Resolution 2005 (2014)[1]
Provisional version

Identities and diversity within intercultural societies

Parliamentary Assembly

1.   The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that cultural diversity is an essential condition for human society, brought about not only by cross-border migration, but also by the cultural effects of globalisation, supported by a wide use of new technologies and media that provide people with easy access to information and platforms for communication.

2.   The Assembly notes that relations with people having a different cultural background have become a common experience for a majority of people at school, in the workplace, in neighbourhoods and in a variety of public spaces, particularly in urban areas. A growing number of individuals, especially young people, have multiple cultural affiliations to enjoy, but also to manage, on a daily basis. Their "composite identity" can no longer be restricted to a "collective identity" related to a particular ethnic or religious group.

3.   However, lack of understanding and fear of the "other" hamper intercultural exchange and interaction. If not managed positively, cultural differences lead to radicalisation, paralysing forms of conflict and even violence. The Assembly is alarmed by the rise of anti-democratic and xenophobic political parties in Europe and calls for a radical change in political discourse and action: there is a need to recognise the role of different cultures in the building of national identities and of a European identity characterised by diversity, pluralism and respect for human rights and human dignity.

4.   The Assembly considers that this deep societal change urgently requires a rethinking of the processes, mechanisms and relationships that are needed to counter racism and intolerance and strengthen pluralism and democracy in European societies. In this respect, the Assembly acknowledges the very different circumstances in which national societies emerged and developed in western, eastern, northern and southern Europe and emphasises that account should be taken of those historic differences when discussing what cultural diversity means in different parts of Europe and what implications it entails for society.

5.   The Assembly also underlines the importance of enhanced cultural and educational policies intended to value, and make use of, the inherent potential of young generations with composite identities. This calls for an in-depth review of national policies (not only restricted to culture, youth and education policies, but taking a broader approach to cover in particular employment, social cohesion, housing and security policies), often characterised by a "defensive" approach, and for the development of innovative tools. These policies should, on the one hand, go beyond the simple recognition of diversity and the promotion of tolerance, towards a recognition of the originality of each identity and the promotion of positive exchanges and interactions; on the other hand, they should take account of the European and even global nature of the phenomenon, and thus of the need to work together as a precondition for achieving effective and sustainable results.

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1.   *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2014 (24th Sitting) (see Doc. 13522, report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Carlos Costa Neves). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2014 (24th Sitting). See also Recommendation 2049 (2014).

6. Based also on its past work, related *inter alia* to participatory governance, equality of rights, non-discrimination, cultural rights, education, youth and media, the Assembly recommends that the parliaments and governments of the member States of the Council of Europe:

6.1. concerning strategy and policy making:

6.1.1. recognise cultural diversity as a factor for innovation and development and make it a strategic long-term objective, taking political leadership and building consensus among parties to advance the intercultural agenda at national level;

6.1.2. develop a comprehensive "Intercultural Strategy" focusing, *inter alia,* on awareness raising and public engagement (campaigns, intercultural ambassadors, etc.), cohesion among stakeholders (dialogue, cross-fertilisation and collaborative project development), countering racism (monitoring and deterrence), planning diversity (housing, urban development) and building an intercultural economy (diversity as an asset for innovation and competitiveness);

6.1.3. mainstream the issues of diversity and intercultural dialogue in all relevant policy areas, and in particular cultural, education, youth and media policies; and consider innovative ways to integrate them from the intercultural perspective;

6.2. concerning policy implementation:

6.2.1. observe the equality of rights and in particular harmonise civil rights laws for all citizens regardless of ethnic background or cultural origins; guarantee the freedom of any person to determine his or her cultural affiliations and identity; ensure equal access to education, culture and cultural expressions;

6.2.2. establish a sustainable climate of dialogue and understanding through more equal power relations, interactive communication processes and conditions for empowerment through the development of individual self-confidence, paired with a sense of collective responsibility;

6.2.3. review the education system to enhance its capacity to promote understanding of diversity and the development of intercultural competencies starting from a very early age; in this respect, support the implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education and the use of associated tools and manuals, including the results of the "Intercultural education" project (school curricula, teaching and training resources);

6.2.4. promote multilingualism in formal and non-formal education and develop policies and programmes encouraging the sharing of international experiences and mobility for youth and young adults to strengthen intercultural competence;

6.2.5. promote the role of intercultural mediators and develop targeted training of civil servants and educators aiming at building up their intercultural competences;

6.2.6. introduce requirements for publicly financed institutions to reflect in more concrete terms the diversity in their leadership, governing boards, staff, users and programming (artists and audience); develop "intercultural rules" as a principle of good governance and a criterion for subsidies;

6.2.7. use public spaces (such as museums, libraries and cultural and arts centres), cultural and other events (such as music and film festivals and sports events), and virtual platforms to cultivate interculturality and share a common vision of cohesive and plural society;

6.3. concerning partnerships and co-operation:

6.3.1. mobilise partnerships with a large network of organisations, including youth organisations, non-governmental associations, businesses, trade unions, media, locally elected leaders, cultural actors, educators and intercultural "innovators", and make use of the experience derived from successful pilot initiatives;

6.3.2. encourage public media to contribute to this process by setting up nationwide media partnerships and programmes for a balanced diversity of reporting, using stories to portray cultural diversity as an asset rather than a threat to society;

6.3.3.   recognise the increasingly important role played by local authorities in promoting and implementing intercultural policy and pilot action, and in this context review the existing mechanisms (allocation of powers, legal structure, co-financing, etc.) to facilitate this process;

6.3.4.   in co-operation with the Council of Europe and the European Union, seek partnerships to develop transfrontier co-operation to tackle regional specificities, develop shared diversity strategies and pilot projects which stimulate cultural exchange and shape more composite and nuanced identities, particularly in the areas of central, eastern and south-east Europe with numerous minorities as well as cultural and historic interconnections across borders.