

Launch of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue

Outline

On December 4th 2007, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Training and Youth, Jan Figel, launched the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue with the presentation of the communication campaign and the website of the European Year.

The **communication campaign**, entitled "Together in Diversity", will contribute to the achievement of the Years objectives, namely:

- Promoting intercultural dialogue as an instrument to assist EU citizens and residents in acquiring knowledge and aptitudes that will enable them to deal with a more open and more complex environment;
- Highlighting the contribution of different cultures and expressions of cultural diversity to the heritage and ways of life of Member States;
- Outlining intercultural dialogue as an opportunity to contribute to and benefit from a diverse and dynamic society, not only in Europe but also in the rest of the world; and
- Raising awareness among EU citizens, in particular young people, of the importance of developing active European citizenship which is open to the world, respectful of cultural diversity and based on common values held in the EU.

The communication campaign will be complemented by a dedicated campaign **website**, www.dialogue2008.eu. The website, which has been developed together with civil society organisations, provides information on the latest developments regarding the European Year and the activities undertaken in its framework both at national and European level. It also includes a partner section including profiles of individuals and organisations working within the field of intercultural dialogue with the aim of stimulating networking and exchanges of best practices at EU level. This section already includes more than 500 profiles of organisations.

The "**European Ambassadors for Intercultural Dialogue**"¹, personalities of the cultural scene in Europe and beyond, will also contribute to promoting the European Year.

European Year activities and events

The launch event was also the opportunity to present some of the initiatives that will be undertaken during the Year. In addition to supporting the EU-wide information campaign, surveys and studies on intercultural dialogue, financial support will be provided to the following activities:

- **National projects** in the 27 EU Member States and seven **European flagship projects**. These projects, the results of which will be presented in the second half of the Year, will cover the areas of urban culture, popular arts, participation of young people, migration, media, exchange of local initiatives, video project or activities of immigrant communities.
- **Events at national and European level**. At European level, the official launch of the European Year will take place under the Slovenian Presidency in Ljubljana on January 7th-8th 2008. In Brussels, six debates, which will start as of March 2008, will focus on specific sectoral views on intercultural dialogue and cover six specific topics, namely:
 - Interreligious dialogue;

¹ The European Ambassadors for intercultural dialogue include the Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho, Slovak conductor Jack Martin Händler, Romanian film director Radu Mihăileanu, Slovenian conceptual artist Marko Peljhan, Catalan bass viola player Jordi Savall, Turkish piano player Fazil Say, and Serbian Eurovision champion Marja Šerifović.

- Art & culture;
- Media;
- The workplace;
- Education and youth; and
- Migration and integration.

The full list of events is available at: http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/341.0.html?&redirect_url=my-startpage-eyid.html.

Background

The European Commission has designated 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The European Year is part of the EU's efforts to promote intercultural dialogue and competences within the EU and beyond. Eight main topics have been selected for the Year, namely culture and the media, education/science, migration, minorities, multilingualism, religion, the workplace, and youth.

The overall budget assigned to this initiative, €10 million, will be used for activities at the European and national levels in the following manner:

- Events and initiatives on a European scale aimed at promoting intercultural dialogue;
- Events and initiatives at national and regional levels that have a strong European dimension aimed at promoting the objectives of the Year's objectives;
- Information and promotional campaigns, particularly those done in cooperation with the media and civil society organisations, at Community and national level to publicise the key messages and good practices promoted by the Year; and
- Surveys and studies carried out at Community and/or national level and in consultation with transnational networks and civil society stakeholders.

In order to reach out to citizens and meet the specific priorities and needs of each Member State, most activities will be coordinated, defined, funded nationally and implemented at national, regional or local levels. For this purpose, in each country a **National Implementing Body (NIB)** has been appointed to define the national work plan and priorities for the Year, to implementation of the European Year activities as well as to allocate funds.

Therefore, there will be many opportunities for foundations and other civil society organisations to get involved in the Year at national level by:

- Contacting the NIB in their respective countries to know more about the activities planned for the Year and to develop close and continuous cooperation during the European Year. You can check the list of NIBs at: http://ec.europa.eu/culture/eac/dialogue/pdf_word/nat_coord_bodies.doc;
- Participating in the national activities organised during the Year (e.g. by contributing to campaigns, taking part in meetings and events, or undertaking activities included in the national strategy); and
- Organising their own events and use the Year as a “hook” to advance the priorities in their agenda.

Foundations and other civil society organisations are already involved initiatives at European and national level to advance intercultural dialogue and support the overall goal of the Year. Further information on these projects is available on the EFC website on the European Year at:

<http://www.efc.be/projects/eu/intercultural/default.htm>.

Action Point

For further information on the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, please visit the European Commission website at www.dialogue2008.eu

Further information on foundations' practices in the area of intercultural dialogue is available on the EFC webpage on the European Year at: <http://www.efc.be/projects/eu/intercultural/default.htm>.

The European Year provides an excellent opportunity for civil society organisations and foundations in particular to promote intercultural dialogue and understanding by providing a platform for promotion, networking, knowledge-sharing and partnerships both with public and private stakeholders. The EFC will monitor closely the latest developments regarding the European Year to ensure that EFC members active in the area of intercultural dialogue can fully take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Year to advance their priorities.