

UNIVERSITIES AS ACTORS OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN WIDER SOCIETY

Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, 2 – 3 June 2009

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WE, THE PARTICIPANTS in the Forum on “Universities as Actors of Intercultural Dialogue in Wider Society”, organized by the Council of Europe and the Russian Peoples' Friendship University of Russia in Moscow on 2 – 3 June 2009:

considering the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue *Living Together as Equals in Dignity*;

underline that among the factors that will decide the future of our societies is the ability of European societies to conduct intercultural dialogue with other regions of the world as well as with their own citizens with a cultural background different from that of the majority population;

maintain that to meet this goal, European societies require citizens who both value the diversity of our global society as well as of our individual countries, regions and local communities and are willing and able to engage in intercultural dialogue;

note that higher education institutions, staff and students do and should play a key role in developing the competences and attitudes required of them to be active citizens in culturally diverse societies;

reaffirm that these goals require public policies that seek to develop and benefit from competences and qualities of all its citizens, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, national or other background;

underscore the importance of cooperation among decision makers and practitioners at every level of education to improve the opportunity for all to benefit from quality higher education.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND

that higher education institutions and their leadership

- establish as part of their institutional mission and policies a commitment to further intercultural dialogue in the broader society of which the institutions are a part;

- base their institutional policy and practice to further intercultural dialogue on the principles laid down in the Council of Europe White Paper;
- act as advocates and agents of intercultural dialogue in their local, regional and national communities and demonstrate examples of good practice through their own actions;
- encourage their students to undertake curriculum and volunteer activities aiming to involve and assist members of minority cultural backgrounds or otherwise stimulate intercultural dialogue in their local and national communities;
- include the ability to engage in intercultural dialogue in the learning goals for all students, regardless of their level and academic specialization;
- value and promote interdisciplinarity as a basis for intercultural learning;
- offer training in intercultural awareness and dialogue to all staff members;
- promote research related to intercultural dialogue;
- promote intercultural dialogue through lifelong learning programmes and courses.

that higher education organizations and networks

- play a proactive role in ensuring that higher education institutions address the issue of intercultural learning and dialogue;
- offer international platforms for exchange of practices and policies.

that students and their representative organizations

- participate in intercultural dialogue initiatives;
- facilitate and encourage, in their own policies and practice, active participation by foreign students and students of minority background;
- encourage students representatives at all levels to work to further intercultural dialogue as a key mission of their higher education systems and institutions.

that public authorities responsible for higher education

- reaffirm that the preparation for and contribution to intercultural awareness and dialogue is an important purpose of higher education and confirm this principle through their policies;
- establish policies that ensure equal opportunities to higher education – completion as well as access – for members of minorities;
- establish policies and practices that encourage higher education institutions to commit to the promotion of intercultural dialogue;
- establish policies and practice that encourage students and staff to spend periods of study and research abroad, and ensure that these policies include a broad range of partners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds;
- facilitate arrangements for visas, work permits and social security for mobility of students and staff.

that the Council of Europe

- promote the implementation of the White Paper
- work to establish the contribution of higher education to intercultural awareness and dialogue as an important element of the European Higher Education Area;
- recognize and further the important contribution of education and higher education to its overall activities on intercultural dialogue;
- engage further in cooperation and dialogue on higher education policy and practice with countries outside of the European Cultural Convention.