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Intercultural Dialogue and Human Rights
a crucial link for building intercultural competences

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**INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND HUMAN RIGHTS/ A CRUCIAL LINK FOR
BUILDING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES**

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FROM WORDS TO ACTION

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Introduction

One of the standard definitions of culture describes it as “*the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artefacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning*”.¹ This follows the consensus embodied in UNESCO’s 1982 Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies. It defined culture as the “*whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group including not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs*”.²

The (consolidating and transforming) role of culture in society has changed drastically in recent decades. Various economic, political, social and cultural challenges in the age of globalization have a drastic but diversified impact on societies, states, regions, peoples, communities and persons across the globe. We are living in an increasingly interconnected and contextualized world in which societies, cultures and peoples meet and interact across the globe. We are living in a “global village” where the “other” has become my neighbor. The “other,” who contributed by his or her cultural difference to enable me to discover who I am, is no longer a stranger; he or she is today a member of my own society. The reality is that my own culture is no longer the only one existing in my own environment.

In today’s globalizing world, most societies no longer live in isolated territories, and their cultures are no longer confined by closed boundaries. We live in contact with each other, more or less intensively, and therefore other cultures are part of our daily life. This is the result not only of globalized markets, increased migration flows, but also of modern technologies which transform communication systems and rebuild relationships between and among societies. Various cultural interactions have become a way of living in today’s multicultural realities. Indeed, it becomes important in order to avoid conflict (and even war) to understand that others do not see their world as we see our own, do not follow the same values when judging similar situations, or do not use the same criteria as our own to identify them as different. Henceforth the importance of intercultural education and learning intercultural competences in respect of universal human rights.

In this context Rodolfo Stavenhagen’s anthropological definition of culture is very helpful.³ He conceives culture as a bridge builder, a cohesive factor and a carrier of good relations for social and economic exchange beyond borders by distinguishing three aspects: i) culture as an asset, tangible or intangible, and a carrier of local identity which should be conserved; ii) culture as a commodity which needs to be re-produced not only to reconstitute cultural capital but also as a source of economic development insofar it is embedded in production processes; and iii) culture as a set of norms and capacities which enrich communities and should be valorized. A dynamic and interactive process between these three aspects of culture implies not only peaceful co-existence of different cultures within society but also a mutually influencing and open dialogue between cultures. Moreover, such an implicit conceptual shift from multicultural co-existence to intercultural dialogue may avoid the trap of cultural relativism and provide the base of a true living together, where borders are less important than meeting places and spaces.

New, innovative and peoples-oriented approaches are therefore needed to respond to the challenges of fragmented and disturbed societies also with a new culture for human rights-based education and citizenship in respect of an integral human development and various (formal, informal, non-formal) learning environments. Moreover, the substance and urgency of a revisited role and increased responsibility of education in multi-/intercultural, complex and interconnected societies is crucial for facing up these

¹ Bates, D. G., & Plog, F., *Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd Ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976, p. 6.

² http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/files/12762/11295421661mexico_en.pdf/mexico_en.pdf

³ Stavenhagen, R., Cultural rights: a social science perspective, in H. Niec (ed.), *Culture rights and wrongs*, Paris: Unesco, 1998, p. 1-20.

challenges. Learning to cope with changes and live together in respect of human rights implies a focus on building life(long) and intercultural competences.

The paper is structured along three parts. The first part identifies the general context by defining what is meant by cultural diversity and what is understood by intercultural dialogue and the value-based link with human rights in today's world. The second part focuses on institution-building in the area of human rights-based intercultural dialogue by major international organizations. The last part introduces the need for strengthening intercultural education by developing human rights-based intercultural competences.

1. Intercultural dialogue for cultural diversity

1.1 Cultural diversity

Our cultural environment is changing quickly and becoming more and more diversified. New cultural influences pervade virtually every society. Cultural diversity is therefore an essential condition of human society and a true basis for creativity and innovation. It is caused and fostered by many factors such as cross-border migration, the claim of minorities to a distinct cultural identity, the cultural effects of globalisation, the growing interdependence between and among societies, and the advances of information and communication media. More and more individuals are living in a "multicultural" normality, i.e. facing the influences of different cultures in their daily life, and have to manage their own multiple cultural affiliations.

Cultural diversity is not only a fact and a right to be protected, but also an economic, social and political added value, which needs to be developed and adequately managed. Protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are factors of human development. They are a manifestation of human liberty and an essential requirement for sustainable and cohesive development of various populations. In summary, cultural diversity is a rich asset for individuals and societies, which needs careful and gentle management attention through respect, dialogue and mutual learning.⁴

On the other hand, increasing cultural diversity brings about new social and political challenges. Cultural diversity often triggers fear and rejection. Negative reactions – from stereotyping, racism, xenophobia and intolerance to discrimination and violence – can threaten peace and the very fabric of local and national communities. International conflicts, the socio-economic vulnerability and marginalisation of entire groups, and widespread cultural ignorance – including the lack of knowledge about one's own culture and heritage – provide fertile ground for rejection, social exclusion, extremist reactions and conflict.

The most fundamental challenge, therefore, is that of combining social cohesion and cultural diversity. However, there is no consensus on the best long-term vision for living together peacefully in multicultural societies. Still it is obvious that the right balance between social cohesion and cultural diversity cannot be achieved by compromising the core values that are at the very heart of the fabric of our societies – the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law, enshrined in various international and national treaties. This should be realised within a dialogues' framework.

1.2 Intercultural dialogue

An inventory of usages and practices

Dialogue is a vital tool for understanding and managing diversity. It should be clear that the prior goal of intercultural dialogue is not integration or assimilation of individuals and groups of different cultures within a

⁴ The Preamble of UNESCO's Convention on the "Protection of the Diversities of Cultural Expressions" (2005) states that "*Cultural Diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels*" and that cultural diversity is important "*for the full realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognised instruments.*"

given society, but an incentive to share universal values by/for living and doing together whilst respecting the other.

“In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among peoples and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together.” This affirmation, drawn from the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted by UNESCO in 2001, is broadly accepted by all concerned organisations and individuals. It is strongly normative and presents a pathway towards the goal of attaining ways of living together. However, many usages surrounding the notion of intercultural dialogue and a multiplicity of intercultural practices have to be taken into consideration.⁵

Definition

Dialogue seeks to enable and promote the best in humanity. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote in 2001: *“Dialogue is the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation. It is both a specific working method and an integral part of all other policies to manage cultural diversity today. It is an antidote to rejection and violence. It is a tool that can be used by everybody, by every local and regional authority, every government, every religious community, by migrants and host societies, minorities and majorities, civil society organisations and international bodies like the Council of Europe, in order to improve the situation.”* The cost of “non-dialogue” may therefore be high. Continued non-communication, ignorance and mutual cultural isolation may lead to ever more dangerous degrees of misunderstanding, mutual seclusion, fear, marginalisation, and violent conflict. The Council of Europe’s White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (2008) puts it in this way *“Intercultural Dialogue has an important role to play... It allows us to prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides. It enables us to move forward together, to deal with our identities constructively and democratically on the basis of shared universal values.”* It defines Intercultural dialogue as *“an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups belonging to different cultures that leads to a deeper understanding of the other’s world perception.”*⁶

Objective

The broad objective of intercultural dialogue is to learn to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging. It can also be a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts through enhancing the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Manuel Castell⁷, the Spanish sociologist, sees economic, political, social or cultural exclusion as the main cause for conflicts. He believes in the power and necessity of communication to restore confidence and to formulate common projects. This can be made explicit in more specific goals such as sharing visions of the world or best practices, identifying, understanding and learning from differences and similarities between different cultural traditions and perceptions, and developing jointly new projects. For Edgar Morin, the French philosopher and sociologist, dialogue is only possible between individuals who recognise themselves as persons with the same dignity, rights and obligations.⁸ In other words, dialogue supposes equality and mutual respect, an absolutely necessary condition for a successful policy of intercultural dialogue.

In order to create such a true and meaningful intercultural dialogue following conditions should be realised: equal dignity of all participants, voluntary engagement in dialogue, a mind-set (on both sides) characterised by openness, curiosity and commitment, and the absence of a desire to “win” the dialogue, a readiness to look at both cultural similarities and differences, a minimum degree of knowledge about the distinguishing features of one’s own and the “other” culture, and the ability to find a common language for understanding and respecting cultural differences.

⁵ Isar, Ray, The intercultural challenge: an imperative of solidarity, in European Commission, *Intercultural dialogue*, Luxembourg, 2003, p. 169-183.

⁶ Council of Europe, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. Living Together as Equals in Dignity*, CM (2008).

⁷ Castells, M., *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Cheltenham, UK, Northampton, MA: Edward Edgar, 2004.

⁸ Talking to Edgar Morin, Dialogue assumes equality, interview by UNESCO, The New Courier, January 2004.

Parameters

In sum, intercultural dialogue is a privileged tool for establishing peaceful and convivial links between persons and between peoples, provided it is based on solid value roots. Three basic parameters can be distinguished: its value basis, its transversal nature and its different geographical dimensions:

- Intercultural dialogue is neither an expression of, nor does it lead to, cultural relativism. Dialogue should be based on the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It implies a rejection of the idea of a clash of civilisations and expresses its conviction that intercultural dialogue benefits peace and international stability.
- The promotion of intercultural dialogue is not simply another theme, added to the list of other existing policies. Instead, it is conceived as a cross-sectorial and transversal approach that influences the agenda of virtually all other policy domains and institutions.
- The geographical dimensions of intercultural dialogue relate to a dialogue within societies, such as dialogue between majority and minority cultures living within the same community (e.g. dialogues with immigrant communities, various religious beliefs and national minorities), an intercultural dialogue between different cultures across national borders (e.g. dialogues in international cultural policy programmes, cross-border exchange schemes or international social networks), and intercultural dialogue between macro regions across the globe.

1.3 Human rights-based intercultural dialogue

Since the end of the 20th century intercultural dialogue has been intended and promoted worldwide as the major tool to contrast the process of culturalisation of conflicts and to promote a 'new humanism,' a new universal vision open to the entire human community. Working in this direction, civil society organizations, NGOs, local and regional authorities, national governments, regional and international organizations can all contribute to the promotion of intercultural dialogue within a human rights-shared global strategy of multi-level governance.⁹

It has been underlined that the final aim of intercultural dialogue is to work together in order to share common goods¹⁰. The challenge is, therefore, to provide true opportunities to all those living in a given society, not only in order to know and tolerate each other, but, above all, to do things together in a given socio-political community. The reciprocal knowledge obtained through dialogue is essential to identify what to do together, how to do it and to share responsibility about it, in other words, to identify the foundations of a feeling of common belonging among people living in the same community. For these reasons, the concept of intercultural dialogue is intimately related to those of democracy and citizenship. The process of inclusion promoted by dialogue is therefore based on the respect of the universal human rights.

In the context of inclusive participation in the political, economic, social and cultural life of a community, it is clear that the present concept of national citizenship is not fit to respond to the challenges of multiculturalism to which intercultural dialogue is addressed. "*All human beings, being formally recognized as born with dignity and rights, are by nature citizens of the planet earth.*"¹¹ Thus, the development of intercultural dialogue is anchored in the principle of the equal dignity of every member of the human family, recognized and promoted by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the two International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the other legal instruments – at universal and regional levels – constituting the International Human Rights Law. It also confronts the

⁹ Bekemans, Léonce (ed.), *Intercultural Dialogue and Multi-level Governance in Europe. A Human Rights Based Approach*, Brussels, Berlin, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: International Academic Publishers Peter Lang, 2012.

¹⁰ Bekemans, L. a.o (ed.), *Intercultural Dialogue and Citizenship*, Translating Values into Actions, A Common Project for Europeans and their Partners, Venice: Marsilio, 2007, 663 p.

¹¹ Papisca, Antonio, Citizenship and citizenships ad omnes includendos: A human rights approach, in L. Bekemans, M. Karasinska-Fendler, M. Mascia, A. Papisca, C. A Stephanou, and P. G. Xuereb, *Intercultural dialogue and citizenship: Translating values into actions; A common project for Europeans and their partners (Eds)*, Venice: Marsilio, 2007, p. 457- 480.

question of religious freedom by defining the correct relationship between the civil sphere and the religious one, beginning with the recognition of each person's fundamental right to religious freedom.¹²

As a consequence, being its universal paradigm of reference, human rights play an essential role in the context of intercultural dialogue in what can be seen as a bidirectional process, since an effective dialogue needs to be rooted in the International Human Rights Law, contributing, at the same time, to its effectiveness. This relation works as a solid basis for the proposed conception of citizenship: *'assuming therefore that equal dignity of all the members of the human family is the founding principle of whatever legal system, the intercultural dialogue marked by human rights and by the tension of the telos, of 'what-to-do-together-where,' the question that needs to be reopened as regards the traditional concept of citizenship in the sense of making it plural and extending the space it is exercised in'*.¹³

1.4 A value-based framework for cultural diversity

An authentic intercultural dialogue calls for a conceptual framework that deals with diversity on various scales; requires a socio-cultural setting that combines globalization with cultural assertivity and assumes a moral dimension that favors commonly shared values worldwide.¹⁴ This has various implications.

- Culture as a driving force for genuine intercultural dialogue

Cultural pluriformity is perceived as the main character of civilizations. It is a source of wealth and strength. Different cultures should not be separated; but they enter into dialogue with, influence each other and transform themselves while remaining diversified. Therefore mutual learning is crucial for intercultural dialogue. It would be a grave mistake to save the originality of particular cultures by isolating them from dialogue with other cultures or to accept a cultural relativist approach on the global scale. Moving away from the Western sense of superiority and the rise of cross-cultural relativism, there is indeed a growing recognition that some forms of cross-cultural judgments can be appropriate worldwide. We assume that a dynamic cultural sector helps to ensure real participative democracy and activates democratic empowerment, by inspiring citizens to become active, creative and responsible.

Intercultural dialogue is also an important way of overcoming some of the negative consequences of globalization, condition to the recognition of common and moral values (i.e. human dignity, respect for difference and diversity, solidarity, etc.). As such, intercultural dialogue is an important instrument in governance building, creating mutual understanding, trust and confidence. It is a vehicle for a more active, consensus building citizens' participation to create tolerance and respect between different cultures and peoples and to overcome ignorance, arrogance, fear and mistrust. Such a dialogue should be perceived as a path to conviviality and interculturalism in which cultures influence each other without destroying themselves or entering into clashes or conflicts. It is therefore a crucial path for peace and genuine sustainable development and may lead to a conversation among equals with respect for the difference and the diversity of each other.

- Responsibility to favor a dialogue between diverse cultural discourses in a globalizing world

Various global, international and regional actors have an important responsibility in intercultural dialogue. They have the task to be facilitators, communicative bridge builders and boundary breakers in such a dialogue. Their socio-economic foundation are based on democracy, human rights, solidarity and above all diversity, meaning respect for different cultures, languages, religions, traditions, etc. This implies mutual understanding and learning and an open dialogue. The maintenance and promotion of the global common

¹² See articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art.18), the International Covenant on civil and political rights (Art. 18), the European Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental freedoms of 1950 (Art. 9), the Inter-American Convention of 1969 (Art.12), the African Charter of human rights and peoples' rights of 1989 (Art.8), the International Convention on children's rights of 1989 (Art.14), the European Charter of fundamental rights of 2000 (Art.10), the Arab Charter of human rights of 2004 (Art. 30).

¹³ Papisca, Antonio, Intercultural dialogue and citizenship on the international policy agenda. *Pace diritti umani*, no.1, 2007, p. 25-39.

¹⁴ Bekemans, Léonce (ed.), *A Value-driven European Future*, Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2012.

good of economically, socially and culturally sustainable development worldwide, the common practice of mutual learning and the centrality of the individual citizen as a person within a community and a coherent internal and external policy are to be guiding principles in promoting global dialogues with a human and cultural face.

- Human rights paradigm as the basic point of departure for intercultural and interreligious dialogue

Recent developments have strengthened the relation between human rights and intercultural dialogue because of their mutually reinforcing in the creation of inclusive societies. Human rights are at the core of any suitable approach to intercultural dialogue. The International Law of Human Rights has extended its constitutional space from inside the nation state to the entire world. The human rights paradigm can then be seen as a powerful transcultural facilitator in moving from the (increasingly) conflicting stage of multiculturalism to the dialogic stage of inter-culturality. 15

Such an universal human rights approach to intercultural dialogue also requires a clear policy interpretation. Human rights-based education policies are absolutely necessary to provide learning environments which favour the inclusion of all individuals and groups living in the international scene. Therefore policies are needed to develop new kinds of knowledge, skills and competencies based on universally agreed human rights frameworks which promote sustainable dialogues for tolerance, non-violence, peace and mutual respect. A major coordination with various international institutions engaged in this field, is therefore desirable; also a major focus and continuity to partnerships of countries within the UN framework and interagency initiatives as well as with regional inter-governmental organizations active in this field, such as the Council of Europe, ALECSO and ISESCO.

- From policy to practices

Sources of good practice projects are manifold. Successful intercultural dialogue projects are to be found in "shared spaces", both institutional and non-institutional. Moreover, diversity can be fostered at all stages of cultural/artistic production, distribution and participation. The educational challenges are to respond to the need to develop intercultural competencies and skills among all members of society and to stimulate transnational cooperation activities. Finally, interactive communication processes may stimulate the development of self-confidence in individuals as well as a sense of collective responsibility.

A number of guidelines of intercultural practices can be identified for sharing diversity within and between cultures: - recognise that intercultural dialogue depends upon the full implementation of human, civic, economic, social and cultural rights; - acknowledge intercultural dialogue at the heart of citizenship and integration strategies; - approach intercultural dialogue as a transversal issue which is part of a complex system of governance based on diversity, equality and participation; - develop strategies which view intercultural dialogue as a process of interactive communication within and between cultures and; - open up institutional structures and international cooperation for intercultural dialogue. In summary, interculturality should become a practice of plural citizenship, favouring an alliance of civilisations above a clash of civilisations. The learning and building of intercultural competencies respectful of human rights becomes then crucial.

¹⁵ Barrett, Martyn, *Interculturalism and Multiculturalism: Similarities and Differences*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, December 2013, 187 p.

2. Institutional Practices of Human rights-based Intercultural Dialogue

2.1 UN/UNESCO

The United Nations (UN) has launched many formal initiatives in the last few decades to promote a culture of peace and a dialogue among civilisations. It declared 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In November 2001, the General Assembly adopted the UN Global Agenda for dialogue among civilisations. Since the adoption of the resolution, the need to promote dialogue has been underlined by UN members and by the UN itself.

The Alliance of Civilizations was established in 2005¹⁶ to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions and to counter the forces that fuel polarisation and extremism. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) under the presidency of former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, is responsible for its implementation phase. In 2011 the UNAOC launched the regional initiative “Reconciling diversity and cohesion: a human rights model to build inclusive and participatory societies in European countries”. It recognised that migration and the growing mobility of people results in increased diversity in societies, thus leading to new challenges but also to untapped resources. Changing the narrative that most European societies have constructed around diversity seems a necessary move in order to start thinking of cultural diversity as an asset rather than a liability and to make it a full advantage for democracies in the 21st century.

The most recent global initiative is the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue.¹⁷ It is an initiative of the Government of Azerbaijan, supported by the Council of Europe, its North-South Centre, UNESCO and the UN Alliance of Civilizations. The Forum has taken responsibility for delivering the global agenda of the Dialogue Among Civilisations, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (November 2001), the UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the Islamic Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2004), the Declaration and Action Plan of the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe Member States, and the Council of Europe’s White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (May 2008).

Since its creation in 1945 UNESCO has worked to create the conditions necessary for open dialogue among civilisations, cultures and peoples, all based upon a respect for commonly shared values and global visions of sustainable development. It has a long-standing commitment to the conceptualisation and promotion of practices related to cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, intercultural education and human rights. In the new, turbulent international globalised landscape, UNESCO is taking even greater account of the close links between cultural diversity, dialogue, and human rights. Its Declaration of the principles of international cultural cooperation in 1966¹⁸ clearly recognised mutual knowledge of cultures as a key to peace. Various medium term plans, programmes and initiatives have been launched to respond to time-specific needs, focussing on specific characteristics of cultures.¹⁹

The World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997)²⁰ combined the specificity and universality of cultural values. Placing culture at the heart of development policy has constituted an essential investment in the world’s future and a pre-condition to successful globalisation processes that take into account the

¹⁶ <http://www.unaoc.org>

¹⁷ The first World Forum on “Intercultural Dialogue - United through Common Values, Enriched by Cultural Diversity”, took place in Baku (Azerbaijan, 7-9 April 2011). The 2nd World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue was held from May 29th to June 1st 2013 in Baku <http://www.bakuforum-icd.az>

¹⁸ <http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php>

¹⁹ The Medium Term Plan 1977-1982 viewed culture at the service of development so that intercultural dialogue could be realised with respect to the value of cultural endogeneity; the Medium Term Plan 1990-1995 was concerned about the development of pluricultural societies and the complexity of cultural identities; it favoured the sense of belonging to a universal culture by stressing the interdependence of cultures and economies; the Medium Term Strategy 1996-2001 focused on the interlinkages of culture with development, democracy, peace and security by evidencing the need for active tolerance and creative diversity.

²⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/culture-and-development/>

principles of cultural diversity. The Report “Our Creative Diversity” (1966)²¹ considered a commitment to pluralism to be of fundamental importance. Its message was that cultural pluralism is an all-pervasive, enduring characteristic of societies, and that ethnic identification is a normal and healthy response to the pressures of globalisation. Its central argument is that development embraces not only access to goods and services, but also the opportunity to choose a full, satisfying, valuable and valued way of living together and cannot be divorced from its human or cultural context. This implies a clear shift from the purely instrumental role of culture to awarding it a constructive, constitutive and creative role. In line with the conclusions of “Our Creative Diversity”, a thematic programme “Mainstreaming Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in Education for Sustainable Development”²² was established in 2007 as a contribution to the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity²³ (2001) presents a very important step towards the institutional building of intercultural dialogue. This is a legal instrument, which recognises, for the first time, cultural diversity as a “common heritage of humanity” and considers its safeguarding to be a concrete and ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It affirmed the position that “*no one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope*”.²⁴ The connection between human rights and intercultural dialogue became crucial because of their mutually reinforcing of the creation of inclusive societies. As a consequence, a global culture of human rights requires competence in holding intercultural dialogues.

In 2005, UNESCO provided a new international framework for the governance and management of culture with the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions²⁵. It is a legally-binding international agreement that ensures that artists, cultural professionals, practitioners and citizens worldwide can create, produce, disseminate and enjoy a broad range of cultural goods, services and activities, including their own. The focus was on the implementation of international law that would recognise the distinctive nature of cultural goods, services and activities as vehicles of identity, values and meaning; and that, while cultural goods, services and activities have important economic value, they are not mere commodities or consumer goods that can only be regarded as objects of trade. The convention recognised that culture can no longer be just a by-product of development, but rather the mainspring for sustainable development. The 2009 UNESCO World Report on “Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural dialogue”,²⁶ further elaborated on the importance of cultural diversity in different areas such as languages, education, communication and creativity. This diversity is perceived as an essential dimension of intercultural dialogue for strengthening sustainable development, ensuring the effective exercising of universally recognised human rights and freedoms, and favouring social cohesion and democratic governance. It makes clear how crucial it is to acquire a cultural literacy to understand cultures in their creative diversity.

Recent developments have been focussing on the creation of favourable conditions of cultural participation. In particular, the current UNESCO project “Building competences to develop policies and programmes for intercultural dialogue respectful of human rights” within its Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace and non-Violence aims at developing “*generic guidelines and training tools to build knowledge and competencies*

²¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001055/105586e.pdf>

²² http://www.iemed.org/publicacions/quaderns/10/q10_185.pdf; Tilbury, D & Mulà, I., *Review of Education for Sustainable Development Policies from a Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue: Gaps and Opportunities for Future Action*, Paris: UNESCO, 2009.

²³ <http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php>

²⁴ UNESCO, 2001, Art. 4.

²⁵ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/diversity-of-cultural-expressions/the-convention/convention-text/>

²⁶ The UNESCO World Report, *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, UNAOC, Paris, 2009; available through <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001847/184755e.pdf>

for the design and revision of public policies and programmes aimed at reinforcing intercultural understanding and human rights, notably among young people.²⁷

2.2 Council of Europe

Setting

The Council of Europe (1949) is marked by its resolute commitment to the promotion of the universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms by seeking to develop common and democratic principles throughout Europe. Numerous international conventions and other legal instruments, policy statements and programme documents have guided its policy. Its long-standing promotion of intercultural dialogue has become a political priority.²⁸

According to the European Cultural Convention (Paris, 1954), the Council of Europe's action aims at an intercultural approach based on the principles of equal dignity and promotion of universal values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The purpose of this convention is to develop mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and a reciprocal appreciation of their cultural diversity, to safeguard European culture, to promote national contributions to Europe's common cultural heritage respecting the same fundamental values and to encourage in particular the study of the languages, history and civilisation of the Parties to the Convention.

A European legal framework for Intercultural dialogue is provided by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)²⁹ (1953). This international treaty protects human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. It established the European Court of Human Rights which interprets and applies the convention and deals with complaints. Articles 9 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion), 10 (Freedom of expression) and 11 (Freedom of association and assembly) of the ECHR relate to intercultural dialogue.

The basic conditions of intercultural dialogue for authentic intercultural dialogue were said to relate to:

- Democracy: the democratic governance of cultural diversity is one of the main policy approaches for the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Democracy is the foundation of the political system, and citizens are valued also as political actors and not only as social beings, contributors to or beneficiaries of the wellbeing of the nation;
- Rule of law: a main feature of democracy and a further condition for intercultural dialogue;
- Equal dignity and equal enjoyment of rights: general principles, ethnic equality and gender equality.

The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: "Living together as equals in dignity" (2008)³⁰ presents a conceptual framework for dealing with intercultural dialogue, based on valuing cultural diversity and proposed policy approaches to the promotion of intercultural dialogue. It focuses on the human rights based democratic governance of cultural diversity and on the learning and teaching intercultural competences in key competence areas at various levels and types of education.

Assessment

The Council of Europe is committed to common values and principles, which are rooted in Europe's cultural, religious and humanistic heritage – a heritage both shared and rich in its diversity. The statutory mission of the organisation is the promotion and active defence of pluralist democracy, universal human rights and the

²⁷ Intersectoral Platform for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, Bureau for Strategic Planning, *Intercultural Competences. Conceptual and Operational Framework*, Paris: UNESCO, 2013, 44 p.

UNESCO, *Building Human Rights-infused Intercultural Competences Framework and Guidelines*, 2013, 36 p.

²⁸ See Bekemans, L., *Globalisation vs Europeanisation: a human-centric interaction*, op.cit., p. 226-229.

²⁹ <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm>

³⁰ Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008; also available at <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/White%20Paper%20final%20EN%20020508.pdf>

rule of law. Values are important building materials for social cohesion. However intercultural dialogue, as a tool for the promotion of cultural diversity and social cohesion, can only be successful if the dialogue partners – independent of all differences – are sharing certain common values and cultural references.

The Council of Europe's approach to intercultural dialogue brings into focus all policy areas directly influencing the diversity of cultural practices and cultural identities. It concerns, to name just the most obvious, policies regarding citizenship and rights of participation, education, social cohesion, minority rights, immigration, foreign affairs, language, relations between the state and religions, the development of civil society and gender equality. Education, in all its forms, arguably plays the most important role of all, since the skills necessary for living peacefully together in a culturally diverse environment need to be acquired and can be taught; this includes for instance the important areas of the teaching of foreign languages and of history.

In a wider sense, however, coherence must be achieved also with other policy areas, i.e. with those that influence the material living conditions and the sustainability of cultural identities, such as social services, housing, labour markets, urban planning, public health and many more. A better integration of these policy areas is necessary for addressing the negative consequences of social fragmentation and the precarious social and economic positions of many individuals and groups.

The diversity and scope of policy areas concerned with intercultural dialogue presents a specific challenge, which cannot be addressed by ad hoc or sectorial measures without running the risk of neutralising the efforts in one domain by opposite or ill-conceived measures taken in another. In order to be effective, the principle of promoting intercultural dialogue must therefore become an integral part of policy-making and policy implementation in practically all other areas. This is usually called "mainstreaming".

This brings into focus the role of the different stakeholders of intercultural dialogue, who act in very different political and institutional contexts. At the local level, initiatives by individuals and civil society organisations, the activities of religious communities, the policies and services of local and regional authorities as well as neighbourhood media – they all play a very important role for the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Issues faced by cultural and religious minorities can often be best addressed at the local level. Parliaments, governments, administrations and NGOs at national level share this responsibility for fostering a culture of understanding. Also international organisations can contribute in various ways. Of course, all this works more effectively if they share the same priorities and convictions. A particular role is set for cultural industries in promoting intercultural dialogue (for example, through music, film, publishing, cultural tourism) and reflecting on society's diversity. This includes the media, referring to printed and broadcast media and the growing importance of new technologies, as tools of creation, information and communication.

2.3 European Union

Setting

Today the European reality is confronted with the limits of its pragmatic and functional integration process. The 21st century is making new demands that call for a revision of the perspective of Europe. Today, its model of society, based on fundamental human rights, culture as a vehicle of emancipation, of sustainable development and socio-economic cohesion, and on a multilateral vision of the world order, is under stress. In other words, an intense conversation between the confusing actual (political, economic, cultural and institutional) European reality and Europe's responsibility in the context of an ever-increasing globalisation, is clearly taking place. Moreover, the EU is made up of multicultural societies. Conflicts do influence how people define their identities and how they perceive themselves in relation to their own culture and to others. Various legal references relate to a human rights-based intercultural dialogue in the European Union.

The enlargement of the European Union, coupled with increasing mobility linked to the common market, new and old migratory flows, the new trade ties with the rest of the world, and education, leisure and globalisation in general, have led to increased contact between cultures, religions, ethnic groups and languages. Against this backdrop and in the context of an increasingly multicultural EU, the development of intercultural

competences and the promotion of intercultural dialogue have been a driving force for related EU initiatives. The promotion of intercultural dialogue became high on the political EU agenda after the attack on the Twin Towers of 9/11. Various EU activities and conferences were organised in the aftermath to support the importance of intercultural dialogue, often in collaboration with the academic world and the Jean Monnet Programme of the EU.³¹

The fundamental basis of the legal framework of the EU's activities in the field of intercultural dialogue lies in the current Treaty of the European Union. In particular, article 2: says that *"The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail."*

The Preamble of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (annex of the Lisbon Treaty, 2009) reads as follows: *"The peoples of Europe, in creating an ever closer union among them, are resolved to share a peaceful future based on common values. Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It places the individual at the heart of its activities, by establishing the citizenship of the Union and by creating an area of freedom, security and justice. The Union contributes to the preservation and to the development of these common values while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe as well as the national identities of the Member States and the organisation of their public authorities at national, regional and local levels; it seeks to promote balanced and sustainable development and ensures free movement of persons, services, goods and capital, and the freedom of establishment. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen the protection of fundamental rights in the light of changes in society, social progress and scientific and technological developments by making those rights more visible in a Charter."* Articles 10, 11 and 12 are of particular importance to intercultural dialogue. They address equality (e.g. non-discrimination and cultural, religious and linguistic diversity), freedoms (e.g. freedom of expression, of thought, conscience and religion), and citizen's rights (e.g. of movement and residence, to vote).

Assessment

Intercultural dialogue contributes to a number of strategic priorities of the European Union, such as respecting and promoting cultural diversity; favouring the European Union's commitment to solidarity, social justice and reinforced cohesion; allowing the European Union to make its voice heard and realising new efficient partnerships with neighbouring countries. Indeed, the European Union has for the last two decades encouraged intercultural dialogue, both inside and outside of the European Union, through various programmes and initiatives.

However, to realise this objective and to reinforce European Community action, a first step is to identify, promote and exchange experiences and best practices that would illustrate the possibility, value and efficiency of intercultural dialogue. The European Commission has initiated this process of valorisation via projects supported by European Community programs. A second step is to treat intercultural dialogue as a horizontal priority for all relevant European Community programs, especially for those related to culture, education, youth and citizenship; finally, 2008 was declared the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Since then, intercultural dialogue events have complemented existing community programs and raised the awareness of citizens, especially the youths, as to the importance of intercultural dialogue.³²

³¹ Bekemans, Léonce. *Globalisation vs Europeansation. A Human-centric Interaction*, Brussels, Berlin, Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien: International Academic Publishers Peter Lang, 2013. p.155-169.

³² Decision N° 1983/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008.

3. Intercultural Education: learning human rights-based intercultural competencies

Education systems transmit and shape the value systems of the societies in which they are embedded. Education, at all levels from primary schools to institutions of lifelong learning, now faces the critical challenge of reflecting and guiding the manifest plurality of cultures and identities in globalizing societies: both to embody a commitment to the equal dignity of all, and to offer a sufficiently rich vision of human flourishing. Education concerns capacity building in diversity management at the citizenship level. It should therefore prepare people of different backgrounds and of varying talents for a life together; this includes but goes beyond preparing them for livelihoods, and consists of providing information and training not only of life skills but also of cultural development.

3.1 Points of departure

- *The right to education is rooted in the international Law expressed in numerous legal treaties.*

Education is a fundamental human right and important for the exercise of other human rights. It promotes individual freedom and empowerment and yields important development benefits. Freedom of education has been guaranteed in international and European law. Following articles constitute the universal, international and European legal framework for the right to education.

The right to education has been universally recognized in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): *“(1) Everyone has the right to education: Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”*

Article 2 Protocol 1 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Rome, 1950) says, *“that no person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, The State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religions and philosophical convictions”.*

Article 13 paragraph 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) clearly states that education *“shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms [and] that education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.”* Henceforth, rights, respect and participation are bound firmly together. Education in this full sense embraces personal formation, not merely the transmission of information, or professional training. It thus enhances social, cultural and economic development, active citizenship and fundamental moral values. The impact of the global economic downturn on education systems if the right to education is not fully protected is well illustrated by UNESCO in its “Education for all - Global Monitoring Reports”.³³

Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2000) defines the right to education as follows: *“1. Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training; 2. This right includes the possibility to receive free compulsory education; 3. The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right.”*

³³ http://publishing.unesco.org/details.aspx?Code_Livre=5018

As well as being a right in itself, the right to education is also an enabling right. If people have access to education they can develop the skills, capacity and confidence to secure other rights. Education gives people the ability to access information and to grow in knowledge. It supports people in developing the communication skills to demand these rights, the confidence to speak in a variety of forums, and the ability to negotiate with a wide range of authorities and power holders. In other words, some preconditions are needed to make education a meaningful right. Katarina Tomasevski, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education developed the concept of the 4 A's: education should be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable.³⁴ Of course these conditions are to be guaranteed, elaborated and strengthened, in respect of the key objectives of education.

- *The key role of education: learning to live together by learning to do together in intercultural realities*

Setting: Education plays a central role in the development of both human beings and modern societies as it enhances social, cultural and economic development, active citizenship and ethical values. Its priority task is to transmit knowledge and competences which give scope and responsibility to the development of each person in times of change. Starting from the need to know, understand and live other cultures in today's increasingly interconnected human societies, education should therefore be perceived as a means as well as an objective for living together and for learning differences in a positive, peaceful, respectful and mutually beneficial way.

The current crisis of socialization and value transmission has made the task of education difficult but vital for society building. The crucial role of education should therefore be reset within the dramatic acceleration in the speed of social change brought about by the process of globalization. In such a changing context of transformation processes, we are being urged to rethink the meaning of education, as well as the uses and practices of teaching and learning, the opportunities for communicating interaction offered by new technologies and the dangers of commodification of human relations caused by the new relation between culture and economy. The crucial role of education should be geared to "learning to live together by doing together." This implies that the learning processes for multi- and intercultural realities should be based on shared social responsibility and integral human development.³⁵ However, the current crisis of socialization and value transmission undermines the educational perspectives for dealing with multicultural and intercultural realities. The crucial role of education, as well as the use and practices of teaching and learning, need therefore to be reset within the dramatic acceleration in the speed of social change brought about by the process of globalization. In short, objectives, competences and various aspects of citizenship education should be revisited and strengthened in order to develop proper answers to society's current challenges and cultural realities.

Definition: Education is a dynamic process of learning that creates added value and forms the person through integral development. It should transmit possibilities and opportunities with conviction, intuition and motivation. It is always a meeting with the other; hence the role of teachers as key agents for change and the need to accompany and respect their role in the educational landscape. Also, the international and global context is an integral part of the general curriculum as well as of each individual learning path. This implies the need to transmit in an open and critical way ideals and principles that valorize the person at the center of education systems and national curricula, recognizing the various dimensions of the learning process.

Yet the priority task of education should be to help (young) people to become responsible citizens, providing them with information, knowledge, competences, skills and open behavior, in line with fundamental values such as peace, human dignity, respect for diversity, etc. This presupposes a learning capacity for dialogue and intercultural exchange, which in turn requires the learning of intercultural (life) skills, social and

³⁴ Tomasevski, Katarina, *Manual on rights-based education: global human rights requirements made simple*, Bangkok: UNESCO, 2004. 60 p.

³⁵ Bekemans, Léonce, Educational Challenges and Perspectives in Multiculturalism vs. Interculturalism: Citizenship Education for Intercultural Realities, in Martyn Barrett (Ed.), *Interculturalism and Multiculturalism: Similarities and Differences*, Council of Europe, Publishing, pp. 145- 177.

communicative competences. The Delors Report, "Education for the 21st Century. Learning: the Treasure Within" (1996), very well summarizes this perspective when it identifies the four pillars of the education process: learn to know; learn to do; learn to be; learn to live together.³⁶

Education is to build peace, foster dialogue and enhance understanding in order "*to build peace in the minds of men*" as enshrined in UNESCO's Constitution (1945) and further developed in its various recommendations, declarations, resolutions and initiatives. To be educated is to learn and to be able to feel free of any kind of dependence, submission or fear. It is to be able to create, to think, to imagine, to dream – all distinctive and decisive capacities of the human condition. This ideal is summarized in the Delors Report, "Education for 21st Century. Learning: the Treasure Within" (1996) which argues that the education process rests on four pillars: learn to know; learn to do; learn to be; learn to live together.

The general objectives can be translated and operationalized in more focused thematic objectives such as: Personal development, healthy relationships, human security, conflict resolution, cooperative problem-solving; Unity in diversity (tolerance/appreciation of diversity/preventing inter-group hostilities); Human needs, rights and responsibilities - especially the rights of children, women and marginalized groups; Humanitarian law, Civic participation in democratic processes of good governance and peacebuilding, care of the natural environment, etc.,

The realization of these specific education objectives imply: 1) Learning to live appropriately with others is important in our everyday lives – from life in the school, family and community to the special problems of adolescent relationships; 2) Learning to live together in the wider society requires awareness of and respect for human rights and the responsibilities of local, national and global citizenship and 3) Learning to live together as responsible citizens can help reduce tensions due to ethnic or other divisions and social disparities which contribute to the instability or civil conflict seen in many nations today. Therefore the education focus should be more on the learning of intercultural competencies to deal with intercultural realities in globalizing societies.

Competences: Basic life competences are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that serve personal fulfilment, social inclusion and citizenship-building. These include the traditional competences but also the more transversal ones such as learning to learn, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expressions. In this context, reference to Edgar Morin (2000) is essential. He proposes four objectives in the transmission of knowledge and the activities of teaching³⁷: (i) to form a well-developed mind (rather than a too-full mind); (ii) to teach the human condition; (iii) to educate to live (learning does not mean only the acquisition of knowledge, techniques and productive modes, but also an interest in relations with the other and with oneself); and (iv) to learn the dignity of the citizen.

These key competences for lifelong learning can be defined as follows:

- Communication in the mother tongue: it is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts.
- Communication in foreign languages: it involves, in addition to the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue, mediation and intercultural understanding. The level of proficiency depends on several factors and the capacity for listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology.
- Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) and thus basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

³⁶ Delors Report, *Education for 21st Century Learning: the Treasure Within*, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, Paris: Unesco Publishing, 1996; also available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001095/109590eo.pdf>

³⁷ Morin, Edgar, *Réforme de la pensée au XXI siècle*, in J. Bindé (ed.), *Les Clés du XXI siècle*, Paris: UNESCO/Seuil, 2000, p. 271-275.

- Learning to learn is related to learning, the ability to pursue and organize one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.
- Social and civic competences. Social competences refer to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competences and all forms of behavior that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (such as democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals with tools to engage in active and democratic participation.
- Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship: it is the ability to turn ideas into action. It involves creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. It includes awareness of ethical values and promote good governance.
- Cultural awareness and expression: it involves appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media (such as music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts).

3.2 Human Rights-based Intercultural Education

Globally-accepted human rights standards need to be translated in national education strategies. Policy approaches to intercultural dialogue in the education sector range from a focus on civic education to intercultural education seen as a basis for understanding and respecting diversity. Still, the development of intercultural competences and skills as part of an overall political vision or national strategy on life-long learning has yet to be achieved. Acquiring civic competence through education means equipping individuals to fully participate in civic life based on knowledge of democracy, citizenship and civil rights. Therefore, references and guidelines are needed for policy-makers and practitioners in education, as well as for those working in international development co-operation, to learn human rights-based intercultural competences.

Intercultural education refers to learning processes which lead to a knowledge of other cultures and install behavior patterns of availability, openness, respect and dialogue for a constructive and convivial living together in and among societies. Its major objective is therefore the promotion of learning skills for constructive conviviality in a multi-form cultural and social context, valorizing the cultural dimension of active citizenship. Teaching and learning intercultural competences is therefore a necessity to cope and live with diversities in a globalizing societies.

Intercultural competences refer to *“having adequate relevant knowledge about particular cultures, as well as general knowledge about the sorts of issues arising when members of different cultures interact, holding receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with diverse others, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures”*.³⁸ In other words, intercultural competences refer to a set of values, attitudes, knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviors which are needed for: - understanding and respecting people who are perceived to be culturally different from oneself; - interacting and communicating effectively and appropriately with such people; and - establishing positive and constructive relationships with such people.

On the basis of this definition the key components for intercultural education can be broken down into values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviors, all integral part of the lifelong learning competences. In particular, the core components of intercultural competences are:

- The values involved include valuing cultural variability and diversity and valuing pluralism of perspectives and practices.
- Attitudes relevant to intercultural competences include respect for other cultures, willingness to learn about other cultures, empathy, open-mindedness to people from other cultures, willingness to

³⁸ UNESCO, *Intercultural Competences*, op.cit., p. 16

suspend judgment, curiosity, risk-taking, flexibility and willingness to tolerate ambiguity, valuing cultural diversity.

- Skills most directly relevant to an understanding of intercultural competences include: - skills to listening to people from other cultures; - skills of interacting with people from other cultures; - skills of adapting to other cultural environments; - linguistic, socio-linguistic and discourse skills; - skills in mediating intercultural exchanges; - skills in discovering information about other cultures; - skills of interpreting other cultures and relating cultures to one another; - skills of empathy, multiperspectivity and cognitive flexibility; - and skills in critically evaluating cultural perspectives, practices and products.³⁹
- The knowledge and understanding that contribute to intercultural competence include: cultural self-awareness, communicative awareness, cultural awareness of the other, cultural-specific knowledge, especially knowledge of the perspectives, practices and products of particular cultural groups, cultural-general knowledge, especially knowledge of processes of cultural, societal and individual interaction, socio-linguistic awareness, the cultural adaptation process.
- Relevant behaviors for intercultural learning include: behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately during intercultural encounters, flexibility in cultural behavior; cooperating with individuals who have different cultural orientations on shared activities, flexibility in communicative behaviour; taking on an active participatory role in the social world.

The North-South Centre - European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity - of the Council of Europe, which promotes dialogue and cooperation between Europe, the South of the Mediterranean and Africa, focusses its activities on building a global citizenship based on human rights and citizens' responsibilities. Within this context it has developed global education guidelines⁴⁰. They refer to historicity of knowledge, dealing with controversy, confronting the issues of national or cultural identity, introducing the element of change, inspiring optimism and enjoyment, building on personal experiences or simulations, stimulating active involvement, networking among peoples, using multiple resources and using the media. These are conditions for global education practicing to live in world (market) societies. The Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) contains a clear statement reaffirming education as a fundamental human right and underlines the importance of rights-based government action in achieving Education for All goals.⁴¹

Furthermore, the program "Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights" (2004) of the Council of Europe developed a shared understanding with a glossary of terms for democratic citizenship and elaborated tools for teaching democracy.⁴² It was further formalized in the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010) which defines education for democratic citizenship (Art. 2) and links education for democratic citizenship with human rights education (art. 3). Moreover it distinguishes various types of education in which intercultural competences can be developed:

- Formal education is the structured education and training system that runs from pre-primary and primary through secondary school and on to university. It takes place, as a rule, at general or vocational educational institutions and leads to certification.
- Non-formal education is any planned program of education designed to improve a range of skills and competences, outside the formal educational setting.

³⁹ UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report "Youth and Skills: Putting education to work"* (2012) proposes three sets of skills: foundational skills, referring to the most elemental, including literacy and numeracy; transferable skills, which include the ability to solve problems, communicate ideas and information effectively, be creative, show leadership and conscientiousness and demonstrate entrepreneurial capabilities; and technical and vocational skills, referring to the specific technical know-how required in different settings; also available at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Documents/gmr-2012-en.pdf>

⁴⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/nscentre/GEguideline_presentation_en.asp

⁴¹ The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments (2012) defined six internationally agreed education for all goals aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

⁴² Rolf Gollob & Peter Krapf, *Teaching democracy, A collection of models for democratic citizenship and human rights education: teaching sequences, concepts, methods and models*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2008.

- Informal education is the lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from the educational influences and resources in his or her own environment and from daily experience (family, peer group, neighbors, encounters, library, mass media, work, play, etc.).

Conclusion

1. Intercultural dialogue and identity-building

Intercultural dialogue requires an open attitude towards “the other”, a desire to listen to them and to induce comprehension. However, many people are still afraid that intercultural encounters result in a loss of identity and create insecurity. So, to overcome the perception of “the other” as potential threat it is necessary to build the sense of belonging as close as possible to the citizen, to create small and local communities where “the other” can become an accepted neighbor. Subsequently, a spillover effect can support the building up of identities, not defined in a negative way as being opposed to something, but characterized as belonging to a group differentiated but sharing a basic set of common values and interests.

It should be clear that the prior goal of intercultural dialogue is not integration or assimilation of individuals and groups of different cultures, but an incentive to share universal values by/for ‘doing together’. Political participation and laicity are fundamental features of inclusiveness at all levels; they may give rise to a new global civic identity.

2. Intercultural dialogue and citizenship: universal basis and plural character

Universal citizenship is the grant provided by the ‘new’ International Law, which is rooted in the United Nations Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In virtue of this *Ius Novum Universale*, all human beings are endowed with the same legal statute in the world constitutional space. The rationale of universal citizenship is to include all, i.e. *ad omnes includendos*. This is the basis for all learning intercultural competences

3. Intercultural dialogue and democracy: major challenges and participatory characteristics

The challenge to current politics is the search for a coherent combination of all dimensions of democracy and, at the same time, an extension of democratic practices up to the international institutions. Strengthening and democratizing the United Nations should hopefully become a fundamental common goal for the actors in dialogue. It is assumed that an intensification of intercultural dialogue and a reinforcement of deliberative democracy might contribute to the development of a policy of greater inclusiveness, rejecting a distinction between insiders and outsiders, and increasing a sense of belonging. Such a dialogue constitutes a solid basis for active citizenship, strengthens empowerment and contributes to the deepening of a global identity.

I am convinced that intercultural dialogue may contribute to an intercultural society that brings a new and advanced type of democracy to the growing diversity of existing political, social and cultural spaces. Preconditions for such an intercultural dialogue are: - the acceptance of the human rights paradigm as a solid basis for mutual respect; - an intensification of intercultural communication; - a recognition of cultural pluralism; - greater citizens’ participation; - inclusive policies at all levels and within all sectors; - and the development of a culture of dialogue and an education of intercultural dialogue. Democracy needs intercultural dialogue for the exploitation of its full potential as much as intercultural dialogue needs democratic practices.

4. The structural/institutional setting for human rights-based intercultural dialogue: the global dialogues' framework for learning intercultural competences

Structures for effective and sustainable intercultural dialogue are important for the policy implementation of the key concepts of cultural diversity, identity, citizenship and democracy in respect of human rights. A relevant question concerns the policy for political dialogues, discussions, cooperation, and the human rights clauses in existing treaties. Structured dialogues provide a clear framework for policy-making and would increase the democratic legitimacy that is needed to gain the vital support of citizens across the globe.

Human rights-based intercultural dialogue is therefore of the utmost importance to meeting the challenges of globalization and living together peacefully in a complex world. It contributes to the recognition that difference exists between peoples and societies, and addresses the need to encourage mutual trust, respect and understanding between various peoples. This implies that the learning environment in which intercultural dialogue takes place and develops is marked by diversity, complexity, proximity and interconnectedness of interaction and exchange among and between societies, peoples and persons.

Approaching cultural diversity through intercultural dialogue requires that the broadest possible range of life competences be identified and promoted. Hence the growing awareness that intercultural competences constitute a very relevant resource and become a requisite response to help individuals negotiate cultural boundaries throughout their personal encounters and experiences. The UNESCO and the Council of Europe have been addressing the growing interest in intercultural competences by proposing strategies, guidelines and handbooks in view of the realization of true intercultural dialogue. Placing cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue higher on the international agenda is therefore critical for human security and a prime responsibility for the 21st century to safeguard the survival, livelihood and dignity of individuals.

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