

# EAEA STATEMENT

OCTOBER 2008

INTERCULTURAL  
LEARNING  
AND  
DIALOGUE



**EAEA**

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS



## Intercultural Learning and Dialogue

Intercultural learning takes place under global conditions of increased mobility, migration and the growing necessity for a lifelong learning strategy. At the moment and especially reinforced through the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 there is a general acknowledgement that intercultural competencies on different levels in society should be considered to be amongst the basic or core social skills. But at the same time neither education systems nor other important stakeholders working in the field of integration policies have fully grasped their responsibility for providing the necessary space for an intercultural dialogue in society and setting appropriate conditions for mainstreaming intercultural learning in the broadest possible sense.

### **1. Mainstreaming Intercultural Learning**

Intercultural Learning should become a general principle in adult education embedded in policy, programmes, structures and concepts and developed in dialogue between all stakeholders in a society. Intercultural Learning should be fully integrated in the field of education using all its forms – formal, non-formal or informal.

To achieve this Intercultural Learning has to be:

#### **Transversal at the policy level**

A set of policies should be developed and applied to all levels and areas of education/learning. Planning the training activities, designing and elaborating the learning methods and materials for both facilitators and trainees should be included in both formal and informal systems.

#### **Cross-cutting at the level of learning**

The goals and objectives of Intercultural Learning are universal, so they refer to all parts of knowledge acquisition including social and political science, natural science, literature and cultural studies, arts and so on. Its cross-cutting principles should therefore be reflected in all programmes and subject areas in school, post-school and informal learning activities.

#### **Strategic and practical**

Every Intercultural Learning activity should be planned in compliance with appropriate standards, for example; – setting goals, the design of the programme, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the activity.

### **2. ENHANCING GOOD PRACTICE**

Adult education plays an important role in enhancing good practice on different levels for intercultural dialogue to take place. But it is dependent on political conditions that promote a positive view of diversity as 'normality'.

#### **Encourage the integration of the target group**

The practice of Intercultural learning should promote the opportunity for groups from different cultures, religions or ethnicities to meet each other. The target group should be diverse. This means that we are in favour of courses and actions designed for particular or specific target groups, but not in exclusivity, therefore, a variety of different courses and activities should be promoted, for example language classes with students from different nationalities.

#### **Transversal themes**

The incorporation of cross-cutting thematic topics in contents of learning programmes, such as environment, health, hygiene, and especially women and equality, enhance and reinforce the work done about values in an intercultural context.



### **The active participation of the target group**

The active participation of the target group from the conception of the project throughout its whole development is essential as an element of the Intercultural Learning process that reinforces its independence and improves the group's sense of security in managing their own processes.

### **Promoting empowerment**

In non-formal or informal educational community projects, the actions which aim to develop the "empowerment" of minorities should offer support so that each group is able to define its needs, look for its own resources and to define its own identity inside the society that hosts it. As an example, enabling community consultation with the representatives of different migrant associations.

### **Recreational spaces (sports, art...) based in the learning environment**

Intercultural Learning projects and practices based in sport, recreation and arts activities are a good approach to overcome barriers and let people have fun together. Music or any other artistic expression used by facilitators or trainees in their own collective and individual skills is also an important element of Intercultural learning.

### **Contents should be taken from reality**

Intercultural Learning is mainly an adaptation relating to the new reality affecting both minority or immigrant and the host or majority communities. Therefore, the contents should be taken from a concrete social reality.

### **Recommendations**

EAEA and NILE recommend that the European Commission continue the positive impact of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The Commission can help mainstream intercultural learning in diverse areas and provide a platform for exchange. It can also continue to activate member states to do more in this area.

Intercultural Learning needs space and financing - EAEA recommends that member states but also regional and local actors work to provide these spaces and finances.

Adult learning providers need to be aware of the demands of intercultural learning (e.g. by training their staff, as it is a key competence, especially for tutors). EAEA recommends that all adult learning institutions take up intercultural dialogue as a cross-cutting subject, increase their know-how in this area and provide the necessary conditions for intercultural learning to take place.

EAEA should continue to research and to promote case study examples of good practice in intercultural dialogue across Europe and further afield. In this way, EAEA can help to maintain the momentum and focus which has been achieved during the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and make it easier for others to see how success can be achieved in practical terms.

All adult education learning providers, at whatever level and in whatever context, are asked to consider how they currently involve all learners in decision making. This should cover all aspects of planning, delivery and financing. In this way, the views of all learners and potential learners can be considered and providers can be seen to be more accountable to their learning communities.

The degree to which intercultural dialogue is a reality for learners and providers should be a question asked in adult learning institutions' quality assurance processes, whether through self-assessment or external validation. Without it, it could be argued; providers are simply not taking into account the complex realities of Europe today. They will be ill-prepared for the global perspectives that must now be a regular part of all of our daily thinking and activities.