

Seven Examples of Successful Intercultural Dialogue (ICD)

In the course of the project **weReurope** there were frequent debates on our understanding of interculturality. So some partners of the consortium decided to give an example of intercultural practice to share different experiences and positions and get a starting point for further discussion.

1.

“Rhythms of Resistance” is an international network of groups which have common principles (i.e. using music as medium to fight against homophobia / xenophobia / environmental abuses). The groups are coping with internal diversity through transparent and anti-hierarchical communication. Decisions are made based on consensus not on majority while an ongoing dialogue between the individuals and the groups is creating a stable basis for working together. The self-created culture of respect and absence of hierarchy allows also for an efficient and fruitful interaction between the groups often despite of language barriers and differences in communication styles as well as different perspectives. (LC)

2.

Our theater is called **“tie-up theatre”**, because freedom is our aim. But freedom without bonds is empty vanity, such as an individual without the community, such as democracy without education. Although repeated itself ad infinitum, as now it is happening, the word freedom does not acquire a sense: it becomes yet the name to indicate nothing. Freedom acquires a real meaning only when it emerges from a bond, as much intense. The theater is the place of bonds.» (Manifesto of the Tie-up Theatre)

Learning starting from ourselves: EachOne-TeachOne. The theatre experience mixed up thoughts, personal experiences and ideas, human resources and strengths, come together creating new synergy through formal and informal learning and participative and creative methods, as means of messages and contents against dangerous stereotypes, violence, racism, abuses of power. There are no hierarchy and judgement, just the leader's approach and inputs. (MS)

3.

My first project working in ARCI was named **“Cantiere Sociale”**, that in English could be translated as “Social Yard”. Nice name, that immediately let me think I was in the right place. A Yard - referred to a construction site, a shipyard, etc. – implies the idea of construction, and consequently movement. “Cantiere Sociale” immediately showed itself to be a complex intervention, based on three key

actions devoted to local communities of migrants and Roma people in condition of social and cultural distress. We worked hard for two years, creating a wide network animated by training courses, action research, cultural exchanges. At the end of the project the idea of breaking off this virtuous process was unacceptable for all of us: sometimes a group of people meets up for a specific reason, and thanks to this meeting something new comes to life. In our case, it was named "Circolo Medina", a new club of "Associazione ARCI" composed of migrants, Roma people and Italian operators. (IG)

4.

As we are amidst the **Olympic games**, I think that the group spirit at work, be it preparing the games, i.e. the people on ground, or the athletes in competition, or the audience – this group spirit sets out for the same goal, and although the crowd all are multicultural, although there is competition, and national ties between fans and their heroes, these forces are not being used adversely against each other – maybe the success lies in the nonverbal common physical effort, often a group effort. (JC)

5.

When I was a student I used to work as a secretary for the **Anti-Apartheid-Movement**. Although I never went to South Africa (first there was a boycott, then I could not afford it), I travelled to international meetings and conferences on the issues of "Dismantling Apartheid" and "Freeing Nelson Mandela".

I met people from many parts of the world, who had committed themselves to the same goal and after all the South African people managed to abolish the inhuman system with international support. Looking back, working together across cultural differences for a common goal seems to contain (or create?) successful ICD. (GS)

6.

An anecdote of successful ICD – beyond "we and the others":

I am part of a **multi-cultural choir** with more than 120 singers from various Balkan states, the US, Latin America and Austria. Different as we may be in terms of ethnic and national descent, we are united in our love of singing (of songs from „other“ countries). The choirmaster immigrated from Turkey two years ago and speaks only little German. This is not an issue as his musicality inspires us and we gladly follow his non-verbal instructions and musical demonstrations. Our rehearsals take place in a street-facing room that is open to the view from two sides; quite often, passers-by stop and watch us sing with great enthusiasm songs from migration countries that usually have negative stereotypes associated with them. One evening some youths of migrant background noisily crashed our rehearsal, seemingly inclined towards aggression. Very surprised by our concentrated yet cheerful way of following the choirmaster, the noise subsided at once and was replaced by an uncertain silence. What had happened? The categories of „we“ and „the others“ were not working any more when confronted with an „inclusive“ group. (MSW)

7.

Träd och trä ("Trees and Wood") – an integration project in Helsingborg*:

Instructional activities at Swedish museums often incur a cost. An examination of which schools in Helsingborg take advantage of instructors at "Fredriksdal – museums and gardens" showed that schools that are located in areas where the residents live under poor financial conditions less frequently take part in instructional activities than do schools located in areas where residents have a better financial situation. The level of segregation in Helsingborg is among the highest in the country.

With funding from Helsingborg Municipality's integration project, Dunkers Kulturhus and Fredriksdal decided (2003) to offer instruction, free of charge, to a school that rarely takes advantage of the museum's regular instructional programme that incurs a charge. In order to promote integration among students, a school that more frequently takes advantage of the museum's activities that incur a charge was invited to take part in the project as a cooperation partner. The participating students had different social and cultural backgrounds.

The students met in a neutral arena to work on a common theme, Trees and Wood. The theme was selected to function as a tool to help achieve integration among the students. The theme is also appropriate since it enables a common cultural history for several different cultures and it can also be discussed and processed on the basis of the following perspectives, for example: Stone Age, Wood from an historical perspective, Birds, Cycles and self-sufficiency, Mushrooms, Fruit, Mythical beings, the Christmas tree.

The working method has entailed integration of subjects, but emphasis has been on history and biology.

*) Summary of the "Träd och trä – ett integrationsprojekt" report by Karin Hjelmér, Pelle Johansson, Fredrik Nihlén, Ricky Wrentner. The entire project (in Swedish) can be downloaded from: <http://www.fredriksdal.se/templates/StandardPage.aspx?id=19235&epslanguage=SV>