Policy Department B
Structural and Cohesion Policies

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
AND COHESION POLICY

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2008
INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
AND COHESION POLICY

NOTE

Content:

This note examines the concept of intercultural dialogue and the EU response to it. It provides an overview of the contribution of Cohesion Policy and presents a selection of EU funded projects.

The note has been prepared in the context of the Regional Development Committee hearing on the same subject.
This note was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Regional Development.

This paper is published in the following language:

- Original: EN
- Translation:

Author: Ms Ivana KATSAROVA
Policy Department Structural and Cohesion Policies
European Parliament
B-1047 Brussels
E-mail: ipoldepb@europarl.europa.eu

Manuscript completed in October 2008.

This note is available on the Internet at:


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1. Intercultural dialogue: the evolution of a concept

The idea of “intercultural dialogue” takes as its starting point the recognition of difference and multiplicity of the world in which we live. These differences of opinion, viewpoint, and values exist not only within each individual culture but also between cultures.

Our cultural environment is changing quickly and becoming more and more diversified. Cultural diversity is an essential condition of human society, brought about by cross-border migration, the claim of national and other minorities to a distinct cultural identity, the cultural effects of globalisation, the growing interdependence between all world regions and the advances of information and communication media. More and more individuals are living in a “multicultural” normality and have to manage their own multiple cultural affiliations.

Cultural diversity is also an economic, social and political plus, which needs to be developed and adequately managed. On the other hand, increasing cultural diversity brings about new social and political challenges. Cultural diversity often triggers fear and rejection. Stereotyping, racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination and violence can threaten peace and the very essence of local and national communities.

Dialogue between cultures, the oldest and most fundamental mode of democratic conversation, is an antidote to rejection and violence. Its objective is to enable us to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging.

Intercultural dialogue has undergone a long evolution before becoming a major political strategy and an instrument to promote cultural diversity and social cohesion.

1.1. Objectives and conditions

In a general sense, the 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. Intercultural dialogue can also be a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts by enhancing the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. More specifically, the following goals have been outlined by the Council of Europe:

- share visions of the world, to understand and learn from those that do not see the world with the same perspective we do;
- identify similarities and differences between different cultural traditions and perceptions;
- achieve a consensus that disputes should not be resolved by violence;
- help manage cultural diversity in a democratic manner, by making the necessary adjustments to all types of existing social and political arrangements;
- bridge the divide between those who perceive diversity as a threat and those who view it as an enrichment;
- share best practices particularly in the areas of intercultural dialogue, the democratic management of social diversity and the promotion of social cohesion;
- develop jointly new projects.
Easier than a definition is a description of the conditions, the “enabling factors” that characterize a true, meaningful intercultural dialogue. Based on existing experience, one can propose at least six crucial conditions that must be fulfilled from the very outset, or achieved during the process:
- equal dignity of all participants;
- voluntary engagement in dialogue;
- mindset (on both sides) characterised by openness, curiosity and commitment, and the absence of a desire to “win” the dialogue;
- readiness to look at both cultural similarities and differences;
- minimum degree of knowledge about the distinguishing features of one’s own and the “other” culture;
- ability to find a common language for understanding and respecting cultural differences.

1.2. Definitions

Today, intercultural dialogue is more than a "dialogue between cultures" perceived as regional blocks fighting for influence. There is a considerable shift in understanding that intercultural dialogue as a component of policies and strategies is not only to be aimed at external relations, but also at the new internal dynamics taking place within European societies.

For the purpose of this note, the definition of the Council of Europe within the context of its White Paper exercise on intercultural dialogue (2006-2007) seems to be of particular interest:

"Intercultural dialogue is 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 global perception."

In this definition, “open and respectful” means “based on the equal value of the partners”; “exchange of views” stands for every type of interaction that reveals cultural characteristics; “groups” stands for every type of collective that can act through its representatives (family, community, associations, peoples); “culture” includes everything relating to ways of life, customs, beliefs and other things that have been passed on to us for generations, as well as the various forms of artistic creation; “world perception” stands for values and ways of thinking.

A EUROBAROMETER survey on Intercultural Dialogue in Europe highlighted some specific aspects of the perception of Europeans on this issue.

Almost three-quarters of EU citizens believe that people with a different background (ethnic, religious or national) enrich the cultural life of their country. The dominant sentiment in the EU is that intercultural dialogue is beneficial, but for many, carrying on the cultural tradition is equally important. Europeans attribute a variety of meanings to the expression "Intercultural dialogue in Europe" most of these being closely related to the core concept, and positive. Among the meanings frequently expressed by respondents, one finds: "conversation", "cooperation", "exchange" and "mutual understanding" across all nations, religions and cultures. In response to the survey's opening question that searched

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1 Flash EUROBAROMETER survey commissioned by the European Commission DG Education and Culture, carried out in November 2007.
for a reaction to the phrase "Intercultural dialogue in Europe", a large minority (36%) could not attribute any particular meaning.

Chart 1 reveals the variety of meanings associated with intercultural dialogue.

**Chart 1: Intercultural dialogue in Europe**

- Communication among different communities: 23%
- Cooperation, exchange, trans-national mobility: 13%
- Living together, understanding different cultures: 11%
- Cultural events and access to culture: 10%
- Coexistence and cultural diversity: 9%
- Shared European culture: 8%
- Dealing with linguistic diversity: 5%
- Tolerance, equal rights: 4%
- Education, exchange of information/ideas: 3%
- Dialogue in the sphere of politics and economics: 3%
- Immigration/minorities: 3%
- Preserving traditions: 1%
- Other opinions: 8%

Source: EUROSTAT, 2007

1.3. EU response to intercultural dialogue

2007 was named the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All which sought to raise awareness among European citizens of their rights to equal treatment and to live a life free from discrimination.

Following upon this initiative, the European Commission together with the Council and the European Parliament, designated 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue as a means to respond to the need for a deeper and more structured dialogue of cultures, which would involve not only public authorities but also the civil society as a whole.

The main objectives of this initiative are to promote intercultural dialogue as an instrument to assist European citizens, and all those living in the European Union, to acquire the knowledge and abilities to deal with a more open and more complex environment and to
raise their awareness of the importance of developing an active citizenship that is open to
the world, respectful of cultural diversity and based on common values.

Support for intercultural dialogue processes and action have been identified by European
institutions, intergovernmental organisations and civil society platforms as a means to
foster dialogue and cooperation across European borders and with other world regions,
notably the Mediterranean region. The development of intercultural competences and the
promotion of intercultural dialogue are thus treated as transversal or horizontal policies.

Intercultural dialogue and relevant competences are seen as tools which can contribute to a
number of strategic priorities of the European Union including: respecting and promoting
cultural diversity; committing to the principles of solidarity, social justice and social
cohesion; and realizing new partnerships with neighbouring countries. The European Year
of Intercultural Dialogue is to mark the beginning of a process to make intercultural
dialogue a long term priority of the EC starting with a focus on activities related to culture,
youth, education, migration, minorities and religion.

1.4. Legal framework

Intercultural dialogue as such is not a legal category that normally would be regulated by
national or international law in the strict sense.

A) International level

The only international document specifically addressing intercultural dialogue is the Council
of Europe Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention, adopted in Opatija
(Croatia) on 22 October 2003.

B) EU level

In the past, the focus of EU action in the field of non-discrimination was on preventing
discrimination on the grounds of nationality and gender. Article 13 of the Treaty of
Amsterdam granted the Community new powers to combat discrimination on the grounds
of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

In December 2000 in Nice, the European Parliament, Council and Commission proclaimed
the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Its Preamble states:

... the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity,
freedom and equality... 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...

The EU has also been active in supporting the monitoring of and further research on
discrimination. In March 2007, the Vienna-based European Monitoring Centre on Racism
and Xenophobia became the EU Fundamental Rights Agency. Its tasks include research on
racism, xenophobia, islamophobia and anti-semitism in the EU Member States as well as
monitoring of national measures and European action taken in this context.
1.5. Brief identification of problems encountered by specific groups

A number of groups within our societies face higher risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to the general population. The problems these groups experience are translated into homelessness, unemployment, low education, and subsequently, their further exclusion from society. Ethnic minorities and immigrants are identified as disadvantaged in almost every Member State. They exhibit lower scores on social inclusion such as employment rates, income in employment, and higher scores in school drop-out rates, homelessness, financial exclusion and criminal propensity. The European Union strives to increase the labour market participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities to the same level as the majority population, and to promote their participation in social, cultural and political life. The precarious situation of Roma is tackled accordingly in all countries where they reside.

1.5.1. Migrant workers

External immigration
Against the backdrop of terrorist attacks, global economic competition and fear of job losses, the public presentation of immigrants and migratory phenomena by the media is often biased or negative, linking them often almost exclusively to security issues.

The negative image of migrants is coupled, in some countries with messages of concern about a possible loss of national and societal including religious values.

It is widely acknowledged that racial discrimination is a reality in the European labour market. Some evidence of its extent can be seen when reviewing the following figures for the EU15 in 2002. The unemployment rate of non EU-nationals, used as a proxy, was 16% against 7% for EU nationals; their employment rate was 53% against 66%; and the employment rate of high-skilled, non-EU nationals was only 66% compared to 83% of high-skilled EU nationals.

The vast majority of immigrants work in manual occupations. High unemployment and low salaries mean that such groups are confined to a small segment of the labour market where there is a need for less qualified or simply cheap labour.

Most immigrants are absorbed in the informal economy, for example in the construction industry or in household services. Their jobs tend to be temporary, low paid and poorly regulated. Without adequate training and language skills, many immigrants find it difficult to enter the official labour market and as a result many remain on the margins of society long after they have moved to the country. This reinforces their feelings of exclusion and makes it even harder for them to integrate in the long term.

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2 Source: DG Employment and Social Affairs website.
1.5.2. Ethnic minorities

Negative perceptions are not only held towards new migrants, but also to existing traditional minority groups.

There are clear indications that exclusion of minorities not only takes place in the labour market but also in housing, education, public and private services, institutions, culture and religious matters. Ethnic minorities are still amongst the groups most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. For instance, they are more likely to be from a lower socio-economic background and are still disproportionately affected by unemployment, homelessness, bad housing, poor health and crime. Not only are minorities more likely to experience exclusion but experiences of exclusion are often more severe or extreme.

Roma are the largest ethnic minority in the EU. They have complex and diverse origins and often very different social and cultural identities. The community in general has suffered for many years from social prejudice and stereotyping.

Reports of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency continue to underline the discrimination against Roma as a specific group and the urgent need to ensure they are integrated into education, social, economic and political frameworks and cultural spheres. Poor educational
attainment directly relates to precarious conditions of life, high unemployment, substandard housing conditions and poor access to health services.

In many countries, high unemployment rates of Roma and their integration into labour markets is seen as one of the most important policy issues that needs to be addressed. The 2007 Annual Report of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency points out "the extreme deprivation of housing for Roma which heightens their vulnerability in the face of forced evictions and relocations. Their precarious housing situation, coupled with high levels of unemployment and limitations placed on their rights to equal access to education, locks Roma in a vicious circle of exclusion and segregation".

Over 70% of the Roma population has less than a primary school level of education, which not only excludes them from jobs, but also creates a negative perception of their employability thus reinforcing their exclusion.

The situation of the Roma can be seen as one of the most important challenges to intercultural dialogue in Europe - which has only begun.
2. The contribution of Cohesion policy to intercultural dialogue

The Cohesion Policy constitutes the European Union’s commitment to supporting individuals and regions that need support in their development. In this respect, projects strengthening social cohesion through intercultural dialogue have already been supported in the past period (2000 - 2006). In the current financial period (2007 - 2013) the European Union will spend some €347 billion across the 27 Member States, concentrating on people who have difficulty in accessing the labour market and on regions lagging behind. This is a very substantial commitment of resources and effort. Two funds are of particular relevance: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

2.1. The ERDF

The ERDF is the EU’s principal instrument for regional policy and is of direct relevance to vulnerable groups. The regulation of the Fund insists specifically on the fact that programmes co-financed by the ERDF "should ensure that there is no discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the various stages of implementation".

Consequently, targeted actions carried out at local level, but within the mainstream of overall territorial or socio-economic planning, are likely to have the most immediate direct effect on disadvantaged communities.

The Structural Funds can contribute to improving the social and economic infrastructure of countries and regions - an important issue for vulnerable groups who live in poorer districts where deprivation has reduced the quality and availability of infrastructure. The ERDF contributes in the area of urban rehabilitation, for example, bringing together a range of interventions which increase the quality of life. Similarly, and within certain limits, it can support measures to improve housing stock - another fundamental issue for vulnerable communities.

Within the framework of integrated urban development operations, the Fund finances actions to renovate housing in areas experiencing physical deterioration and social exclusion in the new Member States. The vulnerable groups with lower income are primarily concerned by this type of measures.

Under the Convergence objective, the ERDF focuses among other things on investment in culture, including protection, promotion and preservation of cultural heritage, education investments, vocational training and investments in health and social infrastructure.

The present budget period also provides an interesting opportunity for fund-raising, focusing on micro-businesses and SME creation. This new initiative, called JEREMIE, is managed jointly by DG Regional Development and the European Investment Bank. It combines ERDF allocations with micro-credits for those who do not have access to traditional banking services. Given the preference of people from disadvantaged groups for self-employment, this initiative is particularly relevant.

In addition, the European Territorial Cooperation objective promotes the integration of cross-border markets, local employment initiatives, training and social inclusion.

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3 Concrete examples are available in the Annex.
4 Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006
As regards the PEACE programme between Northern Ireland and the border countries, the ERDF contributes to promote cohesion between communities.

2.2. The ESF

The European Social Fund supports a number of projects in both the ‘new’ and ‘old’ Member States to improve the access of disadvantaged groups to employment, especially through better education and training.

The Fund finances activities aimed at improving involvement in the labour market, including themes on women’s participation, lifelong learning, social inclusion, labour adaptability and an active labour market.

The elimination of discrimination begins with clear and target-oriented information on rights and obligations of both potential victims of discrimination and the general public. The ESF can support this kind of information and awareness-raising action at national level.

Urgent actions are necessary to provide training and employment programmes that meet the needs of the labour market. In some programmes the ESF is funding targeted, but non-segregated projects to raise the employability of women and men from vulnerable communities by offering them tailor-made vocational training, culturally sensitive job centres or accompanying measures after getting a job. It has to be noted that the provision of social services for children and the elderly is a basis for the employability of parents.

Emphasis on self-employment or setting up cooperatives or firms often reflects the preferences of disadvantaged groups as well as the difficulties which they encounter in the labour market. To this end micro-credits may be particularly useful. The Regulation\(^5\) on the European Social Fund (Article 11) explicitly mentions the eligibility of micro-credits as a form of assistance.

The Commission adopted on 13 November 2007 an initiative for the development of micro-credit in Europe, which focuses particularly on disadvantaged persons (immigrants, ethnic minorities, etc.) who wish to enter self-employment but do not have access to traditional banking services.

The Commission is setting up with the European Investment Bank Group adequate instruments to provide monitoring support, technical assistance and funding to selected non-bank Micro-Finance Institutions (MFI) that, in turn, will disburse loans, equity or guarantees to disadvantaged persons with a view to helping them start businesses. Provided it complies with established selection criteria (still to be drafted), a non-bank MFI specialised in Roma, for instance, could qualify to receive funds to start micro-lending operations with Roma-people.

In terms of support and assistance for socially excluded persons, the ESF was and continues to be the major funding opportunity in the present budget period. The EQUAL initiative, which was the ESF laboratory for experimenting with new approaches in the fight against discrimination and exclusion, was absorbed by the ESF in 2007, thus becoming one of the “mainstreamed” objectives.

A central point with regard to the sustainability of projects funded under the ESF (or other programmes and Community initiatives) is to have a long-term perspective beyond the point where Community funding ends.

\(^5\) Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006
A large number of projects promoting the inclusion of minority ethnic communities in the workplace have been financed through “development partnerships”, including many aimed specifically at Roma communities.

Between 2001 and 2004, 45 of the projects funded were targeted either at Roma alone or at Roma together with other disadvantaged groups. In the new round of the EQUAL programme, around 80 new projects are directed at helping Roma.

For example, in 2000-2006, EUR 275 million of ESF funding was devoted to projects specifically targeted at Roma, while a further EUR 1 billion was spent on vulnerable groups including Roma. The key to success is strong and effective coordination and the full involvement of civil society in the design, implementation and monitoring of EU action.

The EU has clear powers in the field of non-discrimination which it has used to legislate and to monitor the correct transposition of EU law. However, the responsibility for most central areas for disadvantaged communities’ inclusion lies primarily with Member States (e.g. education, employment, social inclusion). In these fields the EU can only coordinate Member States’ policies, and support their implementation inter alia through the Structural Funds.

2.3. The role of cities

Cities and local administrations play a significant role in fostering intercultural dialogue. In many countries, municipalities work in cooperation with civil society organisations supporting immigrant and minority communities. Probably the best example of cities’ proactive attitude is the Agenda 21 for Culture initiative of the United Cities and Local Governments, led by the city of Barcelona. Its manifesto commits cities to promoting cultural diversity and human rights as integral to local and urban development.

The authors of a recent study (ERICarts, Sharing Diversity, 2008) point out that many Member States (e.g. Denmark, Spain, Germany, France, the UK) try to address "ghettoisation" by identifying "shared spaces" where citizens can meet and exchange.

"Developments such as deindustrialisation and unemployment have lead to endemic poverty in, for example, the run-down former textile mill towns in the north of England or in the Paris periphery where other factors have come to challenge cohesion: the subsequent loss of respect that second generation boys have for their fathers, the racism and police harassment they have endured and the existence of global virtual networks which offer disenfranchised young men connection, self-esteem, a sense of belonging to a larger community. Whether attracted by jihadist or other movements, many young Muslim men are retreating into an ethnic identity... This means they are less and less likely to enter the local social space and are more likely to move to distant virtual spaces or local cliques of likeminded people in clandestine spaces."

The results of another study on cultural diversity in key cities across Europe (Ilczuk/Isar, Metropolises of Europe, 2006) show that the processes of change occur at different speeds. For example, the cities of Barcelona, Rome and Helsinki have accelerated their speed towards multiculturalism. These cities have explicitly adopted intercultural policy positions.

In other cities, such as Warsaw, Budapest, Tallinn, Moscow or Zagreb, World War II and its aftermath, the rebirth of new democracies in the nineties and the military conflicts in South-East Europe, eliminated the remnants of multiculturalism and in some cases transformed old multicultural cities into almost monocultural entities, with Sarajevo serving as a warning example.
## Documentary Sources

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Annex

A) Examples of projects funded under the ERDF\textsuperscript{6}

Learning to live side by side: cross-cultural cooperation between Ballymacarret (Northern Ireland) and Ballybofey (Ireland)

The project consisted of setting up six "Cultural Learning Partnerships" involving young people from the two communities - the Protestant community of Ballymacarret and the Catholic community of Ballybofey.

Each partnership developed modules around key themes to enable the participants to get to know one another better and learn to find common ground and celebrate their differences.

The "Social Interaction" module takes the form of enjoyable activities including visits to both areas to take part in sports, drama workshops, dances, quizzes, etc.

The “Trust and Confidence Building” module gives each group the opportunity to participate in the activities of the other group. In the sporting field, for example, the young Catholics attend Glentoran FC soccer matches, while the young Protestants attend Gaelic football matches.

As its name would indicate, the "Cultural Understanding" module enables the young people to learn more about one another’s cultural background. This involves dance, drama and Gaelic language workshops, as well as joint participation in events that are highly symbolic to the two communities, such as the July parades for Protestants and Saint-Patrick’s Day for Catholics.

The final unit, the "Political Awareness" module, is designed to encourage the young people to gain a better understanding of the impact politics can have on their day-to-day lives and the lives of their communities. The participants have an opportunity to visit the seats of political power (e.g. the Irish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast and Dublin city councils, etc.) and to meet the people who have been elected to represent them.

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\textsuperscript{6} Source: Website of DG Regional Development
A second home for young Moroccans (The Netherlands)

The URBAN II area in Rotterdam is located in the inner neighbourhoods of the second largest city in the Netherlands. The majority of the population is of non-Dutch descent, primarily immigrant groups from Turkey, Surinam and Morocco. Economic opportunities and education levels are low and many of the youth turn to crime, particularly drug-related crime.

Of the 5,000 young people living in this area, roughly 1,200 are of Moroccan origin. The transition to life in the Netherlands has not been easy for the families of these young people. In fact, it has been estimated that around half of the families concerned experience multiple problems in vital upbringing tasks. The normal cultural processes which would help these young people find their place in the broader culture and the world of work have been largely overwhelmed.

A “Recovery Plan” has therefore been formulated that gives attention to empowering families and building the capacity of the local community to help themselves so that both parents and young people can become active and full members of the community. “Het Klooster” is the part of the plan that focuses on young people.

“Het Klooster” involves the establishment of a community centre which functions as a second home to the young Moroccans and focuses on education and training as well as on recreation. Activities include music, drama productions, discussion groups, guest parents reading aloud from books, coaching in homework and computer building. In addition, there is an emphasis on equal opportunities within the Moroccan community, such as classes for girls, and sensitivity training for boys, and on inclusion within the wider Dutch community by activities which provide a bridge between Dutch people and immigrants.

To achieve these ambitious objectives, it is essential to involve the local community. Local social and cultural organisations, as well as parents were represented in the planning process and are active on the staff and as volunteers. Schools, social workers and the local police are also closely involved in providing practical advice and assistance. Support is also provided by the sub-municipal office, local politicians and by the Department of Sport and Recreation.

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| Contact     | Dienst Sport en Recreatie  
Postbus 1240  
NL - 3000 , BE Rotterdam  
Nederland  
Fax: + 104173885  
E-Mail: gap.spierings@bsd.rotterdam.nl |
Ethnic Minority Business Support Network (UK)

The project aimed at establishing an Ethnic Minority Business Support Network in Newham, London to provide a range of specialist support services for both new and existing ethnic-minority-owned SMEs in view to increase the number of ethnic minority start-ups. The research surveys indicated that ethnic minority owned businesses were twice as likely to fail within the first year of operation than those natives-owned. East London and Newham were especially interested in this project since they have over 90 000 ethnic-minority-owned fashion, retail and hospitality SMEs.

The specialist business counselling and support services offered by the Network consist the following: business planning, marketing, technology applications and innovation, exporting (including to the country of origin) as well as new learning opportunities such as start up training, financial management, marketing and ICT business applications. The services offered were customised to SMEs needs and included the delivery of online business information and learning packages in the workplace.

The key outcomes of the project were: development of four local Business Advice centres in key areas of Newham and of a series of workshops focussed on business advice and development issues. The project supported 750 SMEs, over 400 jobs within SMEs were safeguarded and 104 new jobs were created.

<table>
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<td>Newham College of Further Education Centre for Innovation and Partnerships Diane, Gowland High Street South UK - E6 6ER, London United Kingdom Tel.: +44 20 8257 4420 Fax: +44 20 8257 4400 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:diane.gowland@newham.ac.uk">diane.gowland@newham.ac.uk</a></td>
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Contact
Rives-Manche: A bridge across the Channel (France)

Despite being separated by the English Channel, the County of Sussex and the French Departments of the Somme and Seine-Maritime have a common heritage. The three regions decided, through a cross-border cooperation programme, to turn the barrier that was the Channel into a major means of communication. The result was the Rives-Manche Association, bringing the regions together around a series of projects.

The contacts maintained by the three regions have enabled, amongst other thing, the creation of a joint economic observatory by the Universities of Sussex and Upper-Normandy; language training; two tourist tours, in Dieppe and Brighton; an air- and water-quality study centre involving the Universities of Brighton and Picardy; and, the creation of a coastal service (a kind of environmental brigade), etc.

In the field of the arts, the École supérieure d’art et de design in Amiens and the Brighton School of Design organise educational exchanges and meetings of teachers. Students take training courses at the other school, studying the landscapes of "the other side of the sea", and compare the results at joint exhibitions, organised at regular intervals in the large towns of the Somme and Sussex.

Through the Rives-Manche project, the inhabitants of these three regions are showing their commitment to European integration, concretising it via exchanges, culture and human relations.

<table>
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Contact

Préfecture de Haute-Normandie
Françoise, Vautrain
7, Place de la Madeleine
F - 76036, Rouen cedex
France
Tel.: +33 2 32 76 52 39
Fax: +33 2 32 76 55 20
E-Mail: francoise.vautrain@haute-normandie.pref.gouv.fr
On both sides of the Rhine, the same fight against social exclusion (Germany)

The three partners – the "Espoir" Association in France, the "Netzwerk Diakonie e. V. im Landkreis Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald" and the "Diakonieverein beim Diakonischen Werk Freiburg" in Germany – launched a project aimed at creating a Franco-German network to fight social exclusion and chronic unemployment. In concrete terms, the purpose was to offer unemployed people qualifications and jobs through a cross-border network dedicated to the sale of second-hand items and the provision of services to people with low incomes.

Thanks to flexible working groups, training courses on specialised topics, exchange of staff and participation in festive activities, the partners communicated with one another on a regular basis and succeeded in overcoming the difficulty of speaking different languages, having separate ways of thinking and not sharing the same institutional context. They forged a common identity for themselves while acknowledging mutual differences. Their sense of cooperation, uncertain in the beginning, was no longer in doubt. The basic ideas of the project came from those working in the three organisations, people highly motivated by new professional challenges and the possibility of more effectively helping their target groups.

This networking went hand in hand with the development of existing activities in Fribourg, Volgelsheim, Mülheim, Colmar and Brisach. The results included the extension or creation of second-hand clothes shops and centres selling furniture, the purchase of tools and machines for the recycling of electrical appliances, the provision of a bicycle repair service and the development of a wide range of inexpensive services.

In terms of employment, and given the legal discrepancies in terms of contracts in the two countries, over a period of two years the activities led to the creation of 7 permanent jobs and 36 jobs financed through social support measures in France and 124 temporary jobs in Germany.

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<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Verein Netzwerk Diakonie e. V. Am Fischerrein 1 D - 79199 , Kirchzarten Deutschland Tel.: +49 7661 93840 Fax: +49 7661 9384-40</td>
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**SPEAK Europe (Austria)**

Under this project, information and educational training in the acquisition of foreign languages were developed together with the educational institutions in the federal state of Vorarlberg, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. There are also cooperation arrangements with the Chamber of Industry and the adult education centres in the region. The project aims to:

- Make the work of language and specialist teachers in all areas and at all school levels easier;
- Provide teachers with assistance and resources;
- Lay the groundwork for the lifelong learning of other languages;
- Promote linguistic and cultural awareness

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**Contact**

Pädagogisches Institut
Elisabeth, Allgäuer Carinagasse 11
A - 6800, Feldkirch
Österreich
Tel.: +43 5522 75372-14
Fax: +43 5522 32949
E-Mail: speak.pivbg@vol.at
B) Examples of projects funded under the ESF

Integrating immigrants into the Swedish workforce (Sweden)

By the mid-1990s, nearly 950,000 of Sweden's 8.8 million inhabitants were people born in another country. While some immigrants are well integrated into Swedish society, a significant proportion of them, particularly those with little or no knowledge of the language, still find it difficult to find work. This reinforces their feelings of exclusion, can damage their self-confidence and make it even harder for them to integrate in the long-term.

In Blekinge county, around 400 kilometres south of Stockholm, attempts to minimise immigrant social exclusion has been carried out by the local labour exchange. Focusing on immigrants who had poor language skills in Swedish and in some cases, mental or physical difficulties, it took a highly intensive, hands-on approach to the problem.

Two people worked full-time with the immigrants and saw each participant individually to get a good understanding of their needs. Together, they devised a personal employment plan for the participant to follow. The individual was accompanied by a coach to their work placement and then to their new place of work to support them through the difficult earlier stages of finding, and staying in, a new job.

The work placements were varied, from manual work in fish processing to learning structural design. And clearly the attempt to boost self-confidence worked. Around 130 immigrants took part in the scheme, 101 found work and four have set up in the restaurant business or opened a shop.

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Contact

The Employment Office of Rehabilitation and Education
Leif Ottosson/Helena Titz
Ställverksvägen 5, 372 31
Ronneby, Sweden
Tel.: + 46 (0)457 715 61
Fax: + 46 (0)457 715 70
E-mail: helena.titz@lank.amv.se

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7 Source: Website of DG Employment and Social Affairs
Greek language training for immigrants (Greece)

Greece’s immigrants, almost all of whom have arrived in the last 15 years, now account for approximately 7% of the country’s population. In 2001, an official census registered almost 800,000 resident foreigners, more than half of Albanian origin. Furthermore, the number of asylum seekers is steadily growing, with approximately 9,000 applications for asylum received in 2003.

Most immigrants are absorbed into the informal economy, for example in the construction industry or in household services. Their jobs tend to be temporary, low paid and poorly regulated. Without adequate training and language skills, many immigrants find it difficult to enter the official labour market and as a result many remain on the margins of society long after they have moved to the country. The ESF-funded initiative ‘Greek language for immigrants’, is part of a wider policy to encourage the social and economic integration of the immigrant community. Phase 1 of the project took place in 2003 and involved almost 7,000 immigrants. A second phase began in 2004 targeting 7,600 immigrants. In both phases, approximately 60% of participants were women.

The Operational Programme on employment and vocational training, under which this initiative is funded, also supports several complementary measures targeting the immigrant community. For example, on completing a language course immigrants may apply for a traineeship, other lifelong learning opportunities, or for assistance in finding employment or setting up in business.

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| Contact          | Ministry of Employment & Social Protection, ESF Actions Implementation Authority1
|                  | Dimitris Psallidas1      |
|                  | Alexandra Tseliou2       |
|                  | Agissilaou 23-25, Athens 10436 |
|                  | Tel.: +30 210 52711221   |
|                  | Fax: +30 210 52715132    |
|                  | E-mail: dimipsal@mou.gr1  |
National programme for the Spanish Roma community (Spain)

It is estimated that there are over 600,000 Roma in Spain today. They have complex and diverse origins and often very different social and cultural identities. The community in general has suffered for many years from social prejudice and stereotyping. However, the last few years have seen a major shift in perceptions as more and more of the Roma community access the labour market and education and training.

This shift is in no small part due to the efforts of the national Gypsy foundation (Fundación Secretariado General Gitano - FSGG). Recognition of their role was reflected in the award of a grant from the ESF Operational Programme against discrimination to run a nationwide programme targeted specifically at the Roma community.

Just halfway through the six year programme, the results have exceeded all expectations. Some 47 employment offices have been supported in 44 municipalities in 13 different Autonomous Communities. The total number of beneficiaries has reached almost 17,000 while the original target for the project was 15,000 for the 6 years. Furthermore almost 10,000 work contracts have been agreed as a result of this programme, 45% of which are for more than three months.

Access to training and education opportunities for the Roma community is another key objective. So far some 3,600 people have enrolled in training with support from the programme: 83% of them are Roma and 60% are women.

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Opening up the labour market to young immigrant school-leavers (Germany)

In Hamburg, northern Germany, around 30% of the city’s school children are of immigrant parentage. Finding their way into the workforce is often hard. An information centre – BQM – is working to increase the chances of the city’s immigrant school-leavers entering the workforce.

The traditional job-training course for non-academic school-leavers in Germany is a three year course split between further education and work experience in enterprises. BQM’s role has been to help close this information gap, and build up contacts between teachers, social workers and enterprises, thereby widening the ‘job network’ for young immigrant people in Hamburg.

Some 1,500 enterprises now receive BQM’s newsletter on the local labour market. The Centre is also developing a new training assessment centre, part of whose work will be to promote the use of a test devised by BQM, in cooperation with two social scientists, that can help both teachers and immigrant children assess their individual intercultural skills (i.e. tolerance and languages). BQM is keen to encourage its uptake by personnel departments in businesses as a way of selecting their young trainees and employees. This is complemented by the database www.ichblickdurch.de (“I get it”) which gives teachers, social workers and young people information on preparatory training projects that could help young people to integrate into the workforce.

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<td>KWB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koordinierungsstelle Weiterbildung und Beschäftigung e.V.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilfried Kominek/Julie Christiani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapstadtring 10,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22297 Hamburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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