

Evaluation of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008

Executive Summary

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ECOTEC

► Vincent House
Quay Place
92-93 Edward Street
Birmingham
B1 2RA
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)845 313 7455
F +44 (0)845 313 7454
www.ecotec.com

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Introduction

The European Parliament and Council adopted the Decision¹ to implement the **European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008** (EYID) in December 2006, as a component of the EU's response to increasing cultural diversity in Europe. The EYID aimed to promote the benefits of this diversity, encouraging all those living in Europe to explore its cultural heritage and take advantage of opportunities to learn from different cultural traditions. The emphasis was on intercultural dialogue, as distinct from multiculturalism, the former implying interaction and developing common solutions, rather than simply living side-by-side. A total EU budget of about €10 million was used to co-fund actions on a national and Community scale.

The objectives of the EYID were to:

- Demonstrate ICD (what is it, what works and why);
- Set in motion a sustained process of ICD-related activity;
- Promote a deeper, more structured dialogue with civil society;
- Help provide citizens with intercultural competences;
- Have an impact on views and attitudes of a large number of people;
- Have an impact on policy makers.

These objectives were addressed through the following types of activities:

- Awareness raising of the importance of the ICD concept, targeted at the general public (especially young people);
- Raising the profile of Community programmes that contribute to ICD;
- Identifying and disseminating best practice and innovation;
- Stimulating and drawing attention to the roles of the education sector and the media in the development of mutual understanding between cultures.

The Year was delivered through three mechanisms:

- **Actions on a European scale** (30% of the budget, including 'Flagship Projects', and opening and closing events) – seven projects ran, selected from almost 300 proposals. The average EU contribution was in the region of €300,000-€400,000 per project.
- **National level actions** (40% of the budget) – a National Coordinating Body (NCB) in each Member State submitted a proposal for carrying out activities and all were accepted. Activities in each Member State consisted of those co-funded with the EU, plus others (at

¹ 1983/2006/EC 18.12.2006

national, regional and local levels) funded from within the Member State (e.g. by government, or civil society organisations) and were at the discretion of each country. EU grant levels were calculated on the basis of voting rights of Member States and each Member State had to match its grant by at least the same amount.

- **Community-scale activities** (40% of the budget), comprising mainly the information and promotion campaign (a large part of which was carried out by an external contractor), but also a Eurobarometer survey and a study on national practices. This also included making the logo and other materials available to organisations wishing to label their activities under the EYID 'banner'.

Relevance of the Year

The evaluation found that the objectives of the Year were in line with EU policy goals and allowed sufficient latitude for individual Member States to adopt priorities and activities appropriate to their own national context, without compromising the underlying principles of ICD policy. Different actors used different interpretations of ICD and emphasised different aspects in their own activities. Pertinence to stakeholder needs was strong, due largely to the involvement of relevant networks during the evolution of ICD policy and the EYID itself. The Rainbow Platform (now the Platform for Intercultural Europe), which was invited by the Commission to be a key facilitator in building structured dialogue on ICD, was central in this respect, acting as a focus. Perhaps inevitably the process of wide stakeholder involvement raised expectations which could not always be fulfilled for all NGOs on all issues in the implementation of the programme. In the end, while the Year was relevant to a wide range of potential actors, and the majority of the concerns articulated by the EYID rationale and objectives were addressed to a greater or lesser extent, in practice the arts, culture and education sectors appeared to dominate.

External Coherence

At the level of international policies, the evaluation found that the Year showed very strong coherence with all of the relevant players, including in particular the UN and the Council of Europe (the latter working relationship was based largely on the Intercultural Cities project).

In terms of EU level strategy and policy, most of the policy domains of education and training, culture, multilingualism, youth, sport and citizenship directly or indirectly address the intercultural dialogue concept as one of their priority areas in the field, especially in the most recent policy development documents (i.e. adopted from the end of 2006 onwards). In terms of content, the concept of ICD itself, or the context within which it is embedded, varies significantly across the different policies and in some cases there are indications that clear definitions have not been established. At an EU programme operational level, the concept is well embedded in operational policy guidelines in the fields of education and training, culture and citizenship.

In terms of coherence with national strategies and policies, where a national policy impetus was already strong (not explicitly concerning ICD but encompassing related issues, notably

discrimination), NCBs were able to achieve political buy-in and incorporate relevant activities comparatively quickly into a programme for the Year. In other cases it was taken as read that relevant policy frameworks existed or specific measures were already underway and networks and Third Sector structures in place to implement appropriate activities. Other countries were less well placed or saw the Year as primarily an opportunity to celebrate culture and/or cultural diversity *per se*.

Efficiency

The total budget used was €9,879,717, which allowed the co-funding of seven Flagship Projects (with grants amounting to €2,363,248 giving an average of €337,607) and 29 National Projects (with grants totalling €2,993,830¹), together with about €3,922,639 million for information, promotion, surveys and studies - of which the centralised information and communications campaign implemented by the Commission's external contractor accounted for €3,227,484. Some €600,000 was allocated to opening and closing events. In terms of co-funded projects, the application of these resources allowed coverage of the broad range of themes and objectives of the EYID through the implementation of a range of activities, in particular cultural and artistic events.

The approach of concentrating limited resources on a relatively small number of co-funded projects, while relying on Member States to develop and support their own tranche of relevant activities, appears to have been a sensible and pragmatic route to pursue, and one which was successful in procuring a balance of relevant national and pan-European activity.

We conclude that the deployment of human resources in the Commission proved sufficient, based on the high degree of satisfaction with management of the Year amongst consultees. Feedback from Commission interviewees suggests however that the FTE allocation of 4.63 may be an underestimate of actual time spent by staff on delivery of the Year.

Effectiveness

Of the three levels of objectives for the Year (global, specific and operational), the *operational objectives* were met most fully, albeit with significant variation across the 27 participating countries (as might be expected) and with a bias towards raising awareness of the importance and potential of ICD. Strong contributions were also apparent to the objectives concerning identification and dissemination of best practice, education and media (drawing attention to the role these play in fostering mutual understanding between cultures), and to a lesser extent raising the profile of Community programmes that contribute to ICD. The most significant success was in terms of drawing attention to ICD-related issues, sometimes explicitly (i.e. with an emphasis on dialogue), but mostly in a more general sense, where the existence of cultural diversity or multi-culturalism *per se* was highlighted through cultural and artistic events such as concerts.

¹ Each country received a grant ranging from €5,200 to €252,174 based on country size.

In terms of *specific objectives*, the goal of focusing activity on young people was amply fulfilled, mobilisation of stakeholders was considerable (although it appeared to favour arts and culture organisations), but the involvement of and effects concerning disadvantaged groups was comparatively weak.

In terms of how well the *global objectives* were achieved, the evidence base is weak at this stage, so soon after the end of the Year. While a significant body of activity was implemented which demonstrated what ICD means, what works and why, it is difficult to point to evidence of anything other than a small number of examples of impacts on the views and attitudes of a large number of people or on policy-makers. It is also hard to prove that the objective concerning setting in motion a sustained process of ICD-related activity was achieved, although the evaluation offers some limited grounds for optimism here: in a small number of countries there are signs that a deeper, more structured dialogue within civil society is beginning to emerge as a result of the need identified during the Year to build capacity and networks outside of the arts and culture sectors. Indeed in some countries the distance travelled (from a very low baseline position) may be said to be significant. In such cases the explicit identification of the wider recognition of cultural diversity as a European “norm” (to which to aspire) was important.

The Year produced a range of intended *outputs and results*, the scale and variety of which were considerable, helping to make a contribution to the objective of raising awareness of ICD as an important issue and potentially powerful policy tool. Evidence of impacts is limited to a few countries if we use a strict definition of the term - very few countries have indicated an intention to draw up a national policy framework for ICD or related areas, where this did not exist prior to the Year for example. However, taking impacts to infer actions or results with the potential to facilitate or lead to more concrete actions or changes in the longer term, there are some grounds for cautious optimism, especially in the education field, where schools were amongst the most commonly involved actors in the Year and education professionals appear to have been engaged in the Year (through events, but also via a number of teacher training initiatives); a significant number of Member States are pursuing informal and formal measures to strengthen ICD in schools.

The *structure* of the Year was appropriate to its objectives, insofar as it successfully facilitated relevant activities on a national and pan-European scale. In many cases, national also meant local and regional, a positive feature of the Year as a whole. The seven Flagship Projects were relevant, generally of high quality and represented a sound set of trans-national activity that may serve as a valuable pilot for any future ICD funding programme. In the sense that they were visibly symbolic or illustrative of the ICD concept or approach, they may be judged to have achieved something of the emblematic nature intended in the original Decision. In a number of cases, Flagship Projects reported significant numbers of direct participants.

The model of centralised information and communication activities delivered by an external contractor supported consistency of the central ICD message, while allowing individual Member States to take advantage of local funding (channelled via the contractor) to develop and implement their own tailored publicity activities. The model adopted implied inevitable variations in the local validity of the centrally produced publicity materials and also meant that because a

large, pan-European contractor was required, specialist thematic and geographical knowledge was not available. The evaluation did not assess the performance of the external contractor, but on the question of the *external contractor model*, on balance, the centralised activity (including the website), achieved some very positive results, particularly in terms of press coverage and media collaborations, and was justified from a cost-effectiveness point of view. While some NCBs may have felt that this model offered insufficient flexibility (for example to use the funding available to contract their own third party provider), alternatives would have been difficult to manage and on the whole the outcomes of the Year were not adversely affected.

In terms of impacts on *specific groups*, it is likely there was an impact on the perceptions of those young people who participated, which was further strengthened by the significant degree of involvement of schools and school children in the Year.

The extent of *mobilisation of stakeholders* depended on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the NGO sector in individual countries. Where the NGO base was weak, mobilisation was sufficient to start building a platform for debate on how ICD can be embedded in organisations, and how stronger communities of interest can be built in order to influence future policy. In countries with a strong NGO base, engagement was stronger. However even here, sports organisations and public sector providers were less visible than might have been the case, the latter mirroring weaknesses identified in significant short-term impacts on policy-makers. In terms of mobilisation, the education sector stood out once again as a key player in the Year.

Sustainability

Conclusions on sustainability are largely conjectural, given the short time that has elapsed since the end of the Year. The biggest impact of the Year was on general awareness of ICD (or more accurately cultural diversity) among individual direct participants and indirect participants who were exposed to the Year through TV, radio, newspapers and online. The extent to which such effects are sustainable is difficult to assess, but is likely to be weak. However, a significant number of participants will have received a boost from the Year and in many cases will carry on their activities with renewed vigour.

Sustainability on a project level was achieved in a number of countries where ICD-related funding schemes will carry on from 2009. In these cases heightened awareness of ICD is likely to lead to increased interest in applying for funding of relevant projects.

The process of taking account of ICD in policy-making is likely to continue in countries where a pre-existing framework or action plan was in place before the Year, or where there are tentative signs that development of such a framework is actively under consideration. Where these two criteria are not met however, we conclude it is unlikely that a step change in policy will follow and, unfortunately, in a number of countries the issue may well drop down the policy agenda without further interventions, perhaps at EU level.

In terms of the sustainability of ICD as an item on the EU policy-making agenda, policy developments¹ and formal and informal networks developed during the Year increased cross-sectoral awareness of ICD and its potential contribution to a wide range of policy areas including education, regional development, employment, justice and security and external relations. This suggests that support for ICD at EU level is likely to continue in the medium term.

¹ Notably the Council Conclusions on Intercultural Competences, the Council Conclusions on the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue in the external relations of the Union and its Member States, the Commission Green Paper on the education of migrant children and policies and initiatives on the Roma community.