

## **FINLAND'S NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN YEAR OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE 2008**

### ***New contacts and unconventional encounters***

This document presents a final adopted strategy for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 in Finland and will form the basis of a more comprehensive action programme following consultations with key stakeholders and partners.

Year 2008 was designated as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue by the decision of the European Parliament and the Council on 18 December 2006 (No 1983/2006/EC). The main objectives of the Year are to enhance the importance and the benefits of intercultural dialogue in every day living among all those living in the European Union, and to identify and share best practices in promoting intercultural dialogue in the EU, especially among young people and children.

According to the Decision, the Ministry of Education has on 27 April 2007 appointed the Finnish National Gallery to act as the National Coordination Body in Finland. The Finnish National Gallery, Art Museum Development Department - Kehys ('Frame'), will as the single beneficiary be responsible for organising and producing the Finnish contribution to the Year and to review its implementation. The Department has long-term experience in intercultural dialogue through its task to improve and promote art museums' public relations, their impact on society and especially their relationship with the public.

#### **1. Challenges for Intercultural Dialogue in Finland**

The changing of Finland from a relatively culturally isolated nation to a multicultural country has meant that society, culture and identity have gone through some substantial changes during the last decades. Finland is a rather culturally homogeneous country. In the 1990s, Finland, a country of emigration, became a country of immigration and joining the European Union in 1995 has further hastened the opening of the borders. The constantly growing immigration increases cultural diversity.

The population of Finland is 5.3 million. Nearly two million of the population in Finland are under 30 years of age, and half of these are aged between 15 and 24. Finland is the sixth largest country in Europe in area, with a low population density of 15.5 persons per square kilometre. Most Finns, some two thirds, now live in urban areas, while one third remain in a rural environment. The capital, Helsinki, and the neighbouring towns, Espoo, Kauniainen and Vantaa, form the fast growing Helsinki metropolitan region, which is now home to almost a million Finns. Finland's most

densely populated and urbanized areas lie in the south and southwest of the country. The northern location and unevenly distributed population pose challenges for interaction and cooperation.

The country has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. Finnish speakers make up 91.6% and Swedish speakers 5.5 % of the population (Sámi 0.03 %, Russian 0.75 % and the other languages 2.07 %). About 60 different languages with at least one hundred native speakers, are spoken in Finland.

In terms of ethnic and religious diversity Finland is rather homogeneous. The 'old', 'historical' or 'national' minorities in Finland today are the Swedish speakers, the Sámi, the Roma, the Jews, the Old Russians and the Tatars. Sámi is the only indigenous population in the EU and they number about 7,500 or 0.15% of the population. At the end of 2005, there were 113,900 foreign citizens living in Finland on a permanent basis, representing about 150 different nationalities. The foreign community accounts for 2.3 per cent of the population and is still the smallest in the EU. The biggest groups of immigrants are from Russia, Estonia and Sweden and among them are a considerable number of people of Finnish descent. Other more recent immigrant groups are from Somalia, Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. The majority of foreign citizens, 44%, live in the metropolitan area. Relations between different cultural and religious groups are good and stable. Lutherans account for 85.6% of the population, Orthodox Christians for 1.1% (living mainly in towns and in the easternmost districts) and those unaffiliated with any church total 12.7%.

*Finnish culture is currently receiving more impulses from other cultures, interacting and cooperating on a global level. The main challenge for intercultural dialogue in Finland is to contribute to the development of a dynamic intercultural society, exceeding borders between societies and inside cultures while connecting the cultural diversity in Finland to the wider European context. The objective for the European Year is to promote cultural diversity of Europe, highlight intercultural dialogue as an opportunity to enjoy and benefit from the richness of different cultures, their contributions and expressions in a daily life. This will be done by sharing experiences, opening dialogues with the civil society, pioneering diverse approaches and methods and developing new forms of intercultural dialogue using the means of arts and culture.*

As the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and the Council of Europe youth campaign All different – All equal (2006-2007) precede the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, we have made a strategic choice to not to repeat the same themes (e.g. anti-discrimination, challenges of people exposed to discrimination) as such in 2008, but rather focus on diversity, the wealth of cultures in the EU and on unconventional encounters in people's own neighbourhoods. The European Year will take a broad approach to the theme and emphasize the European context, cross-border challenges and new communication tools as a way to overcome distances.

## **2. Consultation of civil society and stakeholders**

Our aim is to involve a wide range of stakeholders and partners representing civil society, the public and private sectors in the implementation of the Year. In this context key stakeholders include operators working with intercultural dialogue within the fields of arts and culture, education, youth, sport and citizenship on the national, regional and local level. There will be consultations and round table discussions with various government departments and agencies, social partners and broader civil society including associations, foundations and NGO's working closely with the various ethnic, cultural and religious minorities in Finland. The voices of the diverse communities will be actively sought for in planning and implementation of the Year.

A Consultative Committee chaired by the Minister of Culture and Sport, Mr Stefan Wallin, will be nominated to support and guide the work of the National Coordination Body. The Committee will consist of broadminded persons able to facilitate information exchange and dialogue, as well as strengthen networks across different fields. Two to three meetings in 2007 and a meeting once in a quarter in 2008 are envisaged. The project on national scale will involve a number of operators from different sectors. A steering group consisting of some of the projects' operators will be formed.

### **3. National priorities for the Year**

The European Year will give prominence to diversity issues and to accentuate the wealth of cultures and dialogue as a resource for better acquaintance with us and other people. Finland wishes to celebrate the European Year in a positive spirit and to make possible unconventional encounters by taking the project to local communities, schools, working life, hobbies and other concrete fields of people's everyday life. The national project will be planned to inspire and illustrate the everyday dimension of the intercultural dialogue. Special emphasis will be given to initiatives and events involving children and young people, encouraging exchange and participation in dialogue.

Our intention is to build the European Year around two priority themes: Intercultural dialogue with children and young people and Civil society dialogue of the many facets of cultural diversity. We will enhance dialogue between different groups in society and between generations. Activities will have a European dimension, which means direct contacts with other countries, the involvement of other countries' nationals living in Finland in the projects, and themes of European interest.

#### ***Intercultural dialogue with children and young people: Arts and culture as a intermediary of cultural diversity; sharing views and experiences***

We will launch a series of projects for children where intercultural dialogue come alive in inspiring activities (painting, singing, writing, learning by doing etc.) and with direct contacts of children sharing the same community (e.g. schools, nursery schools, pre-schools, art education centres, cultural centres, sport clubs). Activities involving young people will include e.g. cooperation projects between schools and cultural institutions as well as other operators. Experiences will be shared and disseminated in schools, in youth and sports organisations, Internet communities, events etc. In cooperation with artists and media the young people will be able to participate in developing e.g. an interactive game and take part in intercultural dialogue.

#### ***Civil society dialogue of the many facets of cultural diversity***

In Finland, the European Year will see the start of a diverse dialogue of the cultural diversity in the European and global intercultural context. The dialogue will take as a starting point the intercultural reality and underline the importance of an open and dialogical process open to everyone. Among the activities targeted to reach wider audiences there will be public debates (through various media channels), seminars, articles, nationwide competitions etc. "Fair Culture" will be among the themes of the activities.

Target group for the European Year will be all citizens living in Finland, in particular children and young people. Among the activities targeted to reach wider audiences there will be e.g. seminars and public debates, planned to be broadcasted by a key media partner. The launch of the European Year and its national website is envisaged in late part of 2007 in order to generate interest in the objectives and activities of the European Year. Moreover, the European Year will attain high

visibility through the opening and closing events (possibly February-March 2008 and December 2008).

Activities will have a European dimension, which means that the chosen priority theme touches upon European interest. The theme and the working methods could also be introduced and applied in other countries because of the inherent European cultural heritage that will be reflected through current demographic changes.

The Calendar of the European Year will include a number of events and activities carried out by different organisations (e.g. authorities, NGOs) with specific emphasis on the specific objectives of the Year. These linked activities will be funded by the actors themselves, visibility of the events will however be supported by the National Coordination Body as well as the dissemination of materials and other information. By linking their activities with the European Year, these organisations have an opportunity to show their commitment to the underlying values of intercultural dialogue and diversity.

The priority theme described above will be part of the national project to be presented to the European Commission by 14 September 2007. The Ministry of Education will ensure a financial contribution corresponding to the EU contribution towards the national project of the Year.

#### **4. Education**

The Finnish education system will be one of tools for involving citizens, especially children and young people, in the activities of the European Year. We will encourage the involvement of formal and non-formal education on all levels, from nursery schools to adult education providers and art education centres and make use of existing pedagogical material. Moreover, there will be a continuation of cooperation projects between schools and cultural institutions that have been developed during the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007 (e.g. "Taide meille ja heti!", "Give Us Art!" project).

#### **5. Best practices**

Our aim is to find, create and develop new approaches and stimulate dialogue between individuals and communities. In many organisations, the intercultural work has not been properly compiled or documented due to scarce resources or other restraints. The European Year will therefore offer a forum for knowledge transfer and dissemination of best practice. Best practices will be mainly disseminated during the second half of the European Year and as a follow-up to the European Year.

#### **6. Communication strategy**

There will be a more elaborated Communication strategy for the national implementation of the European Year featuring communication activities, target groups, media partners and a choice of multiple channel communication tools. The Communication strategy aims at reaching a high degree of visibility for the European Year in the media, facilitating participation in activities and promoting the European Year's objectives.

We will cooperate with the media (newspapers, radio, television and internet) in publishing multilingual material, as well as in spreading information about the Year and its activities. There will be a website for the European Year based on open source and interactivity. Alongside the two official languages (Finnish and Swedish), we intend to make the Year multilingual and use other

languages (e.g. Sámi language, English, Russian) where necessary in order to ensure a broad ownership for the Year.

We endorse the idea of designating both European and national Ambassadors for the European Year. The appointed national ambassadors for intercultural dialogue will be known to the public appealing to young people. The ambassadors will act as faces for the European Year and use their gifts and their publicity to spread the message of the Year in their own spheres of activity, through their own background and experience.

## **7. Sustainability**

The European Year will offer a laboratory for intercultural dialogue with an aim to transform the collective perception regarding diversity as an asset. We will try to develop and create methods and practices that - when successful - can have sustainable effects. Sustainability will be secured as a part of a process that will carry on and inspire an ongoing dialogue. The purpose of the activities in 2008 is to create a bridge between the European theme years. We hope that the discussions and debates initiated during the European Year will map out areas of dialogue where we can sow the seeds of new ideas and reap a harvest for future activities.

## **8. Monitoring and reporting**

The beneficiary organisation; the Finnish National Gallery will be responsible for the overall reporting and monitoring assisted by a steering group for the national project. A frame for a detailed reporting will be created. The beneficiary organisation will report and monitor the activities. The Consultative Committee of the Year will approve the reports and the guidelines for monitoring.

A university or a research institute will be invited to make a review of the implementation of the Year. The criteria for the evaluation will include the award criteria for the DG EAC restricted call (EAC/08/2007), i.e. the European dimension; Number of persons (including young people) directly and indirectly affected; Education, sustainability, trans-sectoral approach and innovation - as well as indicators dealing with specific activities, cooperation partners, media coverage etc. A final report will be drafted once the project has ended.