- promotion and protection of fundamental rights and the establishment of European Fundamental Rights Agency;
- Commission's fourth report on *Citizenship of the Union*;
- strategies and means for the integration of immigrants in the European Union and managing economic migration;
- combating terrorism and transnational crime.

The Foreign Affairs Committee (with Sub-Committee on Human Rights) from the beginning of 2004-2009 term has prepared as the leading Committee 29 own-initiative reports out of total of 57 reports adopted in the period in question. The own-initiative reports constituting over 50% of all reports adopted by the Committee concerned the following topics (related directly and indirectly to the human rights and intercultural dialogue theme):

- reports on progress towards accession (Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey) and Enlargement Strategy Paper;
- reports on the Annual Report of Human Rights in the World in 2004 and 2005 and Human Rights and Democracy clause in European Union Agreements;
- report on European Neighbourhood Policy and on Barcelona Process Revisited;
- relations with third countries (including e.g. partnership agreement with Syria, a framework for EU engagement in Iraq, relations with Latin America and India);
- reports on European Security Strategy and the Council's report on main aspects and basic choices of CFSP.

An interesting example of European Parliament's attentive position *vis-à-vis* intercultural dialogue and related issues expressed in the reports prepared within inter-institutional decision-making procedures may be the EP's legislative resolution regarding Commission's proposal, the decision of the EP and the Council concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue³⁴.

Within the formal parliamentary structures the *dialoguing* ones are also the interparliamentary delegations responsible for contacts

with third-countries parliamentary assemblies (currently 34).

Last but not least – the informal yet recognised in EP reality for their merit – inter-groups which play an important, although unofficial, role by creating for MEP opportunities to group around particular issues of their interest across EP's partisan affiliations and committees' grouping. As inter-groups make it possible «to make contacts with outside interests on a more informal basis than in committee meetings» (with some of them being open for participation of non-members of EP) and thus provide additional channel of voicing specific interests beyond the formal structures of the EP. Some of the existent inter-groups centre on issues related to preservation of diversities, democracy and protection of human rights: anti-racism and diversity inter-group, globalisation, traditional minorities, constitutional regions and regional languages, Roma rights, Europeans abroad, peace initiatives are examples of the inter-groups by Corbett *et al.*³⁵ while Greenwood³⁶, among his list of active inter-groups, give also the following: indigenous peoples, Euro-Arab inter-group, minority languages and cultures, social exclusion, SOS democracy. Even if it would be extremely difficult to assess the role of inter-groups³⁷ in the EP they still provide at least potentially a significant forum for intercultural debates and important channel (complementary to formal EP structures) for transmitting interests to the Parliament, also for the intercultural issues, especially given the fact that EP «is a contender for the crown – most open of all European institutions?»³⁸.

Committee of the Regions

The Committee whose membership is composed of elected members of local and regional self-governments constitutes naturally the forum for support for diversities as well as voicing and protection of minorities rights. Committee members being the closest to EU citizens out of all EU institutions, are equipped with best practical knowledge on the state of intercultural dialogue within their constituencies and by the same token are those best suited for playing the role of *transmission belt* for intercultural dialogue action plans up and down between the Community level and the dialogue stakeholders.

Similarly to other EU institutions, the Committee presents, alongside its statutory remit activities of mandatory or optional

referral from other Community bodies, a number of own-initiative based documents related to directly or indirectly to issues of intercultural dialogue, in which the regional and local input provides special focus on local and regional experiences³⁹. The regional and local dimension of intercultural dialogue is present in a number of CoR's studies⁴⁰ and was raised also in the Committee's opinion on the Commission's proposal for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue discussed later in this paper.

THE EXISTING AND POTENTIAL EU POLICY INSTRUMENTS
OF SUPPORT FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

*Intercultural Dialogue and the European Policy Instruments
in the Fields of Education, Culture, Media and Civil Society to Date*

The necessary conditions for effective intercultural dialogue to appear are the «common values, rooted in shared respect for human rights, tolerance, solidarity and mutual comprehension, aware(ness) of cultural diversity and the religious dimension»⁴¹. The intercultural dialogue «means mutual knowledge and overcoming of the prejudices»⁴². These can naturally be best promoted by intercultural learning and communication that brings the «learners» closer to each other, makes them aware of their diversities and teaches them mutual respect. The activities in the field of education, culture and media actions and in particular with special focus on younger generations has been at the heart of a number of EC/EU programmes undertaken with the view to promote the principle of «ever closer Union» between the peoples of Europe not only in symbolic and declarative meaning but also through a number of practical actions leading to real *intercultural encounters* between these policy instruments' beneficiaries.

Within the system of EU instruments implemented to date, the *largest scope of the activities* that explicitly support intercultural dialogue and include the largest number of potential stakeholders and participants of dialogue is provided by Community *educational programmes*, and among them:

– currently implemented *SOCRATES II*⁴³ (1 January 2000-31 December 2006), including 5 targeted sub-programmes (*Comenius*, school education, nursery, primary and secondary schools; *Erasmus*,

higher, university and post-university education; *Grundtvig*, adult education and other education pathways; *Lingua*, language learning; *Minerva*, information and communication technologies in education) and 3 transverse measures aimed at improved co-ordination of the entire project;

- *LEONARDO DA VINCI* (currently implemented phase II 1 January 2000 and ending on 31 December 2006)⁴⁴, aimed at contributing to the promotion of a Europe of knowledge by developing a European area of cooperation in the field of education and vocational training and support for member states' policies on lifelong learning and the building up of the knowledge and skills and competences likely to foster active citizenship and employability within six types of supported actions;
- subsequent editions of *TEMPUS* Programme (currently as *TEMPUS III* as *TEMPUS TACIS*, *TEMPUS-CARDS* and *TEMPUS-MEDA*), aimed at higher education system modernisation through three main types of actions: Joint European Projects, Structural and Complementary Measures and Individual Mobility Grants;
- *e-Learning Programme*, implemented from 2004 to 2006 and aimed at effective integration of information and communication technologies into education and training systems in Europe.

The common features of the programmes is the inclusion into the specific projects' objectives of the issues of *the transnational mobility*, developing of *language competences* and organisation of *transnational cooperation and networking*.

Another important instrument for promotion of intercultural dialogue has been *Culture 2000 Programme*⁴⁵. The programme's objectives as stipulated by the EP and Council decision of 14 February 2000⁴⁶ explicitly refer to the promotion of cultural dialogue and mutual knowledge of the culture and history of the European peoples, promotion of transnational dissemination of cultures, highlighting the cultural diversity and the development of new forms of cultural expression, sharing the common cultural heritage, taking into account culture as a factor of socio-economic development and a factor in social integration and citizenship.

The *Youth Programme* established⁴⁷ in 2000 for the period of 1 January 2000 till 31 December 2006 has provided support with five basic types of actions with a view to: support for transnational

mobility, support for IT technologies in the youth field, support for the projects promoting European citizenship through networking and exchange of best practices and promotion of language skills.

The Community activities in the field of *media* cover the formal regulatory framework in the form of «Television without Frontiers Directive» and support mechanisms in the form of *MEDIA* series Programmes (Media I, Media II, 1996-2000; Media Plus - 3rd generation and media-training established for 2001-2005 and extended for 2006).

Last but not least among the programmes promoting European values and aiming at bringing citizens closer to the EU, the *Community Action Programme to promote active European citizenship (civic participation)*⁴⁸, established for the period 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2006 and equipped with the budget 72 million Euro, promotes citizen participation to reflect on the EU construction, values and objectives, intensification of *links and exchanges of citizens* (by *town-twinning*) from the participating countries and stimulating initiative of the bodies fostering active and participatory citizenship.

*Directorate-General Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities and Activities within New Social Agenda
for Modernising Europe's Social Model*

Another strand of activities that provide support for promoting intercultural dialogue are the projects undertaken within the European Social Fund supported projects, Community Equal Initiative and other activities administered by Directorate-General Employment & Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, including – among others – the activities in the fields of social inclusion, anti-discrimination and civil society issues. As one of the major themes undertaken by the DG is the question of building the inclusive society with the action programme supporting a number of activities with transnational characteristics (e.g. Peer review programme, Transnational Exchange Projects, European Networks, European Round Table Conference on poverty and social exclusion). All these constitute together a useful forum for exchange of best practices and transnational and trans-cultural cooperation and intercultural learning between various social actors.

Awareness Raising and Information Activities - EU-Wide Promotion of Cultural Diversity, Knowledge on EU MS and Language Knowledge

Within the strand of awareness raising activities undertaken by EU the following are worth mentioning:

- EC statistical services;
- Eurobarometer, devoting, within its various series, especially within «Special Eurobarometer» series the issues of culture, cultural diversity and language question;
- publications of the DG Culture and Education, e.g. «The Magazine» periodical;
- websites: Europa Languages Portal, Your Europe, Discover the EU, including the interactive quizzes on EU member states and their Europe's history – EuropaGo –, EU DG Education and Culture Portal (including sub-section on Intercultural Dialogue) and of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities;
- information, promotional and visibility actions, e.g. European Days of Languages, European Cities of Culture.

The activities undertaken at the EU level aimed at the promotion of intercultural dialogue and undertaken within most *natural* instruments such as programmes administered by Directorates General of Education and Culture and Employment & Social Affairs are numerous yet probably unavoidably dispersed. *The new generation of programmes* in the field of education, culture and media⁴⁹, the *PROGRESS Programme* (2007-2013) as well as the new programme for the promotion of civic participation *Europe for Citizens* (2007-2013) propose more integrated and coherent approach and considerable increase in funds as well as in the number of target beneficiaries.

Last but not least, the Commission's proposal for the *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue* building upon the hitherto experience of Community action in the field of promotion of intercultural dialogue, promotion of cultural heritage and respect for diversities seems to provide appropriate framework for awareness raising campaign and via involvement of civil society in the wider context of citizens participation in intercultural dialogue may serve the purpose of facilitating the implementation of EU priorities⁵⁰.

THE NEED FOR ACTION AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS -
POTENTIAL FORA FOR DIALOGUE

With quite a number of actions undertaken at Community level it seems that relatively less action takes place (or at least lacks visibility and perhaps required support) locally that is where intercultural dialogue and actions aimed at integrating all citizens into local communities is most needed. Therefore, alongside the existing EU level action more efforts are needed locally and regionally – so perhaps more action should be addressed to and undertaken by local authorities and other sub-national actors so that the information and awareness raising campaign should reach those that deal with cultural diversity in daily encounters. This as required direction has been stressed by the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Economics and Social Committee⁵¹ as well as the European Parliament⁵² in their respective opinions on the Commission's proposal for a decision establishing the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. All cited opinions stress among others the importance of emphasizing the role of regional and local level administrations and the need for structured cooperation with civil society.

The CoR in its opinion⁵³, delivered on 27 April 2006 stressed among others in particular:

- the need to promote lesser-used languages and regional languages;
- *the strategic placement of local and regional authorities for responding the specific needs and demands of different cultural groups and for effective mobilisation of local and regional communities in promoting greater intercultural dialogue*⁵⁴;
- *the need for programmes and legislation to combat cultural and social exclusion could be more of a priority at local and regional levels, rather than action at the level of international diplomacy.*

The intercultural dialogue question on regional/local level can be said of being of two-fold nature. One refers especially to those EU regions and localities that need to cope with multiculturalism and inclusion questions internally, while the other one refers to the potential for dialogue stemming from cross-border cooperation.

The answer to these questions can build on the hitherto successful practice of EU supported project but has some development potential as well. This can and should continue in the

fields of culture and education but also outside the programmes which explicitly refer to interculturalism, dialogue, multilingualism, media or culture. This dialoguing potential of civil society should be reinforced horizontally among Community action programmes beyond these administered by DG Education and Culture and DG for Social Affairs, in all types of project involving local and regional social communities.

The variety of projects possible via the structural and cohesion funds and addressing the regional and local development can also serve well the purpose of building up *dialogue culture* among and within local and regional communities involved in the projects. This means not only the projects related to development of infrastructures for cultural activities, support for tourist development and related fields or social infrastructure implying the application dialogue principle but also those that are not related formally to (inter)cultural and educational activities and dealing more with hard (physical infrastructure) projects yet still constituting the vast potential for dialogue, especially within local communities experiencing in their daily business the problem of culturally heterogeneous social structures.

By agreement as to the common purpose (e.g. also in infrastructural projects concentrating on technicalities but aimed at solving common problems of given population) a community has an useful forum for integration of local stakeholders in debates over the common good. Citizens participation locally and more social dialogue where the basic needs are met carries out integrative potential to create the sense of community between those sharing basic interests and may contribute to gradual elimination of distrust, better understanding of participants and building up of mutual respect regardless of cultural diversities.

Such characteristics of the projects' realities may – in the wider context of Community programmes aimed at building up of active citizenship attitudes (e.g. Citizens for Europe) – constitute a potential for the creation of synergies between the *hard* projects and the *soft* projects in the widest sense aimed at the creation of active and participatory European citizenship rooted in development of the sense of belonging and inclusive societies at the grass-root level. This indirectly may lead also to better understanding among Europe's citizens of the structural funds philosophy – the funds being not merely the *donors* of funds but *purposeful developers* of

European social and economic sphere and last but not least understanding the solidarity principle of support of less privileged for the common good.

In the second strand namely the cross-border cooperation we can search again for dialogue potential. Similarly to the above, the twinning and networking projects (including the town-twinning to be supported within the Citizen's for Europe scheme) should start to be perceived not only as a contractual obligation but as a real means of providing better solutions to common problems via the exchange of information and best practices – with intensified cross-border contacts and greater involvement of civil society in solving common problems. The *cross-border cooperation* programmes (e.g. under INTEREGG Initiative or and cooperation within European grouping of territorial cooperation⁵⁵) and *programmes addressed to the third countries* with participation of EU MS could in practice include the intercultural learning element, while providing for transfer of knowledge and best practices in the fields not necessarily directly linked to culture, education, media or social policy issues. With communication and well developed knowledge about the partners being a prerequisite for dialogue, undertaking common goals seems to provide first steps to opening of communication and mutual opening towards the other, while joint work leads to increased understanding, mutual respect and trust. Transgressing the member states borders and developing more of horizontal, interregional projects, bears inherently the dialoguing element. Successful horizontal cooperation and attainment of common goals in socio-economic sphere may contribute to creating the sense of belonging to a community transgressing one's *backyard* and identification with larger scale EU citizenry.

The experiences of hitherto successfully implemented projects in regional/local development policy and cross-border cooperation domains do not seem usually to take into account the integrative and intercultural learning phenomenon concentrating on *hard* policy results setting aside the important *soft products*. In the pursue for implementation of hard results the stakeholders tend to neglect the fact that they are actually dialoguing or simply do not apprehend the fact that they are *talking prose*⁵⁶.

Still intensified cooperation within Community funded projects and other initiatives undertaken locally/regionally and on cross border scale seems to need a European platform for the contact,

exchange of best practices and information. In the light of long ago proposed *Europe of Regions* the Committee of the Regions seems to be the most appropriate place for building up a potential contact platform. The Committee itself being said to be gradually shifting from its treaty based remit of provider of local/regional policy expertise towards self-perception of more of a kind of representative chamber⁵⁷. This, being perceived as a Committee's weakness from the point of view of its participation in the EU decision-making process⁵⁸, may become its virtue in terms of promoting the intercultural dialogue, tolerance and solidarity issues exactly where it should happen and seems most needed: at regional and local level. This characteristics the Committee may serve well the purpose of promotion of intercultural dialogue both ways: in the form of transmitting EU level knowledge, initiatives and expertise down to the localities and voicing the interest and policy needs of regional and local communities on EU level, at the institution best suited to represent and foster those interests. Even, taking into account the constitutionally limited role the CoR plays in the decision-making, the Committee could still undertake a more proactive stance towards the possibility of serving as the platform for monitoring the initiatives undertaken in EU regions with regard to the intercultural dialogue. The Committee could serve as a contact point and the channel for voicing on the EU level of the interests for local/regional intercultural dialogue activities in search of EU support for all kinds of initiatives that carry a dialoguing potential both locally/regionally and on cross border scale. The exchange of best practices under the auspices of the CoR could bring the intercultural dialogue promoted by the EU closer to the citizens, provide for the possibility of search for partners and building partnerships and last but not least secure greater visibility of the institution itself among its constituents.

CONCLUSIONS

At the Community level there exists a number of programmes and initiatives directly or indirectly aimed at the promotion of intercultural dialogue. These are both the EU-driven «institutionalised» initiatives undertaken in the process of implementing of the treaty provisions as well as the activities undertaken outside the major Community programmes with support from various sources

of funding (including e.g. EU and UNESCO). The initiatives and actions are undertaken by the EU institutions themselves (in the form of Community action programmes), NGOs, universities, schools and institutions of culture. The actions concern primarily the educational system, media and the cultural institutions cooperation field. The forms of undertaken initiatives ranges from the international conferences and research, students' and school pupils exchange, exchange and training for teachers, curricula development projects, language learning and promotion of cultural cooperation and media programmes exchange and training in the field of media. Yet the action within broadly understood support for intercultural dialogue and related issues seems (perhaps unavoidably) highly dispersed among various programmes.

More consistency and streamlining is to be achieved by new generations of programmes proposed by the Commission yet it seems that *intercultural dialogue added value* contributing to building up inclusive societies may be produced only with appropriate action undertaken on national and subnational levels and not only limited to the culture and education domains, especially taking into account the fact that education and culture policy fields constituting the most natural fora for the promotion of intercultural dialogue fall within the member states competence remit.

What then seems to be urgently needed is greater involvement of national and subnational levels with the view of providing appropriate conditions for the intensification of the dialogue, making it part of *standard* policy instruments not only in the field of education and culture but also within other fields of cross-border, national, regional and local communities activities, everywhere where joint activities and the *common purpose* may produce dialoguing situation and provide benefits for all participants.

The results of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue – meant to the intercultural dialogue at the Community level and promote it further – will be a kind of *test in subsidiarity à rébours* also outside the education and culture remit – and will prove or not to what extent the national and sub-national level of action and social readiness is in place for the promotion of the dialogue also in the wider context of social dialogue and citizen action. The Year of Intercultural Dialogue will be a test of responsiveness of local/ regional/national communities to the Community action calling for increased

understanding and visibility of intercultural dialogue question and the test on how the MS and their communities understand intercultural dialogue and its importance as part of their daily life and not as occasional or one-time, holiday and declarative events.

¹ *Communication from the Commission to the European Council the Period of Reflection And Plan D*, Brussels, European Commission, 10 May 2006; COM(2006) 212 provisional version, p. 3.

² See European Commission's proposals included e.g. in Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *The Commission's Contribution to the Period of Reflection and Beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate*, COM(2005) 494 final as well as recent proposals: *Communication from the Commission to the European Council. A Citizens' Agenda. Delivering Results for Europe*, COM(2006) 211 final, and Communication from the Commission to the European Council, *The Period of Reflection and Plan D*, COM(2006) 212.

³ K. Sobotka, *Intercultural Dialogue, Identity and Democracy*, paper prepared for the current Project's Workshop in Lodz, August 2006 (unpublished manuscript).

⁴ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, Burnt Mill, Harlow, Longman, 1995 (3rd edition).

⁵ K. Sobotka, *Intercultural Dialogue...*, cit.

⁶ *Commission Staff Working Document, Annex to the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Year of Intercultural Dialogue*, Brussels, European Commission (2008), SEC(2005) 1202, 5 October 2005, p. 9.

⁷ Data on Commission's offices staffing; source: DG Personnel and Administration; source www.cec.europa.eu.

⁸ *Comp. Staff Regulations for the Officials of the European Communities* and e.g. the Preamble to the *Statute of European Schools*; source www.europa.eu.

⁹ *Commission Work-Programme 2005 Roadmaps*, Brussels, European Commission, available at www.europa.eu; compare also L. Bekemans, *Urban Environment of Intercultural Dialogue: Why Cities Matter in Building Rrban Civitas*, in this volume.

¹⁰ J. Greenwood, *EU Decision-Making ad the Channells of Influence*, in id., *Interest Representation in the European Union*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 43-69.

¹¹ A number of reports concerning the question of equality and respect for human rights and various reports about the situation of minorities, migrants and incidents of racial violence are published among others by DG Social Policy and European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.

¹² European Commission, DG for Education and Culture, Brussels, April 2003.

¹³ *Communication from the Commission*, European Commission, COM(2004) 154 final, Brussels, 9 March 2004.

¹⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs Unit D.3, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004.

¹⁵ *Communication from the European Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2003) 449 final, 24 July 2003.

¹⁶ *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2003) 520 final, 27 August 2003.

¹⁷ European Commission, COM(2006) 35 final, Brussels, 1 February 2006.

¹⁸ *Communication from the Commission*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2004) 156 final, 9 March 2004.

- ¹⁹ *Communication from the Commission to the European Council*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2006) 211, 10 May 2006.
- ²⁰ *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2005) 494 final, 13 October 2005.
- ²¹ *Communication from the Commission to the European Council*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2006)212 provisional version, 10 May 2006.
- ²² *Communication from the Commission*, Brussels, European Commission, COM(2006) 614 final, 23 October 2006.
- ²³ European Commission, COM(2004) 470 final, Brussels, 14 July 2004; currently: Common position approved by the EP on 24 October 2006.
- ²⁴ COM/2004/0474 final, Amended proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of The Council establishing an integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Adaptation following the agreement of 17 May 2006 on the Financial Framework 2007-2013 (presented by the Commission pursuant to Article 250(2) of the EC Treaty), COM/2006/0236 final; currently accepted after the 2nd PE reading of 25 October 2006.
- ²⁵ European Commission, Brussels, COM(2004) 469 final, 14 July 2004
- ²⁶ European Commission, Brussels, COM(2004) 471 final, 14 July 2004
- ²⁷ European Commission, Brussels, COM(2005) 280 final, 30 June 2006.
- ²⁸ European Commission, Brussels, COM(2005) 116 final, 6 April 2005.
- ²⁹ European Commission, Brussels, COM(2005) 467 final, 5 October 2005, amended by COM(2006) 492 final, Brussels, 5 September 2006
- ³⁰ It is a selection of documents only – not the exhausting list of Commission’s initiatives in the related fields.
- ³¹ R. Corbett, F. Jacobs and M. Shackleton, *The European Parliament*, London, John Harper Publishing, 2005 (6th edition), p. 38. This standard has been upheld in the Parliament’s Rules of Procedure but by virtue of the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism adopted by the Parliament’s Bureau on 19 April 2004, European Parliament document: PE 338.978/BUR, source: www.europarlament.europa.eu.
- ³² See *ibidem*, p. 57.
- ³³ Source: www.europarl.europa.eu.
- ³⁴ European Parliament, document: C-6-0311/2005 - 2005/0203(cod), source: www.europarl.europa.eu.
- ³⁵ R. Corbett, F. Jacobs and M. Shackleton, *The European Parliament*, cit., pp. 178-179.
- ³⁶ J. Greenwood, *EU-Decision-Making...*, cit., pp. 61-62.
- ³⁷ R. Corbett, F. Jacobs and M. Shackleton, *The European Parliament*, cit.
- ³⁸ J. Greenwood, *EU-Decision-Making...*, cit., p. 57.
- ³⁹ See http://www.cor.europa.eu/document/en/avis_parcomm_en.pdf.
- ⁴⁰ See <http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/documents/studies.htm>.
- ⁴¹ Declaration of the Symposium *Intercultural Dialogue* of Jean Monnet Project, Brussels, 20-21 March 2002.
- ⁴² E. Banús, *The European Union: A Space for Intercultural Dialogue*, paper presented at the Symposium *Intercultural Dialogue*, Brussels, 20-21 March 2002.
- ⁴³ Established by EP and Council decision of 24 January 2000, 253/2000/EC; first phase of Socrates terminated after 5 years duration on 31 December 1999.
- ⁴⁴ Council decision 1999/382/EC of 26 April 1999 establishing the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme «Leonardo da Vinci».
- ⁴⁵ The predecessors of the Culture 2000 field of culture are Kaleidoscope, Ariane and Raphael programmes.
- ⁴⁶ Decision 508/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 14 February 2000 establishing «Culture 2000» Programme.
- ⁴⁷ Decision 1031/2000/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 13 April 2000 establishing the «Youth» Community Action Programme.
- ⁴⁸ Council decision 2004/100/EC of 26 January 2006.
- ⁴⁹ *The Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013, Youth in Action, Media 2007, Culture 2007*.

⁵⁰ Compare: *Explanatory Memorandum to the Commission's Proposal*, COM(2005) 467 final.

⁵¹ OJ C 185, 8 August 2006.

⁵² *European Parliament Legislative Resolution on the Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)*, COM(2005)0467 – C6-0311/2005 – 2005/0203(COD), P6_TA(2006)0234.

⁵³ OJ C 206, 29 August 2006.

⁵⁴ Emphasis added.

⁵⁵ *Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006*, OJ L 210.

⁵⁶ «Par ma foi! il y a plus de quarante ans que je dis de la prose sans que j'en susse rien, et je vous suis le plus obligé du monde de m'avoir appris cela», Moliere, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Act II, Scene IV.

⁵⁷ T. Christiansen and P. Lintner, *The Committee of the Regions after 10 Years: Lessons from the Past and Challenges for the Future*, in «Eipascope», Maastricht, EIPA, 2005/1; M. Farrows and R. McCarthy, *Opinion Formulation and Impact of the Committee of the Regions* in «Regional and Federal Studies», vol. 7, n. 1, Spring 1997.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

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