

ENCC Contribution to the European Commission's "Call for ideas" for promoting intercultural dialogue in Europe

Answers by Christiane Ziller, Executive Director of ENCC



Question A:

How can one contribute towards identifying, evaluating, developing and exchanging projects, experience and good practices in intercultural dialogue on a European scale?

To experience and accept cultural diversity as an asset, and to develop values and forms of living together requires a concrete personal encounter with the other in a space free of fear. To create concrete and diverse possibilities for encounters and exchange – that is e.g. something cultural centres in Europe offer. The European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC), whose operations are lead by the German member association (Bundesvereinigung Soziokultureller Zentren) since 2005, represents far more than 1000 socio-cultural facilities in at the moment 10 European countries. As local cultural agencies they are in direct contact with citizens of all ages, especially however with children and young people. Our perception of intercultural dialogue is to build bridges and to be a bridge oneself- these are also central principles of socio-cultural work, that connects different artistic spheres and generations, resorts and cultures, urban and rural settings, East and West, individuals and community. Through our experience we can contribute especially suitable instruments, successful projects and practice examples on European level:- organized exchange of experiences between cultural organizers and multipliers (e.g. via project fairs)- the production of resilient cooperation structures (e.g. through staff exchange, voluntary services, study internships)- the concentration and distribution of existing knowledge through European networks (e.g. newsletter, websites) investigative, qualitative and narrative research (e.g. studies, visits, comparative surveys)- seminars (to further develop positions) cooperation of different societal actors (politics, economy, science, civil society) in common projects, in order to enable cross-over transfers (also between these actors from time to time an intercultural dialogue is urgently needed!) As important as these connecting instruments are individually: nothing is more effective than the own experience of cultural diversity, nothing can substitute the individual effort for respect for the separating and the search for commonalities. PS: The experience of failed projects can be often very instructive therefore we believe a pure focus on best practice is too limited.

Question B:

What information and communication initiatives could contribute towards involving all European Union residents, and particularly young people, in the promotion of intercultural dialogue in day-to-day life and familiarising them with it?

Transregional communication and information campaigns often reach only those who are interested already, are highly educated and materialistic well established (young) people. Much greater success can be ascribed to initiatives and offers that are located in the everyday structures of the target groups, with low access barriers. For

examples schools and cultural centres. Cultural centres have a long tradition of being spaces for encounters between art and education. At least in Germany various cooperations between educational institutions and cultural centres are in place. In the interest of promoting intercultural dialogue, cooperation should be strengthened and promoted by the EU. E.g. cultural centres who know many artists and have expertise of judging artistic value can help schools in choosing and linking up with artists. Also, the cultural centres with vast experience of intercultural dialogue can develop special further training for teachers. And they can offer their considerably more arty infrastructure for offers of educational institutions. Another good way is the increase of mobility of artists and persons engaged in the cultural sector, in the interest of the recipients and also the artists: the recipients extend their personal experiences with artistically produced perspectives and views and the artists gain new insights through their travels which they can in return work on artistically. We have experienced that bringing the own „patchwork identity“ into consciousness is also very useful for the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Intercultural differences do not only exist between ethnics and religions, but also between regions, social strata, generations, gender, etc. Especially in Europe there are hardly any families nowadays, in which not at least one recent ancestor's background is from a different culture. Each and every one of us can start with intercultural dialogue in the own family, as the youth project “Korzenie-Roots” of the Warsaw Cultural Centre Dorozkarnia strikingly manifests. Conclusion: The EU Commission would achieve the greatest effects with a small scale project funding, situated in the living surroundings of people, especially in the field of cooperation between cultural centres and educational institutions.

Question C:

What specific European-scale initiatives likely to reach, directly or indirectly, as many people in the European Union as possible – and particularly young people – could contribute towards promoting intercultural dialogue?

This question is a core question for our association and also the European Network of Cultural Centres, which we also represent here. One evidence for this is our-unfortunately not selected- project application “Building Bridges- the European Cultural Centres as Crystallization core of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue” (GSD EAC 46/05). In our view artistic projects of young people from as many European countries as possible that treat a common subject, under expertise supervision, with affordable means and with results that can subsequently be exchanged easily and impressively are especially suitable for the above-mentioned objective. Therefore we are working on an idea for a video clip competition “Europe in 1:30”, in which the many young people that participate all over Europe in media projects, express their view of Europe in a film in the time of a regular news spot- 1 minute and 30 seconds. The best short films, selected by a jury will be extended and worked on in cooperation with film artists from the cultural centres to produce a feature film which can then be shown at all cultural centres who are interested and have a cinema theatre. In addition, we deem organised staff exchanges very effective, in particular circle exchanges, in which more than two centres are involved. Very important is also the promotion of activities and networks of multipliers (especially in civil society) such as seminars, project fairs, committee work. Often they are the multipliers of information and KnowHow, as well as initiators and carriers of Europe-wide activities. And we deem evaluation instruments very important. Externally it is especially about raising comparable data, internally – and this is just

as important- about self- assessment. Therefore we are planning the development of a questionnaire on intercultural self- evaluation for the staff members in European cultural centres. The results shall be presented and discussed at a European Congress. Finally, we are convinced that investigative, qualitative and narrative research work (studies, visits, comparative surveys) and their publication (print/internet) as well as the establishment of data bases for the individual facilities but also subject related data bases to get into contact easier are very useful.