
Conference of Ministers responsible for Culture
(Baku, 2-3 December 2008):
“Intercultural dialogue as a basis for peace and sustainable
development in Europe and its neighbouring regions”

Baku Declaration for the Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue

Firmly based on:

- the European Convention on Human Rights and other Council of Europe instruments, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action,
- the Declaration and Action Plan of the Third Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member states encouraging intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, based on universal human rights, as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, as well as preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society,

and guided by the:

- the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (May 2008) and the
- global agenda on the Dialogue among Civilisations adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (November 2001),

We, the participants of the Baku Conference of Ministers responsible for Culture,

- affirm cultural diversity between and within countries as a common heritage of humankind;
- agree to contribute to sustainable economic, social and personal development, favourable to cultural creativity;
- promote a sustained process of intercultural dialogue, which is essential for international co-operation, with a view to promoting Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law;
- reaffirm the important role of cultural policies at national, regional and local level and their contribution for promoting intercultural dialogue;
- promote intercultural dialogue, including its religious dimension, as a process that requires a coherent interplay between different policy sectors and the full participation of the different stakeholders – including public authorities, the media and civil society.

We are ready to promote intercultural dialogue as a meaningful practice by:

- sharing a political vision based on universal, indivisible and interdependent Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, in particular through culture and cultural heritage, inside European societies and between Europe and its neighbouring regions;
- seeking to implement the action elements of the Baku conference at a national level and
- proposing modalities for mainstreaming and follow-up action in this respect as set out in the Appendix to this Declaration.

We, the participants of the Baku Conference of Ministers responsible for Culture,

- consider that the Conference of Ministers of Culture held in Baku has offered an excellent opportunity to enhance cultural co-operation between Europe and its neighbouring regions, and
- thank the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting this event in a spirit of open dialogue and exchange and with generous hospitality and excellent organisation.

Appendix to the Declaration

Action Elements for Mainstreaming Intercultural Dialogue on the Basis of the Baku Declaration

The Ministers responsible for Culture, partner organisations and other bodies participating in this Conference:

A. Agree to strengthen the co-operation process launched in Baku, in the framework of the White Paper, with a view to:

- Wide dissemination of relevant texts such as the Council of Europe “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue” as tools for further work on intercultural dialogue including with states and partners beyond the Council of Europe’s member states;
- Organising joint expert meetings and specific activities in the framework of co-operation agreements between the Council of Europe and the different stakeholders present at the conference in order to continue the reflections started in Baku to develop initiatives and possible joint projects in culture and the arts, which contribute to the promotion of dialogue, peace and sustainable development (see also below B);
- Encouraging the signature, ratification and subsequent implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, as well as the Council of Europe’s heritage and landscape conventions¹;
- Further strengthening the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union in order to mutually support the respective policies on intercultural dialogue;
- Further strengthening the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE);
- Providing support for the Alliance of Civilizations initiative of the United Nations in order to enhance a culture of openness and tolerance built on a shared commitment to universal human rights;
- Welcoming the UN Alliance of Civilizations to the “Faro Open Platform” of inter-institutional co-operation for intercultural dialogue between the Council of Europe and UNESCO (Faro, 2005), the request by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO) to join the Platform, and the possible future accession of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for Dialogue between Cultures (ALF);
- Considering the prospect of promoting intercultural dialogue on the basis of the Council of Europe’s standards and values through specific activities with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

¹ Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (CETS No. 121); European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised) (CETS No. 143); European Landscape Convention (CETS No. 176); Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (CETS No. 199).

B. Agree to develop or further strengthen comm on practical initiatives in the follow-up to the conference, building on already agreed transborder co-operation projects such as:

- Activities developed in the framework of the Kyiv Initiative and the South-East Regional Programme² – which provide platforms for plurilateral co-operation, with a view to fostering intercultural dialogue, contributing to the promotion of social and economic development and social cohesion – and the possible launch of similar interregional projects;
- Exchanges between different networks and groups of local and regional authorities relating to the democratic management of cultural diversity at local level, and to consider extending the Intercultural Cities project³ to cities from Europe's neighbouring regions with the support of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and other relevant bodies;
- The further development of the "Compendium" cultural policy information system and the HEREIN cultural heritage information system and the possible access of non-member states of the Council of Europe to these systems;⁴
- Cultural initiatives to reinforce the support for existing instruments which assist the mobility of artists, exchanges of works of art and ideas, practically managed in the framework of the Faro Platform, such as the project "Artists for Dialogue" launched by the government of Azerbaijan;
- Further support or development of intercultural competences to facilitate access to works of art and artistic expressions from different cultures;
- Adoption of sustainable policies, wherever possible, aimed at heritage rehabilitation and local regeneration in national development strategies as well as heritage education activities;

C. In the implementation of the above action elements, appropriate steps will be taken at national level and in the context of the following existing Council of Europe co-operation structures and other initiatives:

- the Steering Committee for Culture (CDCULT) and the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP);
- specialised structures such as:
 - the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe;
 - the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe;
 - the European Resource Centre on Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship (Wergeland Centre);
 - the European Cultural Centre of Delphi;
 - and the European Institute of Cultural Routes;
- as well as
 - the annual Council of Europe exchanges on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, an innovative initiative to improve understanding, reduce tensions and increase mutual respect within and between societies.

² The Kyiv Initiative Regional Programme includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine; see also <http://www.coe.int/kyiv>. The South-East Europe Regional programme includes nine stakeholders from the region; see also <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/Regional/SEE>.

³ The Intercultural Cities Project comprises 12 European cities; see also <http://www.coe.int/interculturalcities>

⁴ The Compendium cultural policy information system comprises 42 Council of Europe member states and is available at <http://www.culturalpolicies.net>; the HEREIN cultural heritage information system comprises 31 Council of Europe member states and is available at <http://www.european-heritage.net>.