Intercultural Dialogue Manifesto

Establishing Common Grounds for International Cooperation

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Preface

Cultural diversity has a dynamic nature and the growth of interconnectedness and acceleration of internalisation processes has indicated the need for intercultural competences to be prioritised to ensure peaceful societies and avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. The acknowledgement of intercultural dialogue and communication can help to diffuse tensions that may arise between multicultural societies and encourage the harmonious interaction of people of varied identities.

In an increasingly globalised world, institutions, organisations and companies across Europe operate in multicultural environments. Many institutions in Europe now actively recruit from abroad, making the learner population of European institutions increasingly multicultural. Institutions, organisations and companies have incorporated diversity in the ways they function and it is often included in their strategies as well. Individual governments are also actively promoting and seeking support for international development efforts.

Programmes such as the Erasmus+ promote youth mobility to foster understanding within Europe and further. The new Erasmus+ programme will focus more on the international dimension and will expand its participation possibilities. Erasmus+ recognises the importance of the extra-EU international dimension and supports the international exchange of students, academics, ideas and good practice between institutions. Erasmus+ is a perfect example of facilitating international cooperation between Europe and other regions because through this networking, experiences and skills sharing, it gives a new perspective to participants that develop a sense of belonging in a global community. Institutions, companies and universities exchange views, promote peer learning and innovation projects and communities become more diverse, open-minded and make greater steps to a more sustainable future.

Aims and Objectives

The topic of intercultural dialogue is very dear to ESN, as ESN is an organisation that has been supporting and developing student exchanges for 31 years and stands by the idea that international exchanges can lead to a better world and a space for an open intercultural dialogue. ESN strives to provide opportunities for stable and healthy interactions between its members, international students and the local communities. It creates safe spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can come together, meet, network and have the chance to gain non-formal intercultural skills and engage in intercultural dialogue.

In cooperation with the Council of Europe and the European Youth Foundation, ESN has prepared this manifesto that focuses on creating intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding and reconciliation among youth workers that have diverse backgrounds and, in formal and informal settings, interact, learn and work together. It is designed for young workers and young people in general who are active in non-formal education and it is intended to develop young people's competencies for intercultural dialogue. The concepts, recommendations and activities highlighted may be usefully integrated into the every-day actions of young people working towards improving intercultural understanding, communication and awareness among their peers and their local communities.

This manifesto is an important contribution to the resources available for those working in increasingly culturally diverse environments, to help improve the overall quality of actions by making them more accessible, effective, fun and inclusive that will result in better outcomes and increase awareness of the intercultural components that will transform international experiences.

The Notion of Intercultural Dialogue

The concept of Intercultural Dialogue is best described by the terminology used by the Council of Europe in its "White Paper for Intercultural Dialogue" [1] as "...an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage." This definition is wide enough to encompass all kinds of cultural exchange between individuals without prioritising arbitrarily any of them. Based on the key findings of the UNESCO survey on Intercultural Dialogue in 2017[2] , intercultural dialogue is increasingly recognized as a prerequisite for peaceful societies and for sustainable development to thrive. This means that it can prevent violent conflicts by promoting peaceful interactions and social cohesion and so peaceful and inclusive societies can create environments beneficial to sustainable development. In the same survey it is stated that priority should be given to the role of non-formal and informal education in order to raise awareness and

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1   Council of Europe, 2008, White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: Living Together As Equals in Dignity, Retrieved from: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/source/white%20paper_final_revised_en.pdf
2   UNESCO, 2018, UNESCO survey on Intercultural Dialogue 2017: Analysis of the Findings,Retrieved from: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/unesco-survey-intercultural-dialogue-2017-analysis-findings-2018-en.pdf

understanding for the integration of people from different cultural backgrounds, safeguarding cultural diversity and inclusion. There is a wide range of actors involved in this process, from national governments to NGOs and the civil society and in order to reassure the resilience of these processes we must achieve multi-stakeholder cooperation and shared responsibility. The ultimate goal of this exchange is to create a collaborative environment that enables young people, their communities and leaders to overcome political and social tensions and to nurture attitudes and behaviours of openness, curiosity and respect for the other that lead to greater empathy, trust and solidarity.

The Significance of Intercultural Dialogue

The concept of intercultural dialogue can be important to not only understand a country or region's specific context, but also as a means of exploring one's own culture and values from the perspective of another cultural community. Based on the survey analysis by UNESCO in 2017 indicating an example of definition by a Member State, while the word dialogue might usually refer to a conversation between different people, the term is also used to describe a form of interaction between two or more persons (who might hold opposing, differing views) that emphasises self-expression and reciprocal listening, without judgment in a spirit of openness, and has a transformative potential. Validation of the other has an empowering effect. Dialogue therefore functions as a smart power tool of diplomacy.

Culture is embodied in a specific community in the way its members feel, think and act, the way they understand themselves and the world, express their moral, aesthetic, religious and political values and establish particular relations as individuals and groups in their daily lives. Usually, people relate one culture to a nation, but that can lead to misunderstandings as this may overlook cultural differences within one nation and also overstate cultural differences between countries. Our identities are linked to our society, but that doesn't mean that each individual shares the same identities in a group. Every individual has its own interpretation. The goal of intercultural dialogue should be to establish common ground between different cultures, communities, and people, promoting understanding and interaction.

In order to achieve intercultural dialogue there should be two or more cultures that have as a starting point to learn from each other and all sides should approach each other with openness and curiosity. Afterwards, they should see their differences in a productive way and accept that

differences can exist, without creating a conflict. To know about a culture is not enough. It's also essential to learn to value and understand it. The last step is taking action and addressing conflicts and stereotypes openly by discussing them in a productive manner. The prerequisite to reach these points is to accept that one's own views are not the only truth and that other's views might also be a possibility. This is the most crucial step and the hardest one to achieve, but it's important in order to create the conditions of knowing, or knowing about, the other cultures and be willing to experience new cultural elements.

Key Terms

1. Culture

Culture is the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.[1]

2. Multicultural

Multiculturalism is the coexistence of diverse cultures. Here culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups that live alongside one another, but each cultural group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with each other.[2]

3. Intercultural

Intercultural describes what occurs when members of two or more different cultural groups interact or influence one another on some level, whether in person or through various mediated forms. [3] Intercultural efforts typically strive to create understanding, increase trust, build relationships and drive collaboration.

4. Dialogue

Dialogue is a form of communication (most often linguistic, though not always) occurring when participants, having their own perspectives, yet recognize the existence of other, different perspectives, remaining open to learning about them. Dialogue requires comprehension but not necessarily agreement. Listening to diverse viewpoints most often takes as its eventual goal compromise between competing positions, collaborative planning, and problem solving.

1   Culture, Mirriam-Webster dictionary, Retrieved from: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture

2   Spring Institute, Paula Schriefer, What's the difference between multicultural, intercultural and cross-cultural communication?, Retrieved from: https://spring-institute.org/whats-difference-multicultural-intercultural-cross-cultural-communication/

3   UNESCO, Intercultural Dialogue-Core Concepts, Retrieved from: https://en.unesco.org/interculturaldialogue/core-concepts

5. Communication

Communication is the act or process of using words, sounds, signs or behaviours to exchange information or to express ideas, thoughts, feelings etc. to someone else.1 Moreover, is sending and receiving information between two or more people. The information conveyed can include facts, ideas, concepts, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, instructions and even emotions.[2]

6. Identity
(Cultural, Social, Personal)

Identity can refer to the person's sense of who they are and what they attribute value and significance. Most people use a range of different identities to describe themselves, including both personal and social identities.

- *Personal identities* are those identities that are based on personal attributes (e.g. caring, extroverted), interpersonal relationships and roles (e.g. mother, friend, colleague) and autobiographical narratives (e.g. born to working-class parents).

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1   Communication, Miriam-Webster Dictionary, Retrieved from: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication

2   „What is Communication? - Definition & Importance." Study.com, 3 February 2014, Retrieved from: study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-communication-definition-importance.html

- *Social identities* are instead based on memberships of social groups (e.g. a nation, a gender group).

- *Cultural identity* refers to those aspects of identity shared by members of a culture that, taken as a set, mark them as distinct from members of other cultures.

These facts simplify intercultural dialogue: since everyone has had the experience of moving between contrasting identities, it makes sense to recognise others as members of multiple groups as well. At the same time though it may complicate the process of understanding that one person can hold multiple and fluid identities and often categorize them as only members of one group.

7. Values, beliefs and attitudes

Values, beliefs, and attitudes are key aspects of culture, fundamental for all communication with others, whether within a culture or between members of different cultures. One possible distinction suggests *values* are a person's own set of principles which they consider of great importance; *beliefs* are the ideas accepted to be true without any facts; and *attitudes* refer to the ways of thinking or feeling with regards to someone or something. [3]

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3   FutureLearn, Values, beliefs and attitudes, Retrieved from: https://www.futurelearn.com/info/courses/supporting-learning-secondary/0/steps/58621

8. Remembrance and Reconciliation

The aim of remembrance and reconciliation is to enable young generations to acquire the skills needed to view the events of the past within their historical context and to listen in order to be encouraged to think critically about the process of recognising one's own role and responsibility in processes of dialogue, decision-making and peacebuilding for the future.[1]

9. Respect for Diversity

Respect itself is based on the judgment that the other person has inherent value and is worthy of one's attention and interest. It recognises the dignity of the other person and affirms their right to choose and to advocate for their own views and way of life. Intercultural dialogue thus requires respect for the dignity, equality and human rights of others, in order to critically reflect on the relationships between different cultural groups.

10. Stereotypes- Prejudice- Discrimination- Bias

A *stereotype* is an over-generalised belief about a particular category of people. It is an expectation that people might have about every person of a particular group. [2] The type of expectation can vary; it can be, for example, an expectation about the group's personality, preferences, or ability. While such generalisations may be useful when making quick decisions, they may be invalid when applied to particular individuals. [3]

Prejudice is an affective feeling towards a person based on their perceived group membership. The word is often used to refer to a preconceived, usually unfavourable, evaluation of another person based on that person's political affiliation, sex, gender, beliefs, values, social class, age, disability, religion, sexuality, race/ethnicity, language, nationality, beauty, occupation, education, criminality, sport team affiliation or other personal characteristic. [4]

Prejudice is also defined as a „feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience" eristics.[5]

1   Intercultural Dialogue, Peacebuilding,Constructive Remembrance and Reconciliation:A Toolkit for Teachers in the Western Balkans,, S. Clarke-Habibi, Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338143881_A_Toolkit_for_Teachers_in_the_Western_Balkans_Educating_for_Intercultural_Dialogue_Peacebuilding_Constructive_Remembrance_and_Reconciliation

2   Cardwell, Mike (1999). *Dictionary of psychology*
3   „Stereotypes | Simply Psychology". Retrieved from: https://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html
4   Wedgwood, Hensleigh (1855). „English Etymologies"
5   Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner. S. L. (2010). „Intergroup bias" The Handbook of Social Psychology

Discrimination is prejudiced treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction towards, a being based on the group, class, or category to which they are perceived to belong. These include age, caste, criminal record, height, disability, family status, gender identity, gender expression, generation, genetic characteristics, marital status, nationality, color, race and ethnicity, religion, sex and sex characteristics, sexual orientation, social class, species, as well as other categories. [1] Discrimination consists of treatment of an individual or group, based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or social category, „in a way that is worse than the way people are usually treated". [2]

Bias is a disproportionate weight in favor of or against an idea or thing, usually in a way that is closed-minded, prejudicial, or unfair. Biases can be innate or learned. People may develop biases for or against an individual, a group, or a belief. [3]

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1   Discrimination, definition, Cambridge Dictionaries Online, Cambridge University. Retrieved from: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discrimination
2   Introduction to Sociology. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company
3   Steinbock, Bonnie (1978). „Speciesism and the Idea of Equality".

11.   Ethnocentrism-Nationalism

Ethnocentrism is the attitude that one's own cultural group, nationality or religion is superior to other groups. A high level of appreciation for one's own culture can be healthy; a shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike for other cultures and could cause misunderstanding and conflict.

Nationalism is devotion to the idea of the nation, glorifying one's nation above all others,

especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Nationalism is viewed with suspicion since its emphasis on community and belonging puts it at odds with liberal commitments to individual rights and to freedom and equality as universal values.

12.   Intercultural Competences

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 groups of people, as well as having the skills required to draw upon both knowledge and attitudes when interacting with others from different cultures.

Components of Intercultural Competence

Intercultural encounters may involve contact between people from different countries, people from different regional, linguistic, ethnic or religious backgrounds. An interpersonal encounter becomes an intercultural encounter when cultural differences are perceived and made noticeable either by the situation or by the individual's own attitudes. If an interpersonal encounter becomes an intercultural encounter, that is the situation where intercultural competence is then required in order to achieve harmonious interaction and effective dialogue. So based on that, intercultural competence can be defined as "the ability to consistently apply through behaviour a combination of the attitudes, skills and knowledge which are needed for understanding, and for effectively and appropriately interacting and communicating with, people who are perceived to be culturally different from oneself".[1] Based on that definition, Deardorff identifies some core components of intercultural competence, that can be broken down into four main categories:

- Attitudes

- Skills

- Knowledge

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[1]   Deardorff, D. K. 2006 , The Identification and Assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalization at Institutions of Higher Education in the United States, Journal of Studies in International Education, Retrieved from: https://www.mccc.edu/~lyncha/doc uments/Deardorff-identificationandassessmentofintercultu-ralcompetenceasanoutcomeofInternationalizat.pdf

Attitudes	Skills	Knowledge
Openness to people who are perceived to be from other cultural backgrounds	Empathy	Cultural self-awareness – of one's own cultural positionings, preconceptions, stereotypes, etc.
Respect for other cultures	The ability to understand and respond to other people's thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings	Communicative awareness, especially of the different linguistic and communicative conventions within different cultures
Curiosity about other cultures and tolerance to ambiguity	Adapting to other cultural environments	Culture-specific knowledge, especially knowledge of the perspectives, practices and products of particular cultural groups
Willingness to learn about other cultures	Linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills	
Willingness to suspend judgement	Interpreting and relating cultures to one another	
Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately during intercultural encounters		
Flexibility in cultural and communicative behaviour		
Having a disposition for action in society in order to enhance the common good, especially through the reduction of intercultural prejudice, discrimination and conflict		

Strengthening Intercultural Dialogue: Recommendations and Policy Orientations for Action

Recommendation 1: Support should continue to be given to networks and initiatives for intercultural dialogue at all levels, while ensuring the full and inclusive engagement of all actors/stakeholders involved.

It's crucial to develop measures to enable members of communities and organisations to organize and participate in projects to counter cultural stereotyping. Support should also be given to initiatives aimed at developing spaces for cultural interaction and cultural exchanges that promote acceptance and tolerance between people from different backgrounds within an overall process of cultural rapprochement.

Recommendation 2: Raise awareness about intercultural dialogue and promote initiatives that reach as many people as possible.

In order to promote and sustain the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness on the topic of sustainable development and intercultural dialogue the actions and initiatives of networks, associations, institutions and organisations should become more visible. The outcomes of their projects should be further communicated and their good practices should be showcased.

Recommendation 3: Provide training and capacity building opportunities for intercultural competencies.

There are various frameworks in which intercultural dialogue can take place, like NGOs, associations, networks and joint youth activities. A process of capacity building could be developed in order to strengthen the intercultural competences of these networks: there could be trainings and conferences during which experts from these networks specialized in various topics can share experiences with organisations in other stages of development. In addition to such training seminars, practical handbooks, informational websites with examples of good practice or other types of publications could help organisations in their development.

Recommendation 4: Mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge are central to short-term and long-term intercultural cooperation.

Intercultural competence is a central precondition for every individual and since it is not automatically acquired, it needs to be developed, learned and maintained throughout life. It is clear that without appropriate policies, which place intercultural competence at the heart of all education, and, above all, without the everyday practice of developing the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge needed for mutual understanding, no sustainable societal change is possible.

Recommendation 5: Enhance civic participation so that it strengthens the responsibility for participation in the cultural and social life and invites people to view all citizens as equal.

Being part of a multicultural society requires to have been taught the values of critical thinking, personal and social responsibility and the importance of learning about cultures different from one's own. Intercultural communication requires people to be aware of their differences and commonalities in order to get involved in civic issues and to work collaboratively with those who may be different from themselves to address common topics and to achieve a common purpose.

Recommendation 6: Create opportunities to learn and practice intercultural dialogue in education institutions and play an active role in internalisation at home and abroad.

It's significant to mention the importance of internationalising learning outcomes for all students, not simply those who study abroad and purposefully integrate international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students. Making purposeful use of cultural diversity can create more inclusive learning settings and develop international and intercultural perspectives.

Recommendation 7: Provide access to the natural and cultural sites and offer the chance for mutual recognition and appreciation.

The cultural heritage, cultural activities and the discovery of different natural sites can connect cultures. There could be possibilities for creating a space of expression and interexchange. Wide participation in cultural activities should be encouraged by all stakeholders. Cultural activities can play a key role in transforming a territory into a shared public space.

Recommendation 8: Adequate financial support and provision through fundings for intercultural dialogue projects and activities.

Civil society has an important role in this regard, but it needs sustainable, secured funding to carry out its tasks. Projects can create intercultural dialogue and help bring communities together. Cultural activities can bridge gaps between people in a peaceful way and encourage mutual understanding between host country populations and people with different cultural backgrounds. In order to create qualitative projects, more financial aid should be guaranteed.

Recommendation 9: Support cultural activities and mobility exchanges and recognise their role as catalysts of dialogue and mutual understanding.

Learning and teaching mobility also plays a crucial role in developing social, civic and intercultural competences and promoting a sense of belonging. Taking part in a mobility period has a wide range of positive aspects. We need to ensure inclusive learning mobility schemes and that access to mobility programmes is possible for all regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, we need to ensure the increasing quality of mobility programmes on topics like the recognition of credit mobility and the integration of exchange students in their hosting countries. Also, returning students have an added-value in their local societies, as they can become ambassadors and natural implementers of intercultural dialogue.

Recommendation 10: Increase the cooperation and the dissemination of knowledge regarding intercultural dialogue through sharing best practices, publications and establishing a communication hub between stakeholders.

Engagement across multiple sectors, actors and levels is required to have a long-lasting impact and to find innovative solutions. There is a range of actors and institutions involved in intercultural dialgue, varying from government ministries to universities, cultural institutions, NGOs and civil society. The resilience of the efforts done to promote diversity and intercultural dialogue depends on interdi-sciplinary cooperation and requires multi-stakeholder cooperation, shared responsibility and strong leadership. It's also essential to integrate intercultural dialogue in their internal structures as a way of enforcing it as part of their core values (ex-recruitment processes).

Achieving Intercultural Dialogue: Activity Ideas for Action

Interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds can positively influence their attitudes towards other cultures and enhance their level of comfortable connections and open-mindedness towards the world. Inspiration and information provision is the first step to changing perspectives and action. Below you can find some ideas for events and activities that can create opportunities for intercultural exchange and experience.

International Meetings:

International meetings can give the chance to the participants to promote their countries and cultures to each other by creating an international atmosphere and presenting their cultural heritage. It would add more value to make such an event open to the local community and showcase the diversity of multiculturalism.

International Sport Games:

Sports events and competitions usually gather a big number of people from all around the world. Sports create an international and friendly atmosphere creating strong bonds between people, making sports a universal language understood by everyone. It aims to break all barriers which separate international and local communities, under the motto of healthy competition.

Photo Exhibitions:

Seeing pictures of places where people have lived or where they have been and showcasing breathtaking landscapes and sites can make people realise what stands beyond their home and make them feel the drive to explore and travel in order to see the world with their own eyes. A photo exhibition presenting the world can be both an online or an on-spot activity by having participants there to explain their experience and give more information.

City Tours:

City tours can be an excellent chance to go forward and see different places and discover new city sites. Every site you visit gives us new inspiration and knowledge of the real world and makes us appreciate the richness and diversity of the local, regional and national cultural heritage.

International Meals:

Food can bring people together and encourage them to create stronger bonds with each other. For this event, participants can bring typical food (and drinks) and in exchange they can try out meals from different countries. In that way they get to know the cuisines of other cultures and get familiar with their food customs.

Language Tandems:

Language tandems is a method of language exchange, in which two or more people meet each other to improve their language skills. It can be a great way to support multiculturalism and language learning as people can teach each other basics of their native languages (or languages they can speak in general) in an informal and entertaining way.

Visiting the Countryside and Natural Heritage Sites:

By visiting the countryside and the natural beauties we may contribute to mending the development gap of urban and rural areas and rediscover the cultural and natural heritage of a country. Broadening heritage perspective and meaning can notably help receive a holistic idea of the cultural-historical-natural experience.

Folk Dance Workshops:

Traditional dancing is one of the best reflections of the spirit and the character of an individual culture, so it is worth the try to teach one's national dances and simultaneously learn other's national dances and the history of traditional dances from around the world.

Training for intercultural competences:

Nowadays more and more people are working in multicultural workplaces, they are part of global teams, interact in multicultural environments or move abroad for a more prosperous future. It's therefore crucial to develop the right skills and competences in order to learn about your own values and biases and how to adapt and respond to different cross-cultural perspectives. Organising training and providing learning opportunities to develop cultural intelligence can increase the possibilities for responding effectively to cultural diversity.

Celebrating Unity in Diversity:

Showcasing and celebrating one's own culture together with other ones can provide an open and safe space to highlight that regardless of whatever differences may divide us, we are all united as free and equal human beings and that's enough of a reason to celebrate with one's local, regional and national music, dance, flag, language and any other cultural element.

Volunteering activities to bring together the international and the local communities:

It can prove beneficial to connect international and local communities through volunteering initiatives, as it can provide opportunities to the participants to learn how one can contribute to the improvement of society as a global citizen. Taking into account the impact of one's words, deeds, and beliefs on those who reside in other cities, states, and countries, has become an essential element of behaving responsibly in the modern world and promoting peace.