



## "UNITE – Undertaking intercultural exchange"

### Final Recommendations

#### General considerations:

1. Intercultural Dialogue should be considered as a dialogue between individuals with different personal cultures rather than between nationalities or persons coming from diverse geographic areas. Due to various reasons, cultures and life style of persons might differ even though they are citizens of the same country or region.
2. Dialogue is needed to foster integration of immigrants, but also to involve different cultures that may be represented by locals. Initiatives and strategies should therefore try and bring together a broad range of different groups and members of society (be they immigrants or locals).
3. There is no dialogue and successful integration without interaction. Unidirectional actions for integration, such as service maps, may be well-intended. However, they do not necessarily lead to active participation and exchange among different parts of society. Problems of integration and their roots might therefore not be fully addressed. Such actions should be considered important, but rather *complementary* to other more interactive initiatives.
4. It is vital to involve third-country-nationals or other persons with a migration background already in the phase of *conception* of actions and strategies promoting intercultural dialogue and participation.
5. Intercultural Dialogue has to refer to the direct living environment of individuals. It may therefore be fostered through what might seem banal (inter-)actions and help in everyday-life (example: persons helping each other to orientate themselves in street life and public transport; exchange between mothers on education etc.).
6. Punctual events may *encourage* successful intercultural dialogue, but not *promote it in a sustainable way*. In order to provoke real changes, long-term strategies for intercultural dialogue and participation have to be considered in all domains of life and for all policy fields.
7. The development of such strategies necessitates time and a constant review! Take also into consideration that (local) cultures change! This requires governance and participation systems which are able to react and adapt to changing contexts.

8. The promotion of intercultural dialogue cannot be dissociated from actions fostering solidarity among all members of the local community and other basic values linked to fundamental human rights.
9. Social Economy may considerably contribute to the implementation of strategies for intercultural dialogue and participation of immigrants. It consists to a large extent of small and medium enterprises and service providers. They are deeply rooted at local level and therefore in close contact with a broad range of different parts of the local community. Through its diverse activities, social economy promotes participation of its members, employees and users in different domains of life (entrepreneurship, social services, leisure ...). Moreover, in contrast to very large and highly professionalized service providers, social economy is in a position to have a closer look at the *individual* and to adapt its offer to the needs of the latter. With its activities and its contribution to the creation of solidarity-based local communities social economy is in a position to guarantee a certain *continuity* in the promotion of long term strategies for intercultural dialogue and participation. Initiatives promoted by local authorities *only*, in turn, might not always be maintained due, for instance, to changes in local government and/or administration.

### **Improving instruments and methods for Intercultural Dialogue**

1. Dialogue should have different formats that enable individuals to express themselves in different ways and to bring in their capabilities and skills. It happens not only through verbal face-to-face conversations, but may also take place in form of music and arts, gastronomic and other convivial events, through cooperation at the work place or entrepreneurship which is committed to establish links with its environment ...
2. It is also through the aforementioned mix of instruments and methods that skills of immigrants may be valued in an appropriate way. However, long-term initiatives are necessary to find means and methodologies to facilitate a formal analysis and recognition of such abilities.
3. The creation and/or the better use of (public) space and venues for encounters of different groups of the local community appears an indispensable and often still missing element in strategies promoting intercultural dialogue and participation. However, hereby another type of ghetto-creation should be avoided: venues should encourage interaction between *different* groups and individuals instead of being used by members of one group only. They should be located in places used and attended by a large number of persons in daily life, which often helps to involve persons that are harder to reach than others. Existing resources and premises which find themselves in the direct living environment of people should be better exploited (example: schools and kindergartens might become meeting places also for parents or family centres that offer education and training also to parents).
4. Again, social economy has an important role to play, as it promotes participation and self-help of its members, salaries and users in local communities. It mobilizes individuals. Moreover, many social economy organizations are in a position to provide aforementioned

unconventional meeting places or to help developing methods to extend the use of already existing venues (examples: participation and exchange at the work place and through social entrepreneurship, family centres in social economy-run kindergartens, social economy-run cafés in (public) libraries...)

5. While planning and carrying out actions for intercultural dialogue, it appears vital to involve so-called “multiplicators”, i.e. persons building “bridges” between locals and migrants. This may also help to bring those groups or persons in that usually do not participate at all and are in general hard to reach. Persons who have themselves a migration background and who speak the language of specific groups of migrants might be helpful in establishing first contacts and encouraging others to participate.
6. In general, persons who are in charge of establishing links between different parts of the population and/or who moderate processes of interaction and dialogue should be considered as ‘helpers’ rather than therapists! They should stimulate and encourage exchange between different parts of the population, but not determine the outcome of it!

### **Partnerships for Intercultural Dialogue**

1. Community actions and partnerships between diverse local actors are vital. To date, a number of isolated initiatives for intercultural dialogue exist and hinder the development of an integrated long-term strategy for intercultural dialogue and integration.
2. Due to regular elections and changes in government and administration, local authorities are not always and in every case able to consequently pursue long term strategies. Moreover, they cannot provide the entirety of resources needed for successful intercultural dialogue and participation in all domains of life. For this reason, alliances and stable partnerships between different local actors are indispensable. These partnerships should not only be established for the *implementation* of specific actions and strategies, but also for their *planning*!

*Local communities* as such should be the pillar for any kind of long-term strategy and action for intercultural dialogue. They can be strengthened through such partnerships.

New community leaders and “bridge-builders” have to be identified by a largest possible number of members of local communities and should be promoted. Persons are needed that are close to people, thereby representing also the various interests of those that do not have the right to vote. (A positive example, for instance, are the elections of councils that are responsible for neighbourhood management.)

3. Social economy is a reliable partner for local authorities due to the aforementioned capacity to contribute in a significant way to the development of local communities, to create social capital, to mobilize persons and resources and to contribute to the realization of long term strategies for intercultural dialogue and integration. It should thus be strongly associated to the conception and implementation of local initiatives and strategies.

4. Local partnerships need to *directly* involve third-country nationals and other persons with migration background in order to develop successful initiatives for intercultural dialogue. Participation has to become a main pillar for any kind of such partnership. Positive examples can be found in Community Planning (UK), in neighbourhood initiatives linked to participative budget procedures or in diverse forms of “neighbourhood management” such as the Quartiersmanagement in German cities.
5. Finally, principles of participation and dialogue should also refer to relations with the countries of origin of third-country nationals and other persons with migration background. It is often unbearable living conditions that make persons migrate rather than more deliberately. Intercultural dialogue and participation should therefore also mean to foster, for instance, fair trade and twin-trading. Solidarity should be exercised and prosperity shared not only between different groups and persons on a given territory, but also between communities on different territories (in different countries). A number of social economy enterprises, sometimes already in partnership with local authorities, already established such links to local communities and (future) social entrepreneurs in developing countries.
6. In the aforementioned context, a key of success is also to actively involve immigrants in the development and realization of initiatives of cooperation with their countries of origin. This will help them at the same time to integrate and receive recognition in their host country.



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