# INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE – ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF THE CURRENT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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*Abstract: The current international community has undergone a continuous and complex evolution taking into account the specific aspects of globalization. As a consequence of the massive migration phenomenon, cultural diversity requires efficient strategies of action, such as promotion of intercultural dialogue. A comprehensive analysis of intercultural dialogues reveals interaction of variable parameters, such as immaterial elements - values, attitudes, ideas, and customs – and material components – artistic objects, possessions – with space dimension and transversal approach of policy and culture domains.hameleonic achievement, intercultural dialogue manifests as an essential dimension of contemporary artistic creation, major current political priority and ideal framework for education.An efficient intercultural dialogue, based on the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, assures a peaceful and secure international community.*

*Keywords: intercultural dialogue, education, artistic creation, policy priority, international community*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization, defined as the process of interaction and integration of different nations, affects political systems, economic development and prosperity, environment, culture, and human physical well-being in societies around the world. Even it is not considered a new phenomenon, whereas it had been widespread in Europe and Asia during Middle Age, globalization, nowadays, is characterized by the increase of cross-border trade, investment and migration in the context of swift technological development and the advances of information and communication media. A direct interaction appears between the fields in which globalization has impact on and its general and specific effects. Not wanting to minimize the political and economical outcomes of globalization, thanks to the controversies from reality and legal framework, it is more than adequate a comprehensible analysis of its cultural effects.

Taking into consideration that migration leads to a change of the structure of a society, immigrants altering in time ratios between nationals and minorities. Thus, the multiple cultural affiliations require a clear, coherent, long term strategy for regular performance of a society, strategy which, compulsorily, has to substantiate on a democratic method as it is the dialogue between cultures.

## *2. CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS*



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The existence of numerous controversies, overlapping of realities, vagueness of the terms used in the discussion of cultural contexts require establishment of some conceptual delimitations. The fundamental source is the expression "culture" which may be analyzed in light of horizontal and vertical dimensions. The main vectors of activity of culture are individuals, groups, community, time, space, communication. The interactions of these vectors generate "intercultural", "intra-cultural", "cross-cultural" and "multicultural" or "a-cultural" attributes for the areas of operation. While the actions which take place within the same culture outline "intra-cultural" feature, the interaction between cultures is described as or mutuality and equality between communities which have contacts - "intercultural"- or reaches across boundaries – "cross-cultural" – or living alongside one another - "multicultural". It may be not ignored the existence of a community without, or irrespective of, culture (customs and habits) – "a-cultural".

The most used idioms in the case of cultural diversity which characterizes nowadays the international community are "intercultural" in association with premises such as "identity", "dialogue", "context", "communication", "education" and "management". Taking into consideration the impact of the terms in legal framework, case law of different level mechanisms and in day by day reality, it would be preferable a study focused on "intercultural dialogue", which reunites features of all the other expressions.

The main European organizations – Council of Europe and European Union – are bound to be preoccupied by phenomenon which takes place in their community. Each of them endeavors to establish clear, comprehensive and acknowledged qualities of intercultural dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue is defined as "open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage based on mutual understanding and respect. It operates at all levels – within societies, between the societies of Europe and between Europe and the wider world' - White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008.

Intercultural dialogue is considered "an instrument to assist European citizens, and all those living in the European Union, in acquiring the knowledge and attitudes to enable them to deal with a more open and more complex environment" - Decision concerning the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 2008.

## 3. STRUCTURE OF THE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

### *3.1. Source of the intercultural dialogue*

Culture includes immaterial elements such as values, ideas, ways of thinking and way of life, customs, beliefs, attitudes and material components such as various forms of artistic creation - objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. This collective programming of the mind distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.

### *3.2. Objective of the intercultural dialogue*

The establishment of the intercultural dialogue has become an urgent requirement silent with changing of national and international community's structure.

#### *3.2.1. General objective of the intercultural dialogue*



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It has set off sine qua non a deeper understanding of the other's global apprehension. It focuses on the function of the collectivity which has to gratify requisites of peacefulness and progression and to configure and develop a sense of mutual belonging. Only this way may be prevented and resolved incompatibilities or even disputes.

### *3.2.2. Specific objectives of the intercultural dialogue*

European legal framework has listed a series of appropriate operations which have to be done in the cultural context. So, the members of community have to share visions of the world, to understand and learn from those that do not see the world with the same perspective they do. It is essential to be identified similarities and differences between different cultural traditions and perception. It has to be established clearly and compulsorily that violence is not a viable solution for resolving eventual disputes between various members of community. Thus, necessary adjustments to all types of existing social and political arrangements must be made only in a democratic manner. One of such fundamental agreement is the one which suggest bridging the divide between those who perceive diversity as a threat and those who view it as enrichment. Only sharing best practices particularly in the areas of intercultural dialogue, the democratic management of social diversity and the promotion of social cohesion and developing jointly new projects it would be possible obtained a lasting positive reaction of the members of community.

### *3.3. Subjects of the intercultural dialogue*

The actors involved in intercultural dialogue are usually "groups" which stand for every type of collective that can act through its representatives: family, community, associations and peoples.

A comprehensive analysis of the subjects reveals varied types of cultural connections. So, especially globalization favors relations between individuals or organizations from different countries and diverse backgrounds (ethnic, social, professional, artistic etc.), links between migrants and local populations, dealings between rural and urban populations, correspondence between centers and peripheries of continents.

### *3.4. Conditions of the intercultural dialogue*

Effectiveness of the intercultural dialogue depends on the establishment of clear conditions of functioning. These dispositions, in function of the model of approach to intercultural dialogue, may be organized in two categories: preconditions or general conditions, which have to be accomplished by the partners in order to assure the appearance of the dialogue; and specific or substance conditions, which establish the guarantees and, in the same, time solutions of a productive dialogue.

The fundamental premise is represented by the necessity to recognize equal dignity for all participants; there are not accepted hierarchies or ascendants of the partners of the dialogue because all have qualities and limits. Actors have to participate to the interchange by free will. Only voluntary engagement may draw in positive effects in communication. The availability of all actors is sustained by their openness, curiosity and commitment, and the absence of a desire to "win" the dialogue. This may happen purely with self-confident, mature and good character partners.

An essential substance condition of the dialogue is readiness to look at both cultural similarities and differences. For this purpose it has to be covered several stages. The first



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stage is represented by the good knowledge of the own culture. Next step is described by a minimum degree of acquaintance about the distinguishing features of one's own and the "other" culture. Other basic point is the capability of arranging the traits of the cultures in classes of resemblances and distinctions. Not less valuable is the ability to find a common language for understanding and respecting cultural differences.

### *3.5. Contain of the intercultural dialogue*

The intercultural dialogue comprises usual activities and special dedicated programmes. Intercultural dialogue is not underlined at any specific stage of these actions. This allows the conclusion that activities are not conducted with the explicit intention to conduct intercultural dialogue, but rather simply touch upon it while in the framework of transnational cooperation.

The intercultural character of the activity is proved by the features of the dialogue's partners: different national affiliation or distinct cultural background as well as their itinerant character all over the world.

## 4. FEATURES OF THE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

### *4.1. Intercultural dialogue – essential dimension of contemporary artistic creation*

Intercultural dialogue stresses the challenges and opportunities of encounters between artists, other culture professionals and audiences of different cultural backgrounds. It is essential constitutive in today's arts and culture practice. The projects are focused on showing the characteristics of the cultures and developing common ideas. They must not consist fully and exclusively in the production and maintenance of websites, the production of magazines and newspapers, the organization of conferences or meetings and the production of studies and reports performance, fair or exhibition, arts residency, festival, publication, research, training, workshop or lecture, multimedia and new technologies. For example, projects which bring together writers from different countries who present their works in their native languages during public reading sessions; festivals during which each project partner has a national day with specific gastronomy, literature, music etc.

### *4.2. Intercultural dialogue – major current politic priority*

Intercultural dialogue is not mainly linked to arts, but to societies. Intercultural dialogue is actually a political and social issue, one that is really important in order to overcome nationalism, the fear for minorities and foreigners.

Thanks to their impact on communities, national or international, notions of "dialogue of civilizations" and "intercultural dialogue" have only recently drawn the attention of international political institutions.

Beginning with First Summit of Heads of State and Government (Vienna) which proclaimed that cultural diversity characterized Europe's rich heritage and that tolerance was the guarantee of an open society, the Council of Europe has assumed intercultural dialogue as a high primacy of its policy. It has been adopted legal instruments, set out mechanisms of protection and initiated programmes and agreements.

The main legal framework related to intercultural dialogue contains European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992), Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995); "Faro Declaration" (2005), which outline the strategy for the



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promotion of intercultural dialogue in the context of the overall remit of the Council of Europe to support human rights, democracy and the rule of law, to strengthen social cohesion, peace and stability; Declaration on 'the future of the Council of Europe youth policy: AGENDA 2020' (2008), which analysis intercultural dialogue in the light of conflict prevention and management, post conflict reconciliation, support to young refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons, and the promotion of global solidarity and cooperation.

The most significant legal instrument adopted by Council of Europe is *White paper on intercultural dialogue (2008, 2010)*, which was preceded by a large consultation with civil society and constitutes the milestone of intercultural dialogue policy in Europe. Moreover, as a follow up, in 2011 the Parliamentary Assembly published the Recommendation 1962 (2011) on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue.

The main mechanisms of protection of intercultural dialogue are European Court on Human Rights (1994), European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2002), Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations (2011), qualified as "the voice of civil society" which provides a hands-on concise, user-friendly Dialogue Toolkit and aims to help build social cohesion and the human rights based approach regarding diversity issues.

Important agreements were signed by the Council of Europe and different partners, charting future cooperation. Thus, it has to listed the protocols with United Nations (particularly UNESCO and the "Alliance of Civilizations" initiative), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union, "Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures" and Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

The key programmes launched by Council of European are European Youth Campaign against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance ("All Different – All Equal"), European Youth Campaign on Diversity, Human Rights and Participation.

European Union has been primarily focusing on the development of intercultural awareness and understanding of individuals, in view of European citizenship and mobility.

The main legal source of European Union is article 165 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which encourage the development of youth exchanges and the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe.

Another important legal instrument is the renewed Framework of cooperation in the youth field (2009), which was published just after the European Year, intercultural aspects being mentioned in the areas of action 'Social inclusion' ('support the development of intercultural awareness and competences for all young people and combat prejudice'), and 'Culture and Creativity'.

An significative contribution has been brought by the intercultural dialogue between Europeans and other nations from all over the world, all interested in funding programme for youth of third countries and in develop initiatives such as the EU-China policy dialogue on culture launched together with the Ministry of Culture of China in 2009, which gave birth to the EU-China Year of Youth in 2011 and the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2012.



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United Nations delegate UNESCO and Alliance of Civilizations to contribute to the safeguard and promotion of the culture as a shared resource for dialogue and sustainable development. In this purpose have been adopted conventions and created programmes.

Fostering cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is one of the main pillars of UNESCO's action in South-East Europe. The main objective is to encourage cultural pluralism at the local, regional and national level as well as regional and sub-regional initiatives, highlighting the importance of transfers and exchanges between cultures.

As well, UNESCO assume the same position as Council of Europe concerning the role that can be played by culture in conflict or post-conflict situations as a vehicle for reconciliation through cultural heritage.

Specific for UNESCO, nevertheless, is the qualification of culture as common spaces for exchange via its Routes of Dialogue programme. The success of past programmes, such as Arabia Plan, Caucasus Project, Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia, Iron Roads in Africa, Mediterranean Programme, The Routes of al-Andalus (PDF in French) encourage the efficient actions in on-going projects: UNESCO Silk Roads Online Platform, The Slave Route.

United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is considered leading United Nations platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation. It explores the roots of polarization between societies and cultures and to recommend practical programmes of action, such as Intercultural Award, Intercultural Leaders, Migration Programming, Peaceapp, Summer schools, Media and Information Litaracy etc. It concentrates its activity in areas as Education, Youth, Migration and Media, implementing continuity, cooperation and progressivity, prevention principles.

### *4.3. Intercultural dialogue – ideal framework for education*

All the international and regional organizations have focused on promoting intercultural dialogue in educational systems. In this purpose it has been created over the time different educational programmes and mechanisms intended to achieve the objectives of intercultural dialogue.

Council of Europe have produced long-term action programmes, such as those focussing on education for democratic citizenship, teacher training for intercultural learning and history teaching, inter-community relations, the programme for the development of monitoring and communication tools of national programmes for Roma in South East Europe, or specific programmes run by the North-South Centre, the European Centre for Modern Languagesand the two European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe.

European Union elaborated Youth programme (2000-2006), which referred to only 'intercultural preparation' of participants, Youth in Action programme (2007-2013), which clearly included 'intercultural dialogue'. As well, it has to mentioned SALTO - Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities - within the European Youth programme, on Cultural Diversity, which organises trainings and issues publications on this topic.

The framework of the Partnership in the youth field set up by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, the focus around the theme of intercultural dialogue has been reflected in several publications (Tkit on Intercultural learning, the Youth Knowledge Book Intercultural learning in non formal education ). Moreover, the European Union Council of Europe youth partnership has been working on the project of setting up



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Indicators for Intercultural dialogue in Non formal education activities, in cooperation with various actors in the field, and especially with SALTO Diversity which conducted a research on intercultural competences.

The flagship initiative 'Youth on the Move', part of the Agenda EU2020 issued in 2011, promotes the development of intercultural competences of individuals through learning mobility.

A recent programme initiated by UNESCO - Education for All (EFA) movement – is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. In order to put into practice this programme, it was ellaborated The Dakar Framework for Action, which mandated UNESCO to coordinate Governments, development agencies, civil society and the private sector, in cooperation with the four other conveners of the Dakar Forum (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank). As the leading agency, UNESCO has focused its activities on five key areas: policy dialogue, monitoring, advocacy, mobilisation of funding, and capacity development in the sight of the achievement of essential goals : expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality; ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes; achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults; eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The latest initiative of UNESCO is World Education Forum 2015, at which it was adopted Incheon Declaration. Principles as equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030, transforming lives through education, gender equality were proclaimed as the future fundamental goals which must be achieved only in conditions of strong global and regional collaboration, cooperation, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the education agenda based on data collection, analysis and reporting at the country level, within the framework of regional entities, mechanisms and strategies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Seen as an aspect of transnational cultural cooperation, intercultural dialogue has become a major priority of the political, social, cultural institutions, both the national and international level. Only a dialogue based on the principles of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, democracy and the rule of law will guarantee international peace and stability in the long term.



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