



## The European Commission's "Call for Ideas" promoting intercultural dialogue

### CEV PROPOSAL

#### Question A

#### How can one contribute towards identifying, evaluating, developing and exchanging experience and good practice in intercultural dialogue on a European scale?

The European Volunteer Center (CEV) is a European umbrella association of 43 national and regional volunteer centers across Europe, that together work to support and promote voluntary activity. The ideas presented in this proposal are a collective work of the CEV and its partner organisations from various EU countries.

CEV is convinced that a good way to identifying, evaluating, developing and exchanging experience and good practice on intercultural dialogue on a European scale is, first of all, linked to identifying and reaching out to the already existing bodies/structures/organizations/businesses, operating on a European scale and involved in intercultural dialogue. It is obvious that intercultural dialogue is a broad topic (dialogue between cultures, generations, religions, social groups, etc.). Therefore quite a number of European organisations and businesses are actually involved in intercultural dialogue matters, like CEV is.

CEV believes that bringing such bodies/structures/organisations/businesses together, e.g. in a forum on projects addressing intercultural dialogue, would lead to synergetic results in terms of real exchanged experiences.

CEV thinks that there are many good practices in field already, which, however, sometimes address the intercultural dialogue **indirectly**, e.g. involvement of third country nationals in volunteering as means of integration and intercultural dialogue; contribution to cultural diversity in local communities through employee volunteering; involvement of socially excluded groups in media/culture production workshops with the help of volunteers, etc.

The needed action to lift the intercultural dialogue aspect up is a reflection of the involved parties upon the impact their involvement and their work has on intercultural dialogue in their communities and on a European level. This could be achieved, e.g., by carrying out the survey among the involved parties and presenting the findings in the above-mentioned forum.

#### Question B

#### What information and communication initiatives could contribute towards involving all European Union residents, and particularly young people, in the promotion of intercultural dialogue in day-to-day life and familiarising them with it?

The European Volunteer Centre (CEV) believes that volunteering initiatives is an active form of day-to-day involvement in and promotion of intercultural dialogue for two strong reasons:

- Volunteers are a **heterogeneous group** of people embracing different age groups, different social groups and different cultural backgrounds; communication efforts aimed at this group, easily lead to multiplied effects; volunteering is a means par excellence to bring together people of different backgrounds on a common goal and, hereby, promote intercultural dialogue.
- Volunteers do care about societal issues and they are active at local level. People who devote their time to voluntary activities are **motivated and open** to a wide range of political and societal issues, **intercultural dialogue** being one of them. Volunteers are at the forefront when it comes to detect and remedy to societal problems, they reach out to many societal groups **through unconventional channels**.

CEV would like to present a few concrete examples of information and communication initiatives that could involve a high number of the EU residents and actively promote intercultural dialogue:

### **Engaging young unemployed people through media in making a series of films “Citizenship for All”**

Through media production (film-making), Community Service Volunteers in the UK ([www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)) engage young disadvantaged people, who are not in education, employment or training, in culture. They are developing a network for this activity in other EU countries. With the help of volunteers they get the young people to produce films about citizenship and about what it means to people in their own countries, e.g., how does being a citizen in Poland differ to that of the UK? How does a young Muslim citizenship rights differ to those of a young Christian, etc.? By means of video conferencing the young people are linked together to discuss their progress and their experiences. In such a way, by means of artistic expression and modern media technologies, young people are actively engaged in participating in intercultural dialogue of the European Union and contributing to establishing active European citizenship.

### **Engaging elderly people in activities with children through reading books - “Read and Make Read”**

Intergenerational dialogue is a very important aspect of intercultural dialogue. In France (France Bénévolat, [www.francebenevolat.org](http://www.francebenevolat.org)) a very successful project, addressing two issues directly related to intercultural dialogue, namely, intergenerational dialogue and literature as a means of interaction, took place. The project idea was to get elderly volunteers to go to primary schools, public libraries, culture centres and read books for small children to help them to discover the pleasure of reading and the power of literature, to use culture as a bridge linking the generations. Active involvement of the elderly and their contribution towards promotion of intercultural dialogue quite often tends to be overshadowed by other issues in the field. CEV, however, believes that it is of great importance to the European intercultural dialogue. The project idea is very simple and clear and could be easily implemented in all the EU countries.

### **INVOLVE – Involvement of third country national in volunteering as a means of better integration**

CEV and other partners in 8 European countries (more information shortly on [www.involve-europe.eu](http://www.involve-europe.eu)) carried out this project. The INVOLVE project was set up to explore innovative solutions to the question of the “social integration” and “active participation” of third country nationals – focusing on volunteering as an instrument. The project partners addressed the lack of knowledge about migrant volunteering, including third country nationals' concepts of, and attitude towards volunteering and investigated national policies and actions that facilitate these activities. Finally, a trans-European network of national contacts in the field of migrant volunteering was to be nurtured allowing for increased transnational dialogue between stakeholders. Involvement of people of various non-European cultural backgrounds in the mainstream volunteer organisations contributes enormously towards a more culturally diverse, better-integrated and more active Europe, not only for citizens, but also for all those residing in Europe. Volunteer projects contribute to mutual dialogue and understanding of host society and immigrants – common projects of migrant and host community volunteers as identified in the final project report should be specifically showcased and promoted at European level.

Pilot projects in the Netherlands (CIVIQ, [www.civiq.nl](http://www.civiq.nl)) show the positive impact of unconventional learning schemes: migrant volunteer organisations and mainstream volunteer organisations are twinned to learn from each other, to embrace diversity within their structures and make integration as a two-side approach of mutual accommodation of the host society and immigrants happen.

Projects in Northern Ireland (Volunteer Development Agency, [www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)) show that it is very important to provide ethnic minority communities with possibilities to actively participate in volunteering.

## Question C

**What specific European scale initiatives likely to reach, directly or indirectly, as many people in the European Union as possible - and particularly young people - could contribute towards promoting intercultural dialogue?**

- **European Volunteer Assemblies** on an annual basis, bringing together volunteers from all over Europe can be in this context one stimulating forum for exchange and discussion. That is when citizens will really feel connected to Europe - when they have the feeling that their voice is heard and taken serious – and when they get the feeling that they actually make Europe happen through their intercultural activities. Learning about intercultural dialogue at school is one thing, but feeling and experiencing it in interaction with fellow citizens throughout Europe is another: There should be more projects at EU level making active European citizens feel the European spirit meeting likeminded people of very diverse cultural backgrounds engaged in similar activities. This stimulates intercultural dialogue and contributes to a feeling of belonging. Volunteering as a feature that unites people from different religious background – and where these people discover that their fellow volunteers in different countries and from different origin care about the same values of solidarity, social cohesion and mutual understanding, bridges can be built between different, yet equal citizens.
- **The European film festival “Citizenship for All”** (see answer to question B., section *Engaging young unemployed people through media in making a series of films “Citizenship for All”*) for young disadvantaged young people who have been involved in the film productions in their own countries to get together, see participate in each other’ s film premiers in a sort of European “Oscars” evening on the EU level. Organising such an event and establishing a European prize for the best European movie in the series “Citizenship for All” would simultaneously contribute to two big European debates – **intercultural dialogue in day-to-day life among young people** and **promoting active European citizenship among young people**.
- **The European exhibition of books read during the “Read and Make Read” project** (see answer to question B., section *Engaging elderly people in activities with children through reading books - “Read and Make Read”*) to which, e.g., the writers whose books were read during the project could be invited, elderly volunteers who participated in the project in different EU countries could be invited, children from the local community/municipality/city where the exhibition takes place could be invited to listen to some readings, carried out by authors and volunteers. In such an event, both intergenerational dialogue and culture as a bridge linking generations would be celebrated.
- **European Forum-Marketplace** for NGOs, businesses and other organisations that operate on a European scale and address intercultural dialogue (directly or **indirectly**) in their work. Such a forum-marketplace would first of all make intercultural dialogue as a theme visible on a European level, showing a big number of organisations, addressing the theme in their work (e.g. CEV through volunteering). Secondly, it would enable these organisations and businesses to meet and share their good practices and experiences that they have already gathered in their day-to-day work. Thirdly, this would lead to an enhanced networked among the European NGOs, businesses and other organisations in the field of intercultural dialogue.
- **A European website for good practices in the field of intercultural dialogue** (see answer to question A).
- **A media campaign highlighting the value of volunteering as a two-way integrative tool:** it offers third country nationals the unique opportunity to get to know the culture of their host country, and it offers the Europeans a unique chance to get to know the culture of third country nationals.
- **A media campaign: “YOU make the difference”** – raising awareness amongst citizens in Europe who engage in volunteering that they do act on the basis of common values even if they are different

in age, cultural background or ethnic origin. Volunteering is a crosscutting activity uniting people from these different backgrounds. The media campaign would raise this awareness focussing on what they have in common rather than on what divides them. This campaign would be implemented in all countries and accompanied by concrete local action where volunteers / citizens make a difference together engaging in concrete projects.

- **A European Campaign Week for** a European exchange on development of **organisational concepts on intercultural mainstreaming** and intercultural dialogue and networking not only among various mainstream and e.g. migrant NGOs and associations, but also actively involving local/regional state representatives, such as municipalities, city councils, etc. Many good practices in volunteering show (Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement – BBE, [www.b-b-e.de](http://www.b-b-e.de)) that a lot still has to be done in mainstreaming intercultural dialogue in national/regional/local mainstream organisations, e.g. linking self-help initiatives of migrant organisations with other established mainstream organisations and state authorities at all the levels.

CEV and its members strongly believe that volunteering is not just a powerful instrument to promote cultural dialogue. Volunteering is a right, and therefore the amount and type of volunteering of all citizens regardless of their background, ethnicity, faith or sex is a good indicator of intercultural dialogue.