

## Challenges to Diversity / Intercultural Dialogue Policies – a *tour de table* (11/2013)

In order to better understand problems of diversity policies and intercultural work, it is useful to complement "good policies and practices" and innovative approaches with information on difficulties, peculiarities or contradictions in that domain.

*Source:* From its very start 15 years ago, the Council of Europe/ERICarts ["Compendium"](#) was not intended to be a mere public relations instrument for national governments. The following selected examples rely on assessments of authors of Compendium country profiles and illustrate a larger picture that underlines, in most cases, the need for further action.

*NOTE: Countries are identified by common international country symbols (alphabetical order)*

- AL "Intercultural education is a totally unknown concept in Albanian academic institutions".
- AM A paradox situation in *education*: What could be seen as fostering diversity in some countries may turn into the opposite in others. For example, the plan of the Armenian Ministry of Education to encourage opening secondary schools teaching in foreign languages met with fierce public protests in intellectual circles and actions in social networks. Armenian civil society seems to have been reminded of the situation during Soviet times, "when the Russian-language schools were much more prestigious and better maintained by the authorities than the Armenian-language ones."
- AT In contrast with the ideas of numerous, partly influential, human rights and minorities' bodies in Austria, "in 2006 and 2011 the *Aliens' Rights Act* was sharpened, initially through the limitation of transition times for asylum procedures. Since 2011, under the terms of the integration agreement, foreigners already living in Austria had to prove their German language competence after 2 instead of the previous 5 years..." Generally, "immigrants from non-EU-countries are disadvantaged in the labour market as well as within the Austrian education system. At the same time, they are at double the risk of poverty as the rest of the population..." There are no official or "cohesive programmes linking intercultural dialogue and culture"
- AZ Sometimes *traditions* don't hinder social progress and rather enforce, or even replace, explicit policies, e.g. in Azerbaijan, where "culture, as well as education, is traditionally mostly a 'female' sphere"
- DE "The gap between German students and *students from immigrant families* is still large, the unemployment rate of migrants is still far above the unemployment rate of the total population and migrants are still underrepresented in public service jobs."
- FI *Negative attitudes towards Europe* reflect "problems in communication policies of the central government in respect to more specific EU policies. Politicians inform citizens about the 'games' played in Brussels, not about outcomes and consequences of specific policies. Failures are reported by the media, while positive outcome is seldom reported. This happens also to cohesion policy programmes of the EU, which forebodes a better future for national cohesion of the member countries than for the cohesion of the EU itself."
- FR "In 1999, France signed 39 articles of the *European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages*, of the 98 of the text, but without ratifying them because the Constitutional Council considered that this charter contains incompatible clauses with the article 2 of the Constitution. Furthermore, France accompanied its signature of a Declaration that stipulates the obligatory use of the French language by all government departments, public services and users, that the teaching of regional and minority languages be optional, and that all official versions of legislative texts be published in French. However, the constitutional revision in 2008 added article 75-1 of the Constitution which recognises the patrimonial value of regional languages: 'regional languages belong to the heritage of France'"
- HR "Even though Croatian legislation includes regulations on quotas and *responsibility of broadcasters and media owners* with regard to the diversity of contents, systematic

monitoring is restricted and therefore it is impossible to assess the extent to which the provisions of different laws are respected."

- HU "Because of the indifference of the majority society and its authorities, and partly also due to the lack of coherence inside the Roma community, plans such as establishing a representative *National Roma Cultural Centre* have been postponed."
- IE "Only 8% of Irish secondary school students learn two or more *foreign languages* compared with a European average of 60%... The *National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism* (NCCRI), an independent expert body for combating racism and working towards a more inclusive intercultural society was abolished with effect from December 2008 as part of government cutbacks."
- IT "It has been mostly left to human rights lobbyists and Catholic organisations to point out that most illegal immigrants are employed in Italian households as cleaners and carers of the elderly... *Migrant communities' fundamental right to culture and freedom of expression*, which is enshrined in the Constitution, has not yet been recognised and explicitly promoted – let alone regulated through specific legislation – by the state administration"
- LV The *National Identity, Civil Society and Community Integration Guidelines 2012-2018* of the Government "have been criticised because of their excessive focus on Latvians and identity issues."
- MD "Russian has remained the *language* used in official documents in all structures of the central and local public administration" and "the mother tongue of the native population is not yet 'a language of inter-ethnic communication'"
- NL Main cultural institutions, including those promoting diversity and dialogue, have recently been affected by grave *cuts of up to 30% in central government subsidies*, resulting in reduced activities (e.g. of the *Mondriaan Stichting*), mergers or closures.
- PL "Media education, which could prepare young people to be more critical and conscious as well as creative and active in using media, especially new technologies," is deficient.
- RU "Cultural matters are often seen in an '*ethnographic*' sense and linked to regional specifics..." In contrast with recognized (= "national") minorities – nearly 20% of the population in Russia – "there are no explicit cultural policies towards new minorities, e.g. towards legal or illegal labour migrants, except minimal linguistic integration"... "Schools based on ethnic principles actually lead to isolation of children and lower training standards".
- RS Despite laws, 51 Conventions on minorities and good intentions, "*ethnically based conflicts* persist, especially after sports events and certain political decisions." In multi-ethnic Vojvodina, "in more than 120 elementary schools classes are held in national minorities' languages." This can be seen as supporting "cultural diversity" and national/ethnic groups – "but not dialogue between them."
- SE "The effectiveness of supporting cultural associations as a measure for integration of immigrants has been questioned, but no major policy changes have been enacted."
- SP "The intention of the Popular Party [central government] to extend Castilian as a vehicular language in the Catalan educational system, as well as the launch of the draft *Act on Education*, in which regional co-official languages are considered 'specialty' subjects, clashed with strong opposition of the Catalan government and society", who try to "defend the language immersion system implemented in the Catalan schools and, therefore, the centrality of the Catalan language and literature in the school curriculum."
- UA According to [Ukrainian Week](#) (2012), "the *Language Law's* implementation makes it possible to actually impose Russian on Southern and Eastern Ukraine, including the regions of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Mykolayiv and the north of Odessa oblast which are still largely Ukrainian-speaking despite the long lasting Russification campaigns of the Soviet era."