

MANIFEST

towards an inclusive society



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS
Direction B: Immigration, asylum and borders



INTO
INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Throughout history migrations have drawn up the current world; they have always existed and always will. Massive migrations from some countries to others are a symptom of world wide injustices and inequalities. But they also show our human ability to improve, to go on in life.

Our societies are multicultural, that is a reality. But, are they societies that include all their members regardless of their culture and origin? Do we contribute to shape an inclusive society, that is, a society where all the cultures coexist in the same conditions? Do all the members of our societies have the same opportunities?

Understanding cultures as something closed could make us think that any contact between them leads to a clash. But cultures are also dynamic, they are in permanent process of transformation (just as societies are), and get constantly richer thanks to this contact, creating new cultural displays.

Indifference, and often hostility, towards the people who come from other countries, or the assimilation model that intends to cover differences through homogenisation, has derived in some European countries in serious social inequalities and important problems of coexistence. In order to stop this, we think we must build a society that includes all the cultures in an egalitarian way, respects differences and guarantees equality of opportunities and success for all its members, regardless of their origin.

We think that dialogue between cultures and social participation are essential to make an inclusive and intercultural society happen. In order to reach them, it is fundamental to listen to and include the voices of all the people and cultures in spaces of public debate and decision that form society. That is why, within the European Project 'INTO: Intercultural Dialogue in European Society', we have created groups of intercultural dialogue with the aim to encourage the participation of those people who have so often been left out of spaces of debate and decision because of their social-economical situation, academic level, gender, age, for belonging to an ethnic minority or being immigrants. In these groups of intercultural dialogue, carried out in Germany, Denmark, Spain, Lithuania and Romania, there have been immigrants, refugees or asylum-seekers from very diverse origins: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Bolivia, Bosnia, Chechenia, China, Colombia, Congo, Denmark, Ecuador, Eritrea, Gambia, Germany, Guinea, Hungary, India, Iran, Iraq, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Moldavia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tanzania, Turkey, U.S.A., Uzbekistan, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia.

The compilation of the contributions to the spaces of dialogue have been the base for this manifesto, which intends to be an instrument to help us achieve a society where we can all choose our option of life in the frame of peaceful and respectful coexistence. How? Through egalitarian dialogue, equality of differences and mutual respect.

In order to achieve an inclusive and intercultural society where we all have our place beyond our origin and culture, we think it is necessary:

- 1) To understand migrations as a phenomenon that is part of social processes and not as a problem, and multiculturalism as richness, as a reality that lets us learn from each other.
- 2) To take equality of differences as our starting point, that is, be based on the respect for differences for the development of every culture and identity, but also on equality to promote that all the cultures can have the same opportunities and the same possibilities of success. Starting from equality of differences, equality is understood as the same right for everybody to live differently. From this conception, we overcome assimilationist models that have compared equality to homogenisation of differences.
- 3) To radicalise the democracies of our societies including the voices of all the people and cultures that shape them, opening spaces of participation that also take minorities into account and allow a plural society.
- 4) To guarantee social participation at a wide level. All the people and cultures that live together in a society, regardless of their origin or culture, have to enjoy full rights (including political rights). Real social participation is what allows full social inclusion.
- 5) To turn Human Rights –both individual and collective– into a reality. All the rights have to be recognised and respected, both for immigrants and natives. Discrimination and prejudices often prevent us from having full rights. That is why it is important that our societies can overcome prejudices, that often derive in racist attitudes, through an approach among all the cultures that shape our societies; an approach that starts from egalitarian dialogue and respectful treatment.
- 6) To start from egalitarian dialogue as a base of social relations, that is, from a dialogue where the contributions and opinions of every participant are based on arguments and not on power, social or cultural positions. Egalitarian dialogue fosters understanding, mutual respect and reaching common agreements among different people or collectives. In this way, we contribute to overcome prejudices that can be created from the lack of knowledge towards the others and overcome possible conflicts that are created when the only thing we see is what makes us different and not what we can have in common.
- 7) To understand the physical space where our societies develop as respectfully shared territories, that is, spaces where differences are respected according to minimum rules of coexistence born from intercultural and egalitarian dialogue among all the people and collectives that live together.

In order to achieve a real equality of differences, our societies should:

- 8) Have free and quality education for all, contribute to overcome social inequalities and fight against racism and xenophobia. An education based on positive expectations and respect for the cultural difference, that seeks equality of results and fosters a fluent relation between the school and the community.
- 9) Make the learning of the language of the host country possible through courses and reception spaces where access to jobs that can serve as a path towards full social inclusion is encouraged.
- 10) Promote affirmative action policies that guarantee equality of results for all the people that form society in all the spheres of life, ensuring that everybody can have access to the means that meet basic necessities, such as employment, housing, education, health, etc., especially caring for the prevention of prejudices that could put a limit to this access.

11) Brake the barriers that stop immigrants from getting the jobs they are qualified for due to their academic level, work experience and skills. In order to achieve this, we must provide them with tools that recognise and accredit previous experiences of both immigrants and natives.

12) Provide vulnerable cases, especially those who have suffered human trafficking or lived in a conflict or war-related situation, with special assistance programmes.

13) Protect everybody from injustice, taking people in need of international protection especially into consideration.

14) Have a wide idea of the reasons that can generate migration. Generally, we only understand migrations from an economical point of view, but there are also political or even personal reasons, like family or education.

15) Promote awareness-raising and information campaigns in the host countries so that we can all have better knowledge on immigration issues, such as who immigrants are, what they do, how they contribute to the enrichment of our societies, etc. These campaigns are also a way to overcome racist and xenophobic attitudes towards immigration.

16) Put an end to the condescending position towards immigrants; through this condescending position we weaken immigrants, decrease their courage and abilities as human beings. It is a position that does not recognise the bravery of these people who left a bad situation in search of new horizons.

17) Understand that immigrants are, more than anything else, people. People who, as anybody else, have the necessity to socialise, live according to their option of life and participate in the society they live in.

18) Promote the presence, in all the areas of society, of women, especially immigrated women, who often suffer a double exclusion: for gender and origin reasons.

19) Demand the media to give a fair point of view on immigration, far from the stereotypes and labelling that have done so much harm to social coexistence.

