

# Languages as the Building-blocks of Intercultural Dialogue

**Martina Ní Cheallaigh**  
**DG EAC**

**ICC Conference, London, 14 March 2008**

[www.dialogue2008.eu](http://www.dialogue2008.eu)



An initiative of the European Union



# Summary



- European Year of Intercultural Dialogue
- Report of the Group of Intellectuals
- Language and Culture in Europe (LACE) – Intercultural competences developed in Compulsory Foreign Language Education in the European Union



# European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008

„Together in diversity“

[www.dialogue2008.eu](http://www.dialogue2008.eu)



An initiative of the European Union

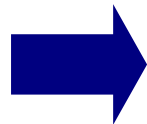


# CONTEXT



## Cultural diversity is at the heart of the EU project

- **Successive enlargements have increased diversity within the EU**
- **The free movement of people in the Single Market increases diversity within EU Member States**
- **The EU is faced with old and new migratory flows**
- **Globalisation facilitates increased interaction between cultures, languages, religions, ethnicities**



**EU faces new challenges**



# CHALLENGES



**We want to go beyond multicultural societies, where cultures and cultural groups simply coexist**

**Tolerance is not enough anymore**

**In an intercultural EU, cultural diversity is a source of creativity, innovation, and prosperity**

**Respectful exchange between different worldviews, mutual understanding, intercultural competence are paramount in an intercultural society**

 **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008**



# GENERAL EYID OBJECTIVES



- **Promote intercultural dialogue as a process of integration in a more open and more complex world**
- **Encourage cultural diversity**
- **Develop a European citizenship open to the world**

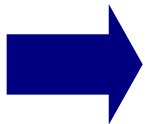


# THEMES OF THE YEAR



Topics selected for a special focus during 2008:

- Culture and the arts
- Education
- Migration and integration
- Multilingualism
- Inter-faith dialogue
- The workplace
- Media



To be treated in a series of “Brussels debates” during 2008, feeding a **sustainable strategy for intercultural dialogue** in Europe beyond 2008, part of the European Agenda for Culture



# TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE



- Involvement of civil society, youth and media important to feed policy process
- Future European intercultural policies to be based on a bottom up 'partnership approach'
  - *Teachers are one of the partners*
  - *Languages are one of the main tools or building blocks*



# AN EMERGING EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AIMED AT:



Raising awareness of importance of ICD in daily life

- Identifying, sharing and recognising best practices in promoting ICD
- Fostering the role of education as a way of learning about diversity and developing skills
- Raising the profile of Community programmes supporting ICD
- Exploring new approaches to ICD through cooperation between different sectors



# GET INVOLVED IN ICD



[www.dialogue2008.eu](http://www.dialogue2008.eu)

**Partners' section = network of civil society actors involved in intercultural dialogue where you can:**

- present your profile and work
- contact colleagues involved in intercultural dialogue
- share best practices
- get Europe-wide visibility for your events, projects and contents
- label activities with the official image of the Year
- **get information about policy debates and initiatives**



# Contribution of Languages



- Group of intellectuals: 10 writers and philosophers representing at least 10 different languages and cultures
- Amin Maalouf, chairman
- to reflect on multilingualism and what role it could play in European integration and the dialogue between different cultures
- Strong conviction that the European project is the most promising ever known and "that efficient management of our linguistic, cultural and religious diversity would produce a reference model indispensable to a planet"



# "The rewarding challenge"



- Group's visionary report on how the multiplicity of languages could strengthen Europe
- Main proposals:
  - Bilateral language-to-language relations
  - Personal adoptive language
  - language of international communication
- In line with EU policy on mother tongue plus two



# No language should be overlooked



- The proposal could be transposed globally
- Immigration is occupying an ever bigger place in the political, economic, social and intellectual life of Europe
- Its in Europe's interest to have significant cohorts of speakers for all the world's languages



# Immigrants and language



- Language of the host country = Personal adoptive language of immigrants
- Important for the immigrant to maintain knowledge of their own language of origin and gain easy access to this language
- Immigrants languages of identity should also be part of the languages Europeans themselves adopt, thus stopping a one-way relationship
- Bilateral/bilingual organisation for each pair of Countries



# "Languages and cultures in Europe" (Lace)



- Study of the intercultural competence developed in compulsory foreign language education in the EU
- Review of national curricula as regards the development of intercultural competence (IC), the main didactical methods they recommend, and how this compares with practice in the classroom



# IC prescribed in foreign-language curricula



- Linguistic competence and communication skills dominate, IC less prominent
- Important difference between countries and levels
- IC as an objective focuses largely on knowledge and attitudes
- Information on didactic & methodological approaches limited, when included, most often stresses use of authentic materials in the target language (TV, newspapers, etc) and information about the other culture e.g. texts about the target country, teacher's oral input, online information



# Practice among teachers



- Oral teacher input – 80%
- Role plays, task-based activities, written and online information, literature, arts – 50 - 75%
- Immersion, school visits abroad, exchanges CLIL, simulations and games, cross cultural dialogues, internet-based collaborative learning – 25-49%
- Critical incidents, self-assessment, intercultural sensitiser (conventionally used outside the classroom) - <25%
- Few indicate Tandem learning activities, case studies



# Cross-curricular activities



- 50.7% YES
- 36.2% No
- 13.2% teach all subjects (37.1% primary teachers)

## What subjects were involved in cross-curricular activities?

- Geography (77.1%), first language/mother tongue (71.6%)
- History (60.6%), music (54.1%)
- Art (49.5%), cookery (45.0%)



# Barriers to cross-curricular activity



- Inflexibility of timetables
- Other teachers don't have the time
- Too difficult to implement
- Other teachers don't think it is necessary
- Language teachers themselves don't have the time



# Difficulties teachers see in developing intercultural competence in language classes



- Lack of time in language lessons
- Shortage of suitable resources, e.g. course books
- Lack of training – 63.4% received little or none in ITE  
53.3% received none at a later stage, **92.5% feel a need for more specific guidance on developing IC**
- Poor knowledge of foreign culture
- Class too big or diverse
- Lack of management support



# Relevance of curricula: Teachers' views



- Curricula tend to emphasise linguistic competence and communication skills at the expense of intercultural competence, this is also reflected in what is assessed in the classroom
- IC objectives may be so general as to be difficult for the untrained teacher to understand and implement.
- Lack of clarity and detail in describing objectives may reduce the degree of significance and time devoted to IC development
- Lack of didactic and methodological approaches and techniques or guidance and examples of teaching materials included.



# Conclusions and Recommendations at EU level



- Foreign language teaching is an appropriate setting for developing intercultural competence
- Dual approach already widely used in MS, though
- Range of IC prescribed for development by the curriculum often limited
- At EU level, research should continue and be expanded into other levels of education
- Support for IC development in foreign-language learning within the Lifelong Learning Programme
- Raise awareness of the nature and need for IC development



# Recommendations at national level



- Increase teacher mobility, teacher and school exchanges, partnerships and visits, also through virtual networking
- Increase understanding of and funding of IC among teachers and administrators
- Allocate more time for IC development in foreign language and other classes
- Greater attention to IC in initial foreign-language teacher education
- Professional development courses in IC development
- Clear specification of objectives in foreign language curricula on IC development, attainment levels and assessment
- Development of suitable approaches, methodologies
- Development of teaching and learning resources

