Facets of interculturality in education
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Project on “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”

Council of Europe Publishing
INTEGRATED PROJECT ON “RESPONSES TO VIOLENCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY”

All Europeans feel affected by violence and its repercussions. Personal security is threatened every day in a whole range of places and circumstances: at home, at school, at work, at sports events and on the streets. While violence and the fear of violence affect everyone’s quality of life, certain groups – such as women, children and the elderly as well as migrants, refugees and particular ethnic groups – may be seen as specific targets.

The integrated project on “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society” was launched by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe as a means of mobilising the Council’s resources over a period of three years (2002-04) to address the widely shared concerns that violence engenders. Its main aim is to help decision makers and others to implement consistent policies of awareness-raising, prevention and law enforcement to combat violence in everyday life. Significantly, these policies have to be formulated and applied in ways that respect human rights and the rule of law. That is an absolute prerequisite for achieving lasting improvement in the actual situation and in people’s feelings about security in Europe.

Facets of interculturality in education is the second of a series of publications for a general readership containing recommendations or instruments used to launch Council of Europe activities and projects on violence prevention. The series also includes discussion and summary documents on the different topics covered by the integrated project.
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FOREWORD

Recent events, not only those of 11 September 2001, which profoundly shook the international community, but also other events with a more limited impact, have once again highlighted the importance of taking account of European cultural diversity in all spheres of community and political life.

Promoting intercultural dialogue is one of the Council of Europe’s main priorities. Acknowledging and affirming the cultural diversity not only of European citizens but of all those who, for one reason or another, have come to live in our continent has been one of the Organisation’s main aims since it was founded.

Education is a fundamental aspect of any long-term policy for strengthening and improving relations between religions, cultures, communities and world views, and particularly as a way of preventing conflict.

Council of Europe activities in this field have focused mainly on history teaching, language policies and education for democratic citizenship. The aim in each of these sectors has been to ensure a pluralistic approach, respect for diversity and independent thinking, and to take account of the differences between cultures, communities and regions in schools on a day-to-day basis.

As a result of the recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers in these three sectors, the specific measures proposed and the examples of good practice brought to light by the Organisation’s activities, most member states have already taken appropriate steps, in particular by preparing new history textbooks, providing teacher training and introducing language policies that take account of the right to be different, and education for democratic citizenship, whose intercultural dimension is a fundamental feature of the Europe we now live in.

This publication presents the results of these activities. It not only provides an overview but also raises questions and proposes guidelines, for which there is currently a pressing need. It is therefore a major contribution to the integrated project on “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”. One of the project’s main objectives is to identify practical ways of developing
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harmonious relations between Europe’s different communities, united by shared fundamental values which the Council of Europe, more than ever, embodies and defines.

Walter Schwimmer
Secretary General
of the Council of Europe
INTRODUCTION

Interculturality may be defined as the set of processes through which relations between different cultures are constructed. The aim is to enable groups and individuals who belong to such cultures within a single society or geopolitical entity to forge links based on equity and mutual respect. It is natural that this should be of particular concern in education where, almost without exception, fostering understanding between different viewpoints and bringing them closer together has always been a declared aim. It is even more natural that at the Council of Europe – with its emphasis on defending democracy and human rights – intercultural considerations should permeate education initiatives.

Thus, in examining how interculturality fits into the Council’s work on education, what immediately comes to mind is a musical metaphor – that of a theme and its variations being developed throughout a score, with the coherence of the whole lending itself to the expression of nuances rather than laboured contrasts. In fact, the intercultural theme has been present ever since the Council of Europe first began looking at education problems and it is present today in the latest education-related work. Moreover, in official statements and in the reports and other documents produced in the course of education-related activities the theme is omnipresent, although it can be difficult to distinguish in the context of very different approaches. The need for an intercultural perspective is stressed in relation to particular activities for specific groups, in relation to educational content and plans for new teaching methods, and in relation to values that have to be promoted. All the more reason why interculturality should not be presented as a series of clearly separable processes.

There is nonetheless a danger that by refusing to differentiate between intercultural processes we could make it harder not only to convey what interculturality means but also to define its scope. So there is a risk of it being seen as the key to all problems – a one-size-fits-all explanation. Clearly, if we accepted such a notion we would be tempted to settle for superficial and misleading interpretations. To avoid that pitfall we need to see interculturality not simply as something general and all-pervasive – as may have been suggested above – but rather as a phenomenon of many facets that together form a whole, although the facets may be considered separately from certain angles and in certain lights.
We should thus think of the various facets of interculturality not as fragmenting the concept into disparate elements but as each embodying some of its characteristics and reflecting a predominant focus, without excluding others. In considering the situation of migrants or of the “new” minorities in central and eastern Europe the dominant facet of interculturality is the concern to address differences, in order to identify the misunderstandings and conflicts they may engender and to find solutions. In exploring linguistic diversity or seeking to understand the importance of the media, the relevant facet of interculturality is centred on communication issues and the implications of linguistic pluralism and information ethics.

Where the aim is to take a fresh look at collective memories of the past, in which the fears, connivances and dislikes of every civilisation have their roots, the facet of interculturality which comes to the fore is concerned with redefining identities and fostering mutual understanding. Where the accent is on involvement in a shared heritage and in the European dimension of education, or on the promotion of good citizenship and democracy, the relevant facet of interculturality is all about reference to values. Lastly, it goes without saying that these different views of interculturality (to express the same idea in another way) must ultimately be realised through practical measures; so a further essential facet is that of practice, based on the choices that interculturality presents.

Working through these different levels, from the ideal of intercultural education to the practicalities of intercultural teaching methods, helps us to appreciate clearly the interrelationships between different interests and forces, all of which are relevant although some are, or have been, more influential than others, depending, inter alia, on the type of problems tackled and the period when they have been tackled. Differences of emphasis thus emerge which – in revealing the range of viewpoints embraced by the intercultural perspective and analyses based on it – afford a clearer picture of its nature and scope.

Such an approach thus seemed the best means of tracing, in a reasonably useful way, the status and function of interculturality within the concept of education prevalent at the Council of Europe over the fifty or so years since its foundation. A structured approach was necessary in order to categorise what is clearly a host of decisions and initiatives. Without it, there would have been a danger of tedious enumeration or wearisome repetition.
Of course, the author’s selection of the facets of interculturality apparent in Council of Europe activities may be questioned. The list could certainly be longer. But, at the same time, it is important not to include too many different facets, for each should be representative not of a single initiative but rather of a problem that may be regarded as a significant aspect of interculturalism. I have also found it useful, when referring to particular initiatives, to avoid getting bogged down in detail and to consider them from a certain distance in order to appreciate their central thrust. By this I mean, for example, that when discussing migrants’ education, it has been important to focus on the notion of difference, rather than on the contacts between countries of origin and host countries, because it is clear that the problems to be overcome arise from the experience, on both sides, of “otherness”. Moreover, it is important to remember that although the facets identified are distinct they are not disconnected, but in fact overlap to some extent. This means they are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, discussion of one may pave the way for consideration of another. Nonetheless, they would seem to offer a functional framework for organising what is a virtual plethora of information without imposing an artificially watertight system of classification.

That task complete, however, one question will remain to be answered: given that a Council of Europe approach to interculturality has been identified, what distinguishes that approach from the approach of other organisations or groups concerned with the same issue? For the importance of the issue is such that we must attempt to assess how much originality has been applied to defining and resolving it.
I. INTERCULTURALITY AS A MEANS OF ADDRESSING DIFFERENCE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

There is no doubt that addressing difference is one of the most significant facets of interculturality. Signalled as a priority in the Council of Europe’s earliest initiatives on the education of migrants, it is currently the focus of much attention particularly because, following the political upheavals of 1989, a number of “new” minorities emerged and seemed to be experiencing problems not dissimilar to those that affected migrants. But this facet of interculturality is relevant not only to migrants and the “new” minorities. At a very early stage it was seen to be equally applicable to all groups of pupils who risked disadvantage and second-class status because they were not being offered types of study and training that suited their particular profile – a profile different from that of their elders or of more privileged groups.

It is therefore no surprise that analysis of the resources which the intercultural perspective affords, in terms of dealing with difference in education, should have become a major theme of debate, involving numerous specialists in the field of “culture shock”.1 At the same time, this process has produced a full-scale theory of interculturality from an education point of view and has facilitated soundly based empirical analysis.

The sociocultural integration of migrants at school, with recognition of their specificity

The Council of Europe was one of the first agencies to recognise the importance of ensuring that children from immigrant backgrounds received an education that could offset the disadvantages they faced on numerous political, socio-economic and cultural fronts. It has never ceased to pursue that aim.

As early as 1969, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe passed a resolution recognising the importance of pre-school education for migrants’ children as a means of overcoming disadvantages associated with an environment that could hamper the children’s...

1. This term features in the title of the work by Carmel Camilleri and Margalit Cohen-Emerique, Chocs de cultures : concepts et enjeux pratiques de l’interculturel, L’Harmattan, Paris, 1989, Carmel Camilleri being one of the most respected researchers in the field, particularly at the Council of Europe.
ability to express themselves in either their family’s original language or the language of the host country.¹ The resolution also stressed the need to adapt nursery and primary education to meet the needs of such children. In 1971 another resolution² called for migrants’ education to be a priority in the work programme of the conference’s Committee of Senior Officials.

In 1974 an ad hoc conference on the education of migrants was held in Strasbourg, bringing together not only representatives of the eighteen countries that had signed the Council Europe’s European Cultural Convention but also many representatives of other international organisations (including the OECD and Unesco and its International Education Office and agencies concerned with the effects of migration. After the conference there was a significant upsurge of interest in migrants’ education. In 1975, 1977 and 1979, each session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education produced a substantial resolution on the subject.

The 1975 resolution on migrants’ education,³ which is the most detailed, addresses the subject well. It recommends that migrants and their children have maximum access to education, providing at the same time for measures to ensure equality of opportunity, for example by enabling them to acquire an adequate knowledge of the languages of both the country of origin and the host country, and by providing types of general and vocational training suited to their particular circumstances. The importance of permanent education is also referred to as a means of facilitating migrants’ integration into their host country while keeping open the possibility of successful reintegration in the country of origin. Specific recommendations for schoolchildren include the creation of “reception” and “special” classes to facilitate integration, the award of grants or scholarships at all levels of education, the general use of a standard school career record and the mutual recognition of the equivalence of certificates awarded. In 1975, mobility within Europe was already a reality and enabling immigrants to avail themselves of it meant that they would not have to restrict their horizons to a single country – which would have been another form of segregation. The resolution also mentions the need to give teachers and others who work with children the necessary training to work effectively with children from immigrant backgrounds. Participation by

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¹ Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education (hereinafter SCME), 1969, Resolution No. 3.
² SCME, 1971, Resolution No. 2.
³ SCME, 1975, Resolution No. 2.
parents in school activities is a further aspect that is encouraged. The extent of
the task – well recognised by the Ministers – is reflected in the recommenda-
tion that national and international research and experimentation be carried
out in order to produce the tools required for tackling a very new set of
circumstances that demanded effort in various unfamiliar directions.

The 1977 resolution\(^1\) reflected a determination to persevere despite the adverse
impact of economic recession and the magnitude of the task. In order to pre-
vent discrimination it was deemed more important than ever to prioritise all
the types of education that migrants were likely to receive, right through from
nursery to vocational-training level. Work in the field of adult education had
to be pursued, as did efforts to reduce the sociocultural gaps between migrants
and the rest of the population. Tackling these problems adequately, however,
demanded close international co-operation and, in fact, this was essential both
in terms of assembling the desired level and mix of expertise and in order to
avoid recurrent waste of effort in competing or overlapping projects.

The ministers’ resolution of 1979\(^2\) re-emphasised most of the points made in
the resolutions of 1975 and 1977 but focused particularly on two aspects:
education for women of immigrant backgrounds, as a means of helping them
to escape second-class status and play their full role in the family, especially
in terms of parenting; and the role of apprenticeships in all types of vocational
training, as a means of making such training both more effective and more
accessible. In addition, picking up on ideas already expressed in the two pre-
vious resolutions, there was reference to the likely benefits of closer cultural
contacts between migrants and the populations of host countries. Forging
such contacts was seen as a way of familiarising migrants with the language
of the host country and of helping host countries to appreciate the enriching
impact of the migrants’ culture.

In 1984, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a
recommendation\(^3\) on the training of teachers in education for intercultural
understanding, notably in a context of migration: it not only stipulates that
teachers should be better prepared for working with children from immigrant
backgrounds, but also aligns itself closely with the intercultural approach as a
element of “education policies … geared to fostering open-mindedness and

\(^{1}\) SCME, 1977, Resolution No. 1.
\(^{2}\) SCME, 1979, Resolution No. 1.
\(^{3}\) Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (84) 18.
an understanding of cultural differences”.¹ In 1985, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education was to return again to the issue, with the Statement on Migrants’ Education making the point that migrants’ educational and cultural development depended on an intercultural dimension with all that that entailed in terms of mutual respect as well as tolerance and intercultural understanding on the part of teachers.²

These documents heralded the concerns that were to feature prominently in the CDCC (Council for Cultural Cooperation) project³ on “The education and cultural development of migrants” launched in 1981 and concluded in 1986. As its title suggests, the project looked at the problems affecting migrants from a much broader perspective than that of schooling alone – education being just one area where action was needed to prevent members of the migrant community from suffering segregation and exclusion. The idea was to construct a comprehensive educational and cultural programme to ensure, for example, that men and women had access to employment and to seek to improve women’s circumstances. Information about migration in European societies was collated both in order to learn more about little-documented situations and to gauge their many consequences across all areas of community life, beginning of course with education and training.

The originality of the project’s conclusions lay in the assertion that satisfactory and effective solutions could be developed only within predefined conceptual frameworks. For that reason, the final report concentrated on issues of principle rather than focusing on practical measures, some of which might already have been evaluated in case studies and experiments that would, in any case, continue. Those in charge of the project were convinced that any chosen solutions would be unlikely to yield the desired results unless the underlying objectives and rationale had been properly clarified.

And it was precisely the intercultural approach that offered the necessary clarification – on the basis of four findings: “a. most of our societies have become multicultural and will be increasingly so; b. every culture has its own specific features which deserve respect as such; c. multiculturalism is a

¹. Ibid, paragraph 2.7.
³. The term “project” is applied at the Council of Europe to a programme of research and activities, defined in this case by the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC), extending over a number of years, taking various forms (meetings of experts, seminars and symposiums, etc.) and resulting in publications including a final report.

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potential asset; [and] d. to make it an asset in reality, action must be taken to foster interpenetration of cultures and so establish a multicultural momentum, while ensuring that the specific identities of individual cultures are not erased”.¹ Acceptance of these ideas was the only way to reinforce rejection of racism and xenophobia, and refusal of exclusion and segregation;² and these were the ideas that had to underpin any initiative on migrants’ education that hoped to yield real, rather than illusory, results. The reason, of course, for the report’s vigorous tone was the fact that many countries were reluctant at the time to embark on the course suggested, a course followed – as the report pointed out – by only a few European states including the Netherlands and Sweden. Hence the urgent need to combine theory and practice in an effort to dismantle barriers and move from the existing situation to the desired one.

It is important to note here that while there was still wariness and hostility towards immigrant groups in European societies, the messages conveyed by this project did find a clear echo within education systems. The practice of educating migrants in the language and culture of their country of origin was widely adopted and, in many cases, students from host countries also developed an interest in such subjects. This came about thanks to school principals and teachers who had benefited from guidance during their basic training or from in-service education courses directly inspired by the 1984 recommendation. Also in line with the recommendation, there was an increase in the number of new teachers from immigrant backgrounds. Twenty years on from the project, however, some people may see these results as obsolete because the nature of immigration has changed, tending now to be either very temporary or, at the other extreme, a final step with no real prospect of return to the country of origin. Many of the project’s concerns might thus appear outdated or seem to be more relevant to thoroughgoing multiculturalism than to the specific circumstances of migrants.

In fact, however, it is not hard to see that the text quoted above – with its emphasis on the fact that multiculturalism would henceforth be a feature of our societies – is still applicable to the here and now. Hence too the argument for focusing on its positive contribution in placing interculturality – for obvious reasons – at the heart of thinking about education policy in the

². Ibid, p. 8.
Council of Europe. For adopting an intercultural perspective in analysing the desired aims of education and the implementation of measures to achieve them is simply consistent with respect for the values that the Council of Europe advocates. There is an unshakeable link between the intercultural perspective and human rights because intercultural interculturality is founded on the principle that difference must never be a euphemism for inferiority. It also goes without saying that such an attitude towards people who are different from oneself necessarily engenders the tolerance that is a prerequisite both for dialogue and mutual understanding and for enabling the partners in a democracy to recognise one another’s qualities. The project’s exploration of the concept of interculturality, involving the most respected specialists in the field, laid the essential theoretical and ethical foundations upon which issues of multiculturalism in our societies could be addressed. By virtue of the avenues that it opened up, there is thus no doubt that the project deserves to be seen as groundbreaking.

One such avenue led specifically to work on the case of the Roma/Gypsies. The Roma experience a more or less permanent condition of migration and immersion in other populations and for that reason are the object of deep-rooted prejudice and forms of segregation. When their situation began to be considered it was clear that their problems resembled those experienced by migrants, and addressing them opened up new perspectives on minority rights and the status of languages. In 1969, a recommendation by the Consultative Assembly (later the Parliamentary Assembly) drew attention to the discrimination suffered by Roma communities, and in 1983 the Council for Cultural Co-operation held the first international seminar to devote a significant part of its programme to the question of Roma children’s schooling. A series of seminars followed, including one in 1989 on the specific theme of multicultural education and the training of teachers for working with Roma students. Jean-Pierre Liégeois, in his book *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, effectively described the benefits likely to flow from the multicultural approach:

> Up to now, Gypsies and Travellers have been invented by observers; it is necessary that they be recognised for what they are, in all their richness and originality, because co-operation in a spirit of mutual respect is the difficult but crucial

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precondition for improving their living conditions and achieving mutually enriching co-existence.²

He pointed out that prejudice had to be countered and that, in the relationship between the two societies, information was an important factor in conflict prevention. Information and co-operation were the keys to making the shift from fundamental opposition to an improved understanding of difference. Virtually identical ideas were expressed in the final report of the project on migrants’ education – further evidence of the wide horizons that open once people begin tackling issues such as the perverse effect of prejudices and the need to abandon them in order to achieve peaceful recognition of difference. In fact this was the central theme in the intercultural approach clearly evident here, a theme subsequently to be pursued at many different levels and in many different contexts without ever losing its original inspiration: the aim being to correct distorted images and misconceptions, and bring about changes of attitude so that differences between societies and individuals might become the subject of dialogue rather than the fuel of interminable conflict.

How education systems can take the diversity of all their students into account

In the course of the project on migrants’ education the point was made repeatedly that this category of pupils was not the only one with specific needs. For all sorts of reasons, there existed among the non-immigrant school population particular types of pupil for whom curriculum content and teaching methods needed to be adapted. This need had to be recognised and voiced so that migrants would not be singled out (thus merely isolating them further) and so that educational policies could be developed to meet the new requirements of the times. In fact, at the Council of Europe, this marked the beginning of a wider-ranging recognition of differences, and a number of initiatives were taken for pupils with specific educational needs. General concern was expressed that children should not suffer at school as a result of any personal, family or social difficulties that they might face.

Naturally, the question of children with disabilities received the attention it deserved, and it was the subject of numerous decisions well in advance of the Committee of Ministers’ 1992 Recommendation¹ on a coherent policy for people

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¹. Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (92) 4.
with disabilities, covering all sectors of society. It is probably unnecessary, however, to deal at length with this subject in the present context, given that the 1992 Recommendation and the many other initiatives for people with disabilities were a direct and natural expression of the Council of Europe’s concerns and extended well beyond the field of education.

A determination to adapt the education system to help pupils overcome disadvantages linked to their background emerged at a very early stage. In 1969 the education ministers passed a resolution recommending that governments determine what adjustments were needed, from nursery level upwards, including at primary school, in view of the special difficulties experienced by certain children in their social and cultural environment and by those who had to adapt to a new environment.¹

Making pre-school education generally available was still the best means of offsetting the initial disadvantages that some children faced and providing equality of opportunity for all. It was therefore necessary to create more school places for children at this crucial stage in their development. Pre-school education had to be geared towards helping children who had difficulties of expression, especially oral expression, as a result of inadequacies in their social and cultural background, and to preventing children from being isolated because of their home environment and family circumstances.

There was a need for closer links between nursery and primary schools so that children would not experience an abrupt change in their educational environment. Primary school teaching had to follow on from nursery education, centring on children’s personal development and associating them with their own education, rather than focusing on arbitrarily defined standards of attainment. Children had to be accepted for what they were rather than what it was wished they should become.

In the early years of secondary education, too – a period now increasingly included in compulsory schooling – it was necessary to avoid directing pupils too soon towards either general or vocational courses, for to do so could penalise children from families unfamiliar with the school system and less able to make informed choices.

¹ SCME, 1969, Resolution No. 3.
As these issues began to be addressed in greater depth, more obstacles were identified that had to be eliminated in order to prevent certain children being disadvantaged at school. In 1969 the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education welcomed as timely a report on the educational needs of the less academically gifted child. The focus here was mainly on upper secondary-level education. To facilitate children’s schooling at this level – particularly at a time when mass education to secondary level (and indeed right through the secondary cycle) was becoming the norm – there was a need for greater flexibility and more choice in what students were offered. New combinations of academic and vocational training had to be designed and curriculums thus had to incorporate more opportunities for choice and more options. Special arrangements for late developers were needed, and guidance and counselling had to be developed in order to prevent students embarking on courses of study where they risked failure due to lack of aptitude or interest. The point was made that assessment would be less traumatic and more informative if it was carried out within the school rather than being a purely external form of recognition. The introduction of work experience, community service and recreational activities was also seen as a necessary step in integrating pupils who found the traditional school atmosphere off-putting. The development of school/parent relations was a further measure to be encouraged.

Higher education was not to be overlooked in the panoply of measures required to prevent certain groups falling by the wayside because courses or conditions of study were unsuitable for them, given their background or initial profile. Third-level colleges had to expand their intake without lowering the quality of their courses. Student-grant programmes had to be introduced to assist the less well-off. These measures – as indeed those affecting migrants – were to be based on wide-ranging international and European-level co-operation.

The thinking about diversity in the school population was very similar to that about migrants. The aims were to ensure that difference would not result in second-class status and to prevent standardisation of rules and practices, taking no account of specific cases.

1. SCME, 1969, Resolution No. 2.
2. SCME, 1969, Resolution No. 4.
From “old” to “new” minorities

The same broadening of perspective applied to the situation of migrants also affected the approach taken to the “new” minorities.

This term referred not to groups of people whose situation was of more recent date than that of the immigrant workers in western Europe, but to groups for whom life had been profoundly altered as a result of the changes in the former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe. At a time when passports indicated both citizenship (either Soviet or that of another political entity) and nationality, the status of these groups had varied: some had been compulsorily assimilated while others had been recognised in principle as independent; some had been placed in statutory categories and others had simply been discriminated against. At the same time, they had belonged to a geopolitical entity in which no clear or powerful centrifugal tendencies were apparent. But as the ties that had held this bloc of countries together were severed, conflicts broke out afresh or spread – a tendency aggravated by the fact that most central and eastern European states had a long history of uneasy coexistence between majority and minority groups. Minorities now began to experience segregation and exclusion similar to that directed against migrants in western Europe. Thus, while the presence of immigrants was the reality that first gained recognition, later developments, especially in central and eastern Europe but also in western Europe, stimulated a change of approach and a much wider definition of the intercultural perspective.1

The facet of interculturality highlighted here was concerned with the formulation of principles on which to base practical steps and measures for countering misrepresentation. For little would be gained by offering a minority group courses of study that gave their language and culture its due place if the only effect were to reinforce the “otherness” of the group by focusing on what was specific to it. Only by situating a particular group within a spectrum of difference do we allow it to be seen as part of a multicultural context in which difference no longer implies opposition or the imposition of inferior status.

With this concept in mind, attention was next drawn to the danger of “self-segregation” through the establishment of schools for minority groups – virtually implying the creation of educational sub-systems, when what was

2. Human rights and minorities in the new European democracies: educational and cultural aspects, Council of Europe, 1996.
really needed was the negotiation of a new social contract with new rules for
coeexistence and new relationships between majorities and minorities.\textsuperscript{2} The
point should also be made that it was difficult to chart new courses within
systems that had not yet begun to evolve in the desired direction. Ultimately a
choice had to be made between interculturality and what might be termed
“ethnic deconstruction”. The model of parallel existence for different cultures,
with separate groups expected to cohabit in a single territory, is permanently at
risk from extremist posturing and inter-ethnic rivalries. By contrast, the inter-
cultural dynamic springs from a fresh vision of culture that entails respect for
the natural interculturality of modern societies, characterised as they are by
exchange, cross-fertilisation and mutual borrowings, rejecting the polarisation
of majority/minority relations. Within this vision, differences and similarities
become complementary, and interaction and interdependence are possible. In
such a context, education comes into its own, its role being to inculcate attitudes
and skills which, rather than helping to replicate an original cultural model in
pristine condition, highlight all the contacts that exist between different cul-
tures.\textsuperscript{1} In other words, the aim is to develop education about difference for every
culture, rather than different patterns of education for different cultures.
“Intercultural education is not about catering for specific types of student. It is
about ensuring that everyone, whether they are members of minorities or
majorities, receives a cultural education from a range of perspectives” [editorial
translation].\textsuperscript{2}

It is clear from the foregoing that measures applicable to the migrant commu-
nity can be extended to all those population groups who, because they are
different from society generally, risk being marginalised or treated in an
unfavourable or discriminatory way, particularly in the field of education. The
first facet of interculturality highlighted is thus about attention to difference –
something which is almost always perceived negatively and needs to be re-
evaluated in a positive sense both within the group concerned and outside it.
The first step here is to observe the group that is different, in order to understand
it better and to assist it more effectively to re-establish for itself, without alien-
ation, an identity respected by others. Interculturality entails, first and foremost,
an awareness of all the factors that can separate one culture from another, espe-
cially when one is a majority culture and the other that of a minority. But inter-

\textsuperscript{1} Audigier, François, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{2} Gelpi, Ettore, \textit{Adult education, democracy and development}, Council of Europe, 1996.
culturality also means recognising the need for combined action involving all those, within a particular society and beyond it, who face the same problem, in order to develop worthwhile solutions. Interculturality is thus, in the first place, both a relationship with a different culture situated inside the generally divided culture where the process of observation is taking place, and a relationship with all other cultures that can help to optimise the process of observation and the solutions that emerge from it. The Council of Europe places great emphasis on the need for international co-operation with a view to appraising national solutions and, at the same time, assessing the value of initiatives to improve upon them.
II. INTERCULTURALITY AS COMMUNICATION IN A CONTEXT OF LINGUISTIC AND MEDIA PLURALISM

The Council of Europe has taken even more initiatives on language than it has on the issue of migrants. Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention of 1954 stipulates that each country shall encourage the study of other languages and the study of its own language by others. Recommendations by the Parliamentary Assembly and Committee of Ministers and Resolutions by the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education have followed in rapid succession over the intervening years and right up the present. These texts have addressed all aspects of language learning whether in the context of formal education systems, or in other contexts designed for specific types of learner, notably adults. Naturally these official statements of policy also led to the implementation of several projects that explored the political, socio-economic and cultural implications of language teaching in greater depth and identified the most appropriate methods of extending its scope and making it more effective. The opening of the European Modern Languages Centre in Graz in 1994 must also be seen as underscoring the high importance of the language sector both in the Council of Europe’s policy choices and in its activity programme.

Moreover, although for many years language teaching in schools and elsewhere focused almost exclusively on majority languages, the level of attention paid to other languages has risen steadily. An early manifestation of this – albeit one which encountered serious obstacles – was the drive to extend the teaching of migrants’ languages of origin to at least a fraction of the school population of the host country. In this regard the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was a milestone.

In terms of explaining how interculturality works in education policies and practices, the relevance of language-teaching issues is obvious. Interculturality is an essential factor from the outset because any form of contact with someone who speaks a language different from our own is per se an occasion of contact with another culture, and to many young people, in particular, it may offer the first opportunity of stepping outside their own familiar world. Here a further facet of interculturality comes into play – that of communication, without which this type of access to another world and contact with other individuals and groups could not take place.
This facet of interculturality, concerned with language learning, is similar to that discussed previously. For while communication is essential here in terms of reaching the other person, it takes place, given the huge range of languages in use, in a context characterised by difference, linguistic diversity both creating a de facto situation and necessitating choices. It is not possible to teach or learn all the languages that exist, for all sorts of reasons: some of these, such as the problem of time in the curriculum and the need to find resources, are practical; others, such as the image of a particular language in terms of level of difficulty or range of use, are to do with information and communication. All this reminds us that communication is another aspect of dealing with difference, albeit one with a particular connotation. This time interculturality is concerned not with defining an almost imposed “otherness” but with addressing the “foreignness” of people and a country that we need to learn more about.

The steps to be followed in exploring this facet of interculturality are thus clear. First we need to gauge how far the diversity of languages in Europe may pose problems for language learning, with a view to avoiding unacceptable and damaging situations of isolation due to difficulties of communication. We then need to look at ways of coping with this diversity, asking, in particular, how to foster attitudes to the languages in question that will not prevent either equitable relations or mutual comprehension. Clearly though, there is a danger that the problem will not present itself in the same way for majority languages and minority languages, so the specific situation of the latter also needs to be addressed.

Essential though it is, however, communication should not be seen purely as a matter of language. The media provide other vehicles and even other languages, notably via the printed, televised or filmed image. The plurality of languages is thus paralleled by the plurality of the media, a realm in which competition is so intense that it clearly has to be controlled in order to ensure that users are not exposed to manipulation and misinformation. Therefore the media, too, require an ethos – the ethos of communication.

But ethics also have a role in communication through language. The use of language is never neutral. Language is constantly conveying sociocultural messages that carry a certain meaning and value. When people speak together they cannot understand one another unless they respect one another, and that respect must be preserved in order to take the step from linguistic plurality to
linguistic pluralism, entailing parity of esteem for different languages. This linguistic pluralism cannot be dissociated from media pluralism, which is also vital to the defence of human rights and democracy.

**Linguistic diversity, cultural diversity**

Linguistic diversity in Europe as a reflection of cultural diversity is a theme that has received much attention at the Council of Europe. In 1982, a Committee of Ministers recommendation made the point that acquiring a knowledge of the language of other member states enabled people to “achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other people and of their cultural heritage”.1 Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention had also signalled the close relationship between languages and histories and civilisations.

The image of a mosaic was soon being used to describe Europe’s languages. While the image was already applicable in the 1950s, it became even more apt and obvious in the wake of later changes. Well before the drafting of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages attention began to be paid to immigrant groups’ languages of origin and to certain regional languages that were asserting themselves after years of subordination to one or more official languages. The collapse of the Soviet bloc was to accentuate this phenomenon in much more dramatic fashion. National languages like those of the Baltic countries and Ukraine, which had previously been effectively sealed in by their national borders and displaced at international level by the single official language, were now able to claim fresh recognition and, in principle, wider dissemination. The lifting of oppressive controls in a number of states encouraged minorities, such as the Turks in Bulgaria and the Kosovo Albanians, to demand that barriers to the use of their own languages be removed. At the same time, virtually everywhere, decentralisation stimulated regionalism and regional languages: in Spain, for example, there was a big increase in the use of the Autonomous Communities’ languages, and in France too arrangements were made for the teaching of Breton and Corsican.

Thus it was that in 1982 the Council of Europe launched a project on “Language policies for a multilingual and multicultural Europe” with the aim of reflecting Europe’s linguistic diversity and looking simultaneously at the

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different types of language in use throughout the continent, that is indigenous minority languages, migrants’ languages, “foreign” languages and the official languages of the member states.  

The project organisers seem to have opted deliberately to cover the widest possible variety of languages, not contenting themselves with too simplistic a version of interculturality. For if interculturality was to fulfil its potential it had to offer a means of moving beyond contrasts, or indeed conflicts, enabling them to be seen from a fresh perspective rather than simply avoided. The identity of “the other”, with all its specificities, had to remain intact and be seen for what it was, rather than being transposed to resemble the identity of the group that wanted to initiate contact. This approach is always difficult and there is often a risk that it will be followed only in the letter rather than the spirit, as efforts are made to attenuate or minimise actual or perceived differences. So the determination not to take the easy approach with regard to linguistic diversity in Europe was understandable, all the more so given the temptation to lump certain minority or regional tongues together with other dominant languages in pursuit of compromise or compression in order to minimise diversity.

Attempts to reduce linguistic diversity might have been pursued, for example, by grouping languages together in “families” or focusing on just a few “major” languages of communication to be prioritised in teaching. The projects run by the Council of Europe’s Language Policy Division, such as that on language learning and the challenge of diversity, did not shirk mention of the need to preserve the variety in order to explore the associated cultural heritages. In the context of modern-language teaching, therefore, special importance had to be attached to the multilingual nature of European society and to intercultural education, while teaching methods that focused only on communication at the expense of literary and cultural studies had to be treated with caution.

Yet while linguistic diversity had to be accepted, care also had to be taken to prevent languages being used as instruments of power and exclusion, and to ensure that societies’ networks did not become monolingual. This was not, however, a reason for turning language into an obsession with a narrowly

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
construed identity and coupling it with a rejection of otherness and difference.\(^1\) The Committee of Ministers had already made the point, in Resolution 69 (2) on an intensified modern language teaching programme for Europe, that linguistic diversity was part of Europe’s cultural heritage and that, far from being a barrier to unity, it should – through the study of modern languages – become a source of intellectual enrichment. That remains the thrust of policy in today’s enlarged Europe where linguistic diversity, like other forms of diversity, is even more marked and harder to manage. It is precisely in today’s Europe, however, that interculturality can prove its full worth as a means of addressing differences on a scale that should not be underestimated.

**Using communication to move beyond diversity**

In terms of language policy and practice, interculturality also depends crucially on communication. Exploration of the wealth of linguistic and cultural pluralism must go hand in hand with efforts to enable the largest possible section of the population to share in that wealth.

It is true that, in their multiplicity, languages create barriers to the good relations that ought to exist between different groups of people in Europe, and such barriers should be minimised wherever possible. The Ministers called for action along these lines, arguing that to achieve a truly common perspective among the countries of Europe, it was necessary to overcome the language barriers between them. The Standing Conference of Ministers had previously stipulated that the removal of such barriers was essential not only for the sake of individual development and the future of Europe, but also as a means of strengthening the international co-operation upon which economic and social progress depended.\(^2\)

Such an approach had many consequences in the field of education, two of which deserve particular attention here because they are directly related to the intercultural perspective that fosters contact on an equitable basis. The teaching of modern languages had to be extended right throughout education and training systems because, in the current situation in Europe, language education had to be available to everyone, not merely to an elite. As contacts in all fields of activity were multiplying and personal mobility was increasing, international exchanges of experience in every sector depended upon making

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1. Ibid.
2. SCME, 1961, Resolution No. 6.
foreign language skills available to all sorts of people. Moreover, in order to address these new groups of language learners and to meet the new needs, there had to be radical changes in the way that languages were taught. Priority had to be given to oral fluency and to work with texts that reflected everyday life in contemporary societies so that the acquisition of language skills could facilitate relations between indigenous groups and various foreign milieus in a practical way. In order to democratise the study of modern languages, wide-ranging and urgent action was required: truly revolutionary changes in language teaching were needed. In particular, emphasis had to be placed on the acquisition of basic vocabulary and grammatical structures.

These considerations led the Council of Europe to take the pioneering step of defining new “threshold levels”, setting out the vocabulary and forms of expression which students needed in order to begin communicating, and on which they could successfully build. Methods for rapidly inculcating the basic elements of foreign languages were already familiar, but they amounted to no more than practical initiation, on the basis of which it was virtually impossible to progress to more in-depth learning. The aim of the threshold levels was to avoid this problem by ensuring not only that students acquired basic skills, but also that they could use those skills to develop an increasingly rich knowledge of a language. Here too, the preference for interculturality was evident, with a concern for even-handedness and a refusal to split language teaching into summary and finite courses for some and real studies for others.

Many other necessary measures to modernise language teaching were recommended with a view to making languages more generally accessible: they included a reduction in class sizes and the use of audiovisual resources. The aim of these developments, as set out in Committee of Ministers’ Resolution (1969) 2, was to ensure that knowledge of a foreign language should no longer be a luxury enjoyed by an elite, but rather an information tool available to all. A project on the learning and teaching of modern languages for purposes of communication, launched in 1982, fully endorsed these policy directions – which were set out clearly at the conference entitled “Across the threshold towards multilingual Europe”. Informed by the Modern Languages Report 1971-1981, the conference demonstrated that the central aim of European modern languages policy was to facilitate communication and exchanges between Europeans of different mother tongues, with a view to
promoting mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation in Europe, and eliminating prejudice and discrimination.¹

These largely practical concerns were not to prevent the parallel pursuit of goals related to the benefits of the cultural component in linguistic exchanges. This was made clear in Recommendation 814 (1977) of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, which stipulated that: “a knowledge of languages is not only essential for communication and exchanges between Europeans, but also leads to the mutual understanding of cultural values”. Here again we see the central plank of interculturality, simultaneously reaching out toward “otherness” and encouraging exploration – with “the others” – of unsuspected areas of similarity. Further work in this field of language learning demonstrated that, while importance was rightly accorded to the improvement of the learning process in order to enhance the learner’s capacity for communication, it was also possible to take account of all the underlying factors that imbue every message exchanged with a complexity which cannot be dismissed. The “Language learning for European citizenship” project, launched in 1989, underscored this message, emphasising the contribution that fully realised language exchanges could make in terms of fostering respect for human rights and democracy. Exchange-centred teaching, involving many different types of contact between pupils, teachers and schools, was also to reveal the extraordinary wealth of ideas and attitudes that come to the fore when students find themselves, as guests and hosts, meeting and talking with others who speak a different language. Increasingly, learners would come to be regarded as cultural intermediaries and a concept of language learning for European citizenship would be recognised as a vehicle for promoting a range of ideas: development of mutual tolerance and mutual concern, exchanges of viewpoints and openness to communication, new ways of life and new ideas – learner autonomy and independent learning – in other words, the entire sociocultural backdrop to a language.²

The same perspective was applied in the “Links” programme which, as its name suggests, was concerned with facilitating communication between communities of language learners in a whole range of ways and using a wide variety of resources. The point was made in this context of the

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programme that although exchanges naturally tended to be seen as a tool for improving language skills, it would be better to see language as a tool for exchange, rather than regarding the exchange simply as an opportunity for language practice.\(^1\) Similar thinking led to the concept of the Language portfolio, a file in which the learner records her or his skills in foreign languages, whether these are evaluated through the award of a recognised certificate or acquired through various types of experience. It goes without saying that many types of experience lie in the realm beyond straightforward communication and, indeed, there is no such thing as communication in the limited sense of a purely informative and self-contained exchange of messages.

**Identity and multiculturality**

Communicating through language inevitably means encountering an identity – generally what is called a cultural identity – that corresponds to a socio-cultural context associated with a particular language. The language is part of that context, and this factor cannot be ignored by those who are communicating. Of course, since the 19th century, when languages have been linked with culture in this way it is often languages that have been given, or been expected to assume, priority, thus making them the basis and criterion of cultural identity – in some cases with militant overtones, which are not hard to understand. If a language is seen not to enjoy the position or status it deserves, this threatens the identity and culture of a people, which will then be defended through defence of the language. A large slice of European history is the history of this struggle. Nowadays the struggle is no longer, as it was in the last century, simply between dominant languages on the one hand and repressed or outlawed languages on the other. There is a further struggle between dominant languages, one of which threatens the others. This is precisely the sort of climate in which each linguistic and cultural identity turns in upon itself, as if defending a besieged sanctuary, and language can come to be seen as the jealously guarded flame of a community – or the secret code protecting it from external danger.

In these circumstances the communicative function of language is drastically curtailed and interculturality gives way to “intraculturality”, in which

\(^1\) School links and exchanges in Europe – a vade-mecum, Council of Europe, 1994
communities – rather than exploring and adapting to one another – find themselves constricted by an aggressive and inward-looking form of identity that ultimately prevents all but superficial contacts, leaving the situation unchanged.

In the course of its work on old and new minorities, described above, the Council of Europe recognised the gravity of this problem, hence its increasing interest in minority languages, which have been the subject of various studies, some very recent.¹ From these it is clear that a number of measures have been successful in enhancing the status of minority languages in education, and these languages are in use for the teaching of certain subjects. Nonetheless, we should not underestimate the many obstacles in the way of genuine parity of treatment between a dominant language – in many cases decreed, rightly or wrongly, to be the national language – and minority languages. There is thus a risk that, despite efforts by governments and societies, the additional scope afforded to minority and regional languages may remain limited.

In the Council of Europe’s view, this is the clinching argument for choosing another path – that of multiculturalism² – as the only means of restoring equitable relations in the context of an intercultural dialogue stabilised and stimulated by a fresh concept of identity. Within a multicultural perspective the model of opposition between two cultural identities (often confronting one another as in a duel) is replaced by a polycentric model. Rather than seeking each to assert its absolute uniqueness, the different cultural identities have to accept that they are part of a plurality, existing on a “level playing field” and relating to one another on terms of equality and mutual recognition. In keeping with this context, each identity must acknowledge its own plurality, recognising that it shares certain characteristics with other identities, as they do with it. From such a perspective, language is still an important characteristic but – like other characteristics such as economic circumstances or aspects of an artistic heritage – it can be shared. People also have to accept that identity is no longer solid, enduring and homogenous, but in fact evolves within a network of interdependence and interrelations, developing new perceptions of itself and others and thus substantively changing.

The switch to a multicultural perspective prevents intercultural relations from foundering in attempts at dialogue between two irreconcilable interlocutors. This can be illustrated by the image of seeking to construct a multipolar, multidirectional web, rather than trying simply to sling a bridge across a chasm. At the same time we have to appreciate the limits of communication: if it is too narrowly focused it leaves no place for the pursuit of rich and complex intercultural relations. If it is to continue expanding and intensifying in an open-ended way, communication must include sustained efforts at investigation, comparison and conciliation. Thus it can never constitute a finite, unquestionable outcome. There is always scope for reducing what is incommunicable – the very factor that both stimulates and constrains communication.

From linguistic pluralism to media pluralism

The multicultural perspective must also mean looking beyond a plurality of languages to a situation of real linguistic pluralism, which depends among other things on media pluralism.

Linguistic pluralism means recognising that various languages coexist within a given territory or territories. It means readiness to accord these languages basic equality, despite the different fates they may have suffered in terms of status, geographical spread and levels of use. Linguistic pluralism cannot eliminate the differences in circumstances between majority and minority languages but it can prevent such differences being translated into hierarchies, and can ensure that the symbolic importance of certain initiatives is not overlooked, notably in the field of education where an all-or-nothing approach is often the worst possible option. Between officially recognised bilingualism or plurilingualism, on the one hand, and the scenario where a language is used only within families, on the other, there must be scope for intermediate solutions, such as the existence of schools that teach through one particular language, or of others where different languages are used to teach different subjects. There is also room for improvement in education systems with regard to the situation of foreign, minority or regional languages. Initiatives by administrators or families will always have a greater chance of success if they focus more on establishing or maintaining a balance and less on creating winners and losers.

In this context the media, with their wide ranging impact in the fields of language and culture, could not be overlooked. As was pointed out in the recommendations and conclusions of the conference entitled “Across the
threshold towards multilingual Europe”, the role of the various media in language learning needed to be defined more closely, teachers needed to have a wider range of media at their disposal and multimedia teaching resources needed to be developed. The conference thus highlighted the whole range of ways in which press, radio, television and the new technologies could contribute. Resolution No. 1 from the 1984 Conference of Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs, meanwhile, emphasised the important role of the media in preserving and developing specific cultural identities. There was, however, considerable evidence that the media sometimes had a long way to go in this respect.

It was thus important to underscore the need for the media to play this role properly, and to recommend the development of media education, enabling people to react against forms of communication or media content that fell short of their expectations – and there were to be repeated complaints of media inadequacies. With regard to migrants, the media have often been guilty of unequal treatment, rarefying or marginalising information that concerns them most directly. The project on “Democracy, human rights, minorities: educational and cultural aspects” found that the presentation of minority groups in the press, on radio and on television was almost always both inadequate and biased. It goes with saying that, as a rule, the languages of such groups had no place in the columns of daily newspapers or on radio or television. Moreover, journalists reporting on situations involving minorities often adopted a “folksy” tone or framed their reports in such a way as to provoke negative reactions. This tendency was particularly marked in the coverage of immigrant communities, but other minority groups rarely fared better. Local media or community radio stations, where such were active, could offset the negative effect of the mass media’s monolingualism and permit coverage based on more direct and reliable information. This was not necessarily an ideal solution, however, for it carried the risk of “ghettoising” coverage of minority issues. On balance, it seemed that the media were in the business of packaging, rather than reflecting, reality and thus tended to neglect the plurality of viewpoints and cultures.

1. Across the threshold towards multilingual Europe, conference, conclusions and recommendations, Council of Europe, 1982, indent 5.
It is hardly surprising, therefore, that media education should have been deemed indispensable. For while it may be true that free and pluralist mass media have an important role to play in education, too many messages – by virtue of their construction or content – get in the way of that mission. Thus while encouraging widespread use of media, it was important at the same time to exercise caution. As early as 1961 the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education recognised the potential benefits of television in adult education, and in 1962 it affirmed that these benefits applied to all forms of education. In 1987, however, a Parliamentary Assembly recommendation sought to encourage the introduction of school courses “on critical appreciation of the media and audiovisual production” and very recently the “Education for democratic citizenship” project took up the torch by organising a seminar entitled “Critical approach to the media in civic education”. In any event, following on from the project on migrants’ education, media education – ideally from primary level upwards – is now a theme of Council of Europe activity, addressed in publications and in numerous in-service training courses for teachers.

The facet of interculturality embodied by communication is thus both reaffirmed and to some extent modified. Communication is indeed a fundamental aspect of interculturality: it is where interculturality is most evidently at work – connecting individuals, groups and institutions who belong to different cultures. At the same time, however, the media – by substituting text and images for actual situations of communication and by replicating them in great numbers – do not necessarily facilitate exchange in the way one might have expected, and indeed hoped, especially with regard to the new technologies. It would seem that communication has become “naturally” intercultural by virtue of the internationalisation of news and information – and that all we need do, in order to encounter different people and different cultures, is to soak it up. Yet communication is becoming harder – not so much because of the mass of information to be assimilated, but because of the

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1. SCME, 1961, Resolution No. 4.
2. SCME, 1962, Resolution No. 4.
6. See for example reports on the two courses DECS/SE/BS/Donau(93) 1 and DECS/SE/DHRH(95) 15.
need for caution, the need to question the accuracy of information and, above all, the integrity with which it is interpreted in a world where the intrinsic value of facts is merely relative. A culture is primarily a collection of meanings and symbols that can literally be destroyed through faulty perception. This is what media education should seek to prevent. Ultimately, while linguistic communication may demand years of effort in order to master a language and then use it advisedly, media-based communication demands even more serious efforts, at least on the part of those utilising the media. Prudence and indeed wariness have to be standard practice, and communication – originally envisaged above all as outreach – could actually become a means of resisting other people and, indeed, excluding them. We ought at least to be capable of distinguishing true communication from false communication, genuine communication from pseudo-communication, and thus we should also be able to distinguish interculturality – as a meeting or occasion of comparison between cultures with all their intrinsic qualities – from sham interculturalism involving contrived and pointless encounters.

All this serves to remind us that while the various facets of interculturality are distinct they cannot be neatly dissociated from one another. Communication offers a good illustration of this, for communication as one facet of interculturality is coloured by the same critical dimension which is present in a heightened, and highly influential, form in the approach to interculturality through history.
III. INTERCULTURALITY AS A CRITICAL APPROACH TO HISTORY IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE

While a critical dimension is always part of interculturality, it is most clearly apparent in relation to the study of history. Since the inception of its activities, the Council of Europe has paid particular attention to history. The preamble and Article 2 of the European Cultural Convention stipulate that, as well as promoting the study of foreign languages, each contracting state must encourage the study of its own history and the history of other countries in order to make its national contribution to the common cultural heritage of Europe. This commitment must extend to the study of civilisations which, at the date of the convention’s signing, was still largely part of history lessons. History is thus of real strategic importance in terms of respecting and implementing the ideals and principles that underpin the Council of Europe’s work. Recommendation 1283 (1996) of the Parliamentary Assembly, on history and the learning of history in Europe, reaffirms in paragraph 2 that history has “a key political role to play in today’s Europe”.

One can easily guess at the obstacles to be overcome in this respect. From school textbooks of the time it is clear that, in the immediate post-war period, situations were not always depicted objectively enough to be appreciated without denying or blocking out certain aspects. And these tendencies were exacerbated by the cold war. Nor, as experience in the Balkans has shown, have we been free in more recent times of passions that threaten to compromise calm consideration of past or present events. All these uncertainties were discussed at a colloquy on the study of history in Europe, organised in conjunction with the adoption of the above-mentioned resolution.¹

Clearly, critical reflection is the facet of interculturality naturally to the fore in a vision of history, especially in the classroom context. It goes without saying that, in all sorts of different countries, history courses are regarded as essential for transmission of national heritage. Yet one is forced to question whether historical analyses really respect the rules that are supposed to govern them. These concerns were to be reflected in all the Council’s work on history teaching, and particularly in the project entitled “Learning and teaching about

¹ “History and the learning of history in Europe”, Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe 1996.
the history of Europe in the 20th century”, which was launched in 1996 and led to the production of a substantial body of resources to help history teachers avoid the pitfalls.

**History teaching and the effort to combat stereotypes and prejudice**

In the immediate post-war period one of the most important guiding ideas for history teaching was that it should be used to overcome the host of preconceived ideas that had exacerbated passions and violence during the conflict, with consequences all too evident after it. Efforts were needed to encourage meetings between countries and cultures that had broken off contact many years previously, and to ensure that such meetings might take place in a new light and without misconceptions.

This marked the beginning of attempts at bridge-building between worlds that had virtually decided to ignore one another, with a foretaste of the results that might be expected from such rapprochement. Interculturality clearly represented a possible avenue of reconciliation. Numerous initiatives in the intervening years have demonstrated that it still offers a means of tackling overt or latent forms of xenophobia, racism and nationalism. Indeed, in 1995, the Council of Europe decided that the time was right to publish a compendium of its work on these themes.²

Nonetheless, it had to be recognised that reality could be distorted as much by lack of information as by one-sided information. The intercultural perspective could work only if all the different cultures that it sought to bring into contact possessed sufficient information. Thus – and this point has been made repeatedly over many years – there was a need in the field of history teaching, as in many others, for schoolchildren in each country to acquire a basic level of knowledge about other countries.

The teaching of European history was the first area addressed in an effort to make good existing shortcomings. Several international conferences were held between 1953 and 1958 with a view to identifying the most serious omissions in school textbooks and finding ways of filling the gaps. In-service teacher-training seminars were organised on the theme “Europe at school”, their purpose being to explore how a basic level of knowledge about the

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different countries of the continent could help to prevent excessive ignorance and the false ideas it breeds. Such initiatives were not confined to Europe, however. Other seminars and different types of in-service teacher training, on the theme “The world at school”, took the effort in directions that had too often been neglected, embracing North and South America, for example, as well as Asia. In parallel, education about development gave pupils the chance to look at regions which they had previously encountered even more rarely. Broadening the scope of interculturality in this way was essential in order to prevent it lapsing into Eurocentrism and thus effectively negating itself.

Interculturality thus took on a rehabilitative function, ensuring that those cultures which had fared best in power struggles or the accidents of history did not capture all the attention at the expense of others. This function became especially evident in initiatives designed to promote the application to particular events or eras of a perspective other than that imposed by the groups ostensibly most closely concerned. One example was a set of guidelines for presenting the French Revolution in a European context, prepared with a view to offering a largely non-French group of teachers an acceptable chronology and analyses of the period, which might be significantly at odds with the points of view habitually adopted by French historians and teachers of history. Interculturality was here taking root in a process of mutual exploration, as urged in Recommendation No. R (84) 18 of the Committee of Ministers on the training of teachers in education for intercultural understanding, notably in a context of migration. Majority and minority groups could encounter one another on an equal footing, avoiding the type of one-sided appraisal that inevitably put distance between them and generated conflict.

While the critical function of interculturality appeared to work relatively smoothly in the above-mentioned examples, there have been many other cases where it has seemed bound to turn into overt campaigning with little room for concessions. This change of register had already been seen among migrants who, despite long periods of residence in their host country, had continued to suffer from prejudice and a lack of proper recognition. From the late 1980s onwards, however, the number of groups likely to engage in such campaigning grew steadily with the resurgence of minorities in central and eastern Europe and the conflicts in south-east Europe. Radicalisation of the demands to which the critical function of interculturality lends itself was only to be expected. As rightly pointed out in the context of the project on “Democracy, human rights, minorities: educational and cultural aspects”, an intercultural
vision of history would be impossible unless everyone had the opportunity to
learn about the existence of cultural diversity and factors that go to make it up1
– in other words unless it was possible for members of every minority to learn
simultaneously about their own history and the history of others. The history
of minorities thus had to be given a place on the syllabus so that minorities (by
rediscovering themselves) and majorities (by abandoning their ignorance and
prejudices) could jointly recover good relations and mutual respect in a
restored context of interculturality.

The Council of Europe is well aware of the need to promote initiatives along
these lines, eschewing any equivocation or pretence. Parliamentary Assembly
Recommendation 1283 (1996) asserts that “People have a right to their
past, just as they have a right to disown it. History is one of several ways of
retrieving this past and creating a cultural identity. It is also a gateway to the
experiences and richness of the past and of other cultures. It is a discipline
concerned with the development of a critical approach to information and of
controlled imagination.2

The dangers of lapsing into nationalism

Obviously, however, ethnocentricity and all that goes with it can compromise
such an approach at any time by encouraging notions of superiority and forms
of bad faith which limit those professing them to a refusal of dialogue and a
posture of intolerance. Nationalism in its many manifestations has a long
history of demonstrating its malign potential in this respect.

Because nationalism cannot be dissociated from a highly questionable idea of
nationhood and of what constitutes an appropriate vision of national history,
we have a responsibility to warn against the misinterpretations to which
these ideas may lead. The question of ambiguities in national history was a
recurring theme at the above-mentioned seminar on history and the learning
of history in Europe. On the one hand, national history is legitimate inasmuch
as no one can deny a community the right to its own history.3 On the
other hand, however, national history encourages the transformation of myths
into dangerous counter-truths, especially when such myths are purveyed

1. Leclef, Daphné, op. cit.
2. Recommendation 1283 (1996) of the Parliamentary Assembly on history and the learning of
history.
3. Leclef, Daphné, op. cit.
through the media and the curriculum, becoming in many cases instruments of manipulation. Identity cast in a national mould thus tends to become inward-looking, avoiding contact with any reality or any type of dialogue that might fail to reinforce its own incontestable view of itself.

So a more flexible concept of the nation state needs to be adopted. This does not mean that nation states – pulled in different directions by destructive forces – should abandon the many aspects of unity and originality to which they lay claim. It does mean, however, that they should become less monolithic and more open to meaningful relations with near and distant neighbours, even those once regarded as inveterate enemies. As an antidote to the monolithic national approach, the Council of Europe in its work on history teaching has attached growing importance to local history, thus promoting acceptance of the idea that national and regional identities can happily coexist. Moreover, in emphasising the need to achieve a European vision of history, it has striven to put conflicts in perspective by presenting them as part of a bygone era.

After 1989, as powerful currents of nationalism surfaced in central and eastern Europe, it became particularly necessary to denounce the dangers of focusing on an inflexible national model. Against this background it was observed that:

> teaching in a nationalistic way goes beyond simply teaching students the history of their national group or nation. Instead it presents them with a particularly one-sided or biased view of their nation’s history in order to promote two related ideas: that in some way, they are superior to other groups or nations … and that their distinctiveness can only be expressed through political sovereignty over the homeland, regardless of any other nationalities who may be living there.¹

Developments in south-east Europe were to provoke even more worrying observations: “There is a tendency to present the nation’s history as if it was a seamless continuity linking the present to a long-distant past. Any historical discontinuities are presented as aberrations. The uniqueness of the nation is emphasised rather than the heritage which it shares with others. Homogeneity (of people, culture, language and heritage) is emphasised and cultural and ethnic diversity is overlooked. There also tends to be a strong focus on conflicts – both those which highlight glorious victories and those which justify

continued fear, defensiveness or hatred – rather than on periods of peaceful co-existence and mutual co-operation.”

An equally serious danger was that the focus on rigid and intolerant national models would encourage the “new” minorities to believe that no other solutions were possible – thus creating potentially explosive situations. The idea of coexistence in plural societies was being rejected, and radical demands were heard, echoing those of the fiercest nationalist movements that would, given the chance, turn formerly oppressed minorities into oppressors. Clearly, Europe would have to hope that the principle of “do as you would be done by” might win out over “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”.

Against such a background it was not surprising that history teachers – especially in secondary schools whose students are at an age where they are highly receptive to the burning issues of the day – should feel that they faced daunting challenges. They could see history being used to encourage feelings of identification in both majorities and minorities, with the circulation of stereotypes or nasty images and an insistence on national history as the dominant version of events. Following the brief and effusive days of consensus when the communist yoke was thrown off, history was now being exploited to feed a resurgence of nationalism in eastern Europe, which it seemed that no political or social force could counter.

Reconciliation as part of interculturality

On the basis of this analysis, various initiatives were deemed necessary in order to move beyond blinkered thinking and denial: the development of comprehensive histories of particular regions and the encouragement of different views of such histories; support for historians carrying out research in countries other than their own; the organisation of exchanges between history teachers in different countries; and encouragement for the practice of comparative history and a critical approach to the interpretation of events. All

4. Ibid.
these initiatives were, of course, associated with the adoption of an intercultural perspective.

For that perspective to produce the desired effects, it was equally essential that those involved in conflict situations should meet, in order to overcome differences and misunderstandings through dialogue and self expression. As we have seen, this process had already taken place in western Europe after the second world war. It enjoyed a resurgence after 1989 and received even further impetus from subsequent events in south-east Europe. Indeed, under the terms of the Stability Pact for south eastern Europe, the Council of Europe was given the task of co-ordinating efforts being undertaken in the field of history studies, with a view to encouraging the countries of the region to learn more about one another and develop deeper understanding. To this end, a wide-ranging programme of meetings between universities, research institutes and schools was organised, and documentation suitable for use in the different countries was prepared. To take just one example, in 2002 a seminar was held on the teaching of national history in south-east European secondary schools, the aim being to assist a group of teachers from different countries of the region in working towards a less polemical perspective on events or periods previously seen in radically opposing terms.

The process was taken a step further with thinking about how the intercultural perspective could contribute to historical methodology. Historian Robert Stradling\(^1\) described the desired approach as one of “multiperspectivity”, which involved acknowledging that any area of historical knowledge was open to a plurality of interpretations – an insight that tended not so much to relativise everything as to foster attitudes of modesty and tolerance. People had to be prepared to accept the idea that the existing knowledge of any phenomenon was merely a tiny fraction of all possible knowledge and that there was always room for fresh perspectives, provided they were supported by reliable information. These ideas underpin the strong and quite natural link between historical knowledge and interculturality. Thinking about history means continually exploring ideas, feelings and types of behaviour that the observer has to examine on the premise that she or he is incapable of bringing

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the necessary objectivity to the analysis. At the same time, however, observers must remain close enough to what they are studying to be able to grasp its significance.

The need for such an approach was enunciated even more clearly in a recent Committee of Ministers Recommendation 2001 (15) on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe. In fact, this document insists particularly on the importance of cultivating attitudes that enable pupils to develop “the intellectual ability to analyse and interpret information critically and responsibly, through dialogue … and through open debate based on multiperspectivity, especially on controversial and sensitive issues”.

The scope of the recommendation is not confined to the learning of history. Indeed, it confirms, summarises and reinforces all the work done over twenty years on the subject of history from an intercultural perspective, with special reference to critical reflection as a facet of interculturality. It makes the point, of course, that history teaching should “play a vital role in the promotion of fundamental values, such as tolerance, mutual understanding, human rights and democracy” and that it should be a “factor in reconciliation … between peoples”. There is also a warning against the exploitation of history to promote “intolerant and ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic ideas”. But the recommendation goes a step further than other documents in condemning misuses of history in the form of “distortion of the past”, “hate speeches” (already singled out for condemnation in Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (97) 20) and “ideological falsification and manipulation”.

Echoing the 1996 Parliamentary Assembly recommendation, the new text was thus further proof of the Council of Europe’s continuing interest in history teaching, in the intercultural teaching of history and generally in making intercultural education a reality.

Interculturality exists where there is possibility of recognising “relative otherness” between individuals and cultures. Individuals can retain all their specificities without cutting themselves off from – or being radically opposed to – others. The study of history is probably one of the best ways of achieving

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2. Ibid, appendix, paragraph 2.
3. Ibid, preamble.
this because of its extremely rich input to interculturality as a process of critical reflection. What it has to offer ranges from the relatively modest contribution of correcting factual errors, such as those found in school textbooks, to the function of therapy against highly destructive ideologies.
IV. INTERCULTURALITY AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE VALUES OF CITIZENSHIP

An intercultural perspective and intercultural practice have been seen from the outset as part and parcel of the values that the Council of Europe stands for. This came across clearly in the previous chapter in relation to the expected benefits of history teaching informed by a concern to transmit a shared past while respecting others and taking care to prevent differences of opinion – in themselves inevitable and even desirable – from degenerating into insurmountable disagreements. All the steps taken to adapt education to the particular needs of migrants and other groups were also guided by a concern to champion attitudes fundamentally associated with respect for the values underpinning the Council of Europe’s mission. Readiness to explore and respect “otherness” has its roots in the instinct for democracy, tolerance and human rights that must govern relations between states and societies as well as between the people who live in them. It is because these values prevail that Europe possesses the particular characteristics and purpose that allow it to see itself for what it is and to develop.

Nonetheless, the priority in the initiatives considered so far has generally been to identify practices that promote respect for these values, rather than to analyse the values themselves. Those undertaking such analysis could easily be accused of ivory-tower theorising, and it may well be preferable to concentrate on practices that make the values clearly apparent, rather than leaving them in an abstract world of principles.

Since the 1990s, however, European societies have experienced difficulties that lead us to suspect it may be time for a vigorous restatement of principles in order to clarify our choices and help us to act with greater determination. Clearly, situations of violence, oppression and severe discrimination against individuals and communities on the basis of their cultural identity continue to exist and in some cases are worsening. Walter Schwimmer, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, has described the problem in still more alarming terms:

At the threshold of the new millennium, even well-established democratic societies face a number of risks. As a result of feeling alienated and not involved

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in decisions concerning them, citizens, especially young people, show a worrying
disinterest in public life … which goes hand-in-hand with a mounting distrust in,
and disrespect for, democratic institutions. Corruption and an often incompre-
hensible and slow administration and judiciary endanger respect for the rule of
law. Intolerance, racism and anti-Semitism threaten and violate citizens’ human
rights. … These developments can lead to a sense of social disintegration.¹

To help spell out the principles that must inform our thinking and behaviour,
emphasis was placed on the concept of democratic citizenship – a concept
whose purposes and processes had to be defined.

That was the task of the “Education for democratic citizenship” project,
launched in 1997 and concluded 2000. The project was connected, however,
to another entitled “Democracy, human rights, minorities: educational and
cultural aspects”, carried out between 1993 and 1997 and already referred to
several times in the previous chapters. Citizenship had effectively become a
means of affording minorities the status that confirms their existence within
multicultural societies without any denial of their basic rights. The European
dimension of education – as envisaged in numerous official statements and
addressed in the project entitled “A secondary education for Europe” – repre-
sented another significant aspect of the interface between interculturality and
citizenship. Before exploring in greater detail the actual relationship between
interculturality and citizenship, we will look at the role of citizenship in the
two last mentioned projects, that is, at its connection with the European
dimension and with secondary schooling in Europe.

The European dimension and education for Europe

Introducing a European dimension into education may seem at first to bear
little relation to the concerns inherent in the promotion of democratic citizen-
ship. For while reinforcing the notion of belonging in a democratic Europe is
necessarily a consideration when introducing a European dimension, the
particular function of such a dimension must be to help improve knowledge
of Europe’s heritage, so it will depend essentially on adjustments in what is
taught. Moreover, the point has been well made that the Europe in the
European dimension cannot be equated with any political organisation.²

Nonetheless, when we examine the official texts setting out the aims of

¹. Project on “Education for democratic citizenship”, final conference report, Council of Europe
introducing a European dimension and the manner of doing so envisaged in
the project of which it forms part, its connections with interculturality and
citizenship are immediately obvious.

The dual connection was already apparent in Parliamentary Assembly
According to this recommendation, the European dimension actually falls
within the field of interculturality. Its aim must be to promote “the study of
languages, history and civilisation”, “mutual understanding between the
peoples of Europe” and “a greater understanding and knowledge of others”.1
Its relevance to citizenship is equally direct, for the introduction of the
European dimension is justified on the grounds that “education should pre-
pare the individual for life in a democratic society by enabling him to carry
out his duties and responsibilities as a citizen”.2

The documents produced in the course of the project entitled “A secondary
education for Europe” present similar arguments. The basic teacher training
essential for the effective introduction of the European dimension in educa-
tion had to imbue teachers with a sense of pluralism and multiculturalism.
The European dimension had to offer young people the opportunity to acquire
the knowledge, skills and approaches needed for facing the challenges that
society presents. One of the teaching packs produced, with suggestions for
teachers keen to bring the European dimension into their lessons, was entitled
Initiation to citizenship. Moreover, the interdisciplinary approach that should
naturally be a part of teaching with a European dimension would involve pro-
moting civic education, which in too many cases tended to be a low priority
on the curriculum. For example, environmental problems, participation in the
local community and recognition of regional specificities should all be prime
topics in young people’s education, thus stimulating fresh interest in a broader
and clearer definition of good citizenship. Part of the project involved general
discussion of secondary school curriculums and here too it was insisted that
room be made for all aspects of citizenship education.3 Clearly, “A secondary
education for Europe” was thus a milestone in terms of placing the inter-
cultural perspective and the concept of democratic citizenship at the heart of

1. Ibid, indents 1 and 2.
2. Ibid, indent 2.
debate about education in every project to reform it – indeed, the observation was made that the intercultural perspective was the key to reforming secondary education.¹

It is important at the same time to realise that the European dimension is part of a particular vision of Europe. It is not intended to refer to a political model in the general sense of that term – other than the very general ethical model founded on the Council of Europe’s values. There is a striking contrast between this and the European Commission’s conception of the European dimension, which, while including educational guidelines similar to those of the Council of Europe, is explicitly intended to contribute to “European citizenship”.² From a multiculturalist perspective, on the other hand, the difficulties of achieving a truly coherent idea of Europe are substantial. “Thus the European route cannot be declined so easily. The geographical, historical, economic and social approaches all lead to a differentiated view.”³ As a result, the distinction between the European dimension and the international or world dimension of education appears to be blurring. Such ambiguity probably has to be accepted if the European dimension is not to be made so rigid as to contradict the principles on which it is founded. It must be sufficiently intercultural to be open to the world. It must be able to assert its own distinguishing features as one of the possible and practically feasible forms of international or world education. And we shall see the same type of interpenetration in the concept of democratic citizenship.

**Interculturality as an approach to citizenship**

“The enlarged consciousness”⁴ is the apt title of one of a series of studies carried out under the umbrella of the project on “Democracy, human rights, minorities : educational and cultural aspects”, which made a further contribution to the theme of citizenship from a particular angle. There are certain echoes here of the work on the European dimension in education, but the project also opened up new horizons. In fact it had two aims: “to develop civics, intercultural education and cultural democracy through practical field

³ The European dimension in secondary education, op. cit., p. 21.
activities”; and to “examine the educational and cultural aspects of management of diversity in a democratic society”.¹ As outlined in The case for intercultural education,² the project described how to refocus the teaching of most subjects from a perspective of interculturality not radically different from that of the European dimension. It also reiterated the importance of multiculturalism in all societies, both contemporary and historical, emphasising in particular “one incontrovertible fact: the increasingly general spread of multiculturalism to all communities.”³ The project also concentrated on the situation of minorities – obviously a theme that had already received a great deal of attention at the Council of Europe – proposing the most suitable concepts and tools for defining, understanding and trying to resolve the problems it raises. The concepts of citizenship and education for citizenship thus expressed the full significance of a firm commitment by societies to multiculturality and interculturality.

Evident in this approach was a change in the notion of identity. Whether with regard to communication or to the teaching of history, the conviction had emerged that a monolithic, untouchable and everlasting concept of identity was no longer valid. The project made a significant contribution by describing at length all the factors militating for the abandonment of such a concept in favour of a notion of identity in all its complexity and fragility, with all its potential for transformation. The first step was to acknowledge that individual identity is complex and multiple and that all of us have a number of identities which correspond to our sense of ethnic, national, religious, social, political and cultural belonging. National identity also had to be re-examined. It was seen as functional because it embodied a symbolic focus for historic and intellectual points of reference; as relativist because “identities are never immutable or eternal, they are shifting”; and finally as pluralist because “identity is ‘multiple’ and complex and includes ’sub-identities’”.⁴ It was also essential to recognise the specificity of cultural identity, which might coincide with national identity in certain respects but could also extend beyond it in other respects, for example on a religious level.⁵ In any event it implied “freedoms inherent in the dignity of the person which incorporate in a continuous

¹. Cultural rights at the Council of Europe (1949-1997), project document, p. 86.
². Leclef, Daphné, Managing cultural diversity, op. cit., p. 58.
⁵. Ibid.
process cultural diversity, the specific and the universal, the past and the future”.\textsuperscript{1} Clearly, in the case of minorities it was particularly important to be able to work within an idea of citizenship that would allow the process described to take place without impediment. It would have been an oversimplification, however, to believe that people needed to opt for this idea of citizenship only in situations where a minority obviously existed. As all societies grew increasingly multicultural, the reality was approaching that minorities could exist anywhere and that all groups of people ran the risk, at one time or another, of being treated as minorities and deprived of their rights. This then had to be borne in mind in any attempt to define citizenship, so that the concept might be framed in as intercultural a way as possible, that is as democratically as possible, according every individual a place, as of right, in the society to which he or she belonged. On that basis it was then possible to identify particular aspects or types of citizenship, such as political citizenship – associated with the exercise of traditional civic rights and duties – and economic citizenship, which could only be properly enjoyed if people were properly integrated into society both socially and vocationally. In any case, what was needed was “a broader conception of citizenship, taking in all the rights enjoyed by people who live in the same state, on the same territory”.\textsuperscript{2}

The project described – concerned as it was with the educational aspects of managing cultural diversity – placed special emphasis on the means of delivering the type of education that would win general acceptance for this conception of citizenship. The fears inspired by a weakening of social cohesion in most European countries constituted a further argument for focusing on a type of education for citizenship which made “a number of immediate demands on policy-makers on all levels, local to national, in our democracies”.\textsuperscript{3} This form of education was currently known in schools as “civic studies” but it was no longer to be concerned simply with inculcating the principles of political life. It had to teach students about “everyday life – respect for others, tolerance, good manners”.\textsuperscript{4} Such was the scale of the challenge, however, that schools alone could not hope to meet it. In the context of democratic societies threatened by an upsurge in anti-social behaviour, they had to be able to count on support from other partners. Anti-social behaviour

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{2} Audigier, François, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid, p. 33.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, p. 34.
in all its forms was symptomatic of a deep-rooted and dangerous malaise attacking the very spirit of our societies.

Here too, interculturality has meant being able to ask questions in full cognisance of their implications and to seek the responses best suited to the extent and gravity of particular situations. It is from the perspective of interculturality, by taking minorities into consideration, that we can conceive of citizenship as something open enough to include everyone. It is interculturality – directly linked to multiculturalism – that offers a partnership approach to a type of education for citizenship that is both a preparation for life in democratic societies and a remedy for social turbulence.

**Citizenship, pluralism and interculturality**

The same themes were addressed again in the context of education for democratic citizenship, but this time from a much wider perspective. With the Council of Europe’s earlier work on citizenship as a starting point, the definition and implications of citizenship now had to be extended in order to address the profound changes taking place in societies. To counter the danger of a decline in civic awareness, education for citizenship had to be made available in a wider variety of places and had to reach a larger audience. Because the context in which it was delivered was constantly changing, it now had to be seen as a lifelong process.

Globalisation was imposing a wider conception of citizenship, and young people already seemed to have little interest in citizenship limited to a European context.¹ Citizenship was “less and less linked to a particular territory” and in a context of “global awareness” a new “global citizenship” was emerging.² This global citizenship concept was “linked with the globalisation process”, but concerned “much more than only the economical aspects of globalisation”; it related in a fundamental way to issues of education for democratic citizenship: “how to live together in a global democratic society”.³

With regard to where education for democratic citizenship took place, existing facilities had to be improved and new ones had to be developed. At school level, courses had to be updated and delivered by properly trained teachers. At

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¹. See “Education for democratic citizenship” project, final conference report, p. 21.
³. See “Education for democratic citizenship” project, final conference report, p. 30.
third level, too, education for citizenship could not be ignored – and it also had to be given its rightful place in informal education, particularly adult education.

Lastly, education for democratic citizenship had to become an aspect of lifelong learning. This was important because it was a key element in the realisation of a learning society, with education and training opportunities that would allow each individual to contribute, independently and on his or her own initiative, to a society engaged in an ongoing process of change. Here was further evidence of the Council of Europe’s interest in adult education, a topic already explored in a project on “Adult education and social change”, which covered a number of aspects related to citizenship and interculturality. Indeed, a statement from the final conference of the project referred to the basic role of adult education in promoting democratic citizenship and reinforcing democratic values, as well as fostering the harmonious development of individuals with an awareness of difference.¹

From this broad perspective, however, one had to ask whether the citizenship in question was not now so universal as to render its intercultural dimension somewhat dubious, given that interculturality might seem merely to be concerned with creating links between sub-groups and ought thus to follow a standard pattern in every context. Yet although democratic citizenship was based on universal principles, it was always lived out in particular sets of circumstances that gave it an undeniably distinct character in each case. For while there were certainly “general contexts connected with the phenomenon of globalisation and [concerning] the processes and trends which include both local and State realities”, there were also national contexts – “state contexts, with their traditions, their cultures, their institutions, their laws, etc, … areas and frameworks within which the citizens discuss, argue, confront their conceptions of citizenship, power, education, living together”.² Thus, on the basis of universal principles governing citizenship per se, there were, throughout the world, a whole range of specific forms of citizenship influenced by the contexts in which they existed. Yet the same range was also present within individual societies where, because people effectively belonged to various types of community, they possessed what might be termed “multiple

¹ Project on “Adult education and social change”, closing conference, final declaration and appendix.
² Audigier, François, Basic concepts and core competencies for education for democratic citizenship, Council of Europe, 2000, p. 12.
citizenship”. In short, it was impossible to talk of citizenship in the abstract. Citizenship was necessarily situated in particular contexts, and derived its meaning only from the needs of a society or a political system.¹

The broader conception of citizenship demanded in the modern world did not therefore preclude a multicultural or intercultural approach. The best proof of this lay in the virtually inextricable link between education for citizenship and intercultural education, despite the criticism sometimes levelled at the latter that it was too “culture centred”. For surely it is culture – in the broad sense of the structure underpinning attitudes and behaviour – that is the determining factor in diversity. The relationship was made clear in what the project called “sites of citizenship” – grassroots activities that had “strong characteristics of pluralistic citizenship. While there is this recognition of basic universal rights, there is also space for variability, negotiation and redefinition.”²

It is useful here to emphasise that education for democratic citizenship has nothing to do with specific political choices. In considering the European dimension or European citizenship, it is always legitimate to question whether any particular political line is being promoted. Such an approach might have been plausible in the days when the Council of Europe was defending the cause of democracy against the totalitarianism that dominated in the east. Yet even at that time it was less concerned with promoting one type of political regime over another than with promoting a set of principles which were fundamentally at odds with a different set of intrinsically unacceptable principles. The term “political choices” may be used in a Council of Europe context only on the understanding that there is a clear distinction between what is political, in terms of being concerned with the basic principles governing all forms of communal life, and politics in the sense of the process whereby those principles are applied in a given situation. The Council of Europe’s concerns have always been political but it has never been involved in politics. For that reason it has consistently denounced situations that contravene the most basic rules of respect for human rights or democracy, but has never proposed choices entailing the adoption of particular formulae for organising societies or economies.

². Ibid, p. 25.
Thus the facet of interculturality that is concerned with promoting values – even in the context of citizenship – is not about ideologies that would seek to instrumentalise the resources that interculturality affords. The principles stemming from the values in question must be observed. The function of the values themselves remains unchanged: they are guidelines on the basis of which situations can be analysed and initiatives developed to address them. The values are points of reference, which individuals and communities need in order to be able to assess what they have achieved and what remains to be done.
V. INTERCULTURALITY AS INNOVATIVE CLASSROOM PRACTICE

The Council of Europe has always seen innovation as one of the best means of effecting necessary changes in education. In the project entitled “Innovation in primary education”, for example, which ran from 1982 to 1987, innovation was rightly seen as the adaptation of school systems to cope with a range of demands that had emerged in our societies. The fact is that the intercultural perspective required new approaches and innovation in most sectors of education. Course content, learning goals and teaching and learning methods all had to be overhauled. Naturally such developments also required new approaches on the part of teachers and thus necessitated changes of emphasis in basic and in-service teacher training.

Classroom practice was thus another facet of interculturality that could not be overlooked. Here the potential influence of interculturality had to be assessed in terms of the declared aims of education and training and the type of measures needed to achieve them. Such was the thrust of the “Education for democratic citizenship” project.

The impact of interculturality on the content of education

The various pro-interculturality initiatives already mentioned highlighted the need for changes (some radical, others less so) in educational content at every level.

Already, programmes on “Europe at school” and “The world at school” had encouraged primary schools to make changes in history and geography courses, correcting under-representation of certain European regions and other parts of the world. Other recurring themes were to be the importance and the refocusing of civic education. Many similar initiatives were designed for the secondary sector, where the need for change was even more apparent. Students at secondary level, particularly as they look forward to entering the world of work, feel a great need for education that better reflects the multicultural nature of societies. The various activities related to history teaching were to be especially significant, notably a programme on “Teaching history

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in the new Europe”¹ which led to the definition of new guidelines for young people and their teachers.

The content of secondary-level education was to be even more significantly affected, however, by the introduction of the European dimension. In practical terms, the changes concerned all subjects. What had to be offered was not merely a certain initiation to European institutions and how they function but to initiate the young to what was “… common to history, culture and values of European countries, including particularly the development in Europe of ideas associated with democracy, liberty, human rights …”² The idea was thus to introduce European studies to the curriculum – entailing a reworking of courses in history, geography, social sciences, economics and philosophy, not to mention modern languages.³

At the same time, the Council of Europe recognised that its scope for influencing educational content in the member states was limited. It could merely make recommendations, the impact of which on actual course content was uncertain. This was also an area of great sensitivity in the various countries. No government had much room for manoeuvre, for there were many obstacles in the way of even minor changes to course content. Indeed, modern language teaching is the only area in which Council of Europe recommendations have been followed to an impressive extent, firstly with regard to prioritising communication and secondly in the use of threshold levels in course and textbook compilation. This probably reflects the fact that there was a widespread impression among politicians and educationalists that modern language teaching methods were significantly outdated. Sadly – and this was something deplored by experts involved in the project on “A secondary education for Europe” – despite a few official provisions for introducing a European dimension to education, there was not, or not yet, any similar sense of urgency with regard to developing pupils’ interest in Europe. It was quickly realised, therefore, that it would be unrealistic to hope for the introduction of a European dimension through officially imposed changes in the curriculum. A better option was to attempt to develop existing courses in new directions. Thus, the European dimension was not presented as a new

¹. See, for example, History teaching and the promotion of democratic values and tolerance: a handbook for teachers, op. cit. and History without frontiers – a practical guide to international history projects in schools in Europe, Document CC-ED/HIST(96), Council of Europe, 1996.
². The European dimension in secondary education, op. cit., p. 41.
subject but as an initiative requiring greater use of an interdisciplinary approach to introduce certain information and concepts. Adopting this standpoint by no means meant accepting the impossibility of change; on the contrary, it was calculated that there was a better chance of achieving change through radical innovation. In fact, the criticism had already been made that lack of an interdisciplinary approach was a major obstacle in efforts to make teaching more open and dynamic, offering “the ways and means … of restoring meaning and consistency to knowledge that has become scattered”. The dossiers pédagogiques or teaching packs, produced as pilot documents to help teachers bring a European dimension into the classroom, covered a number of previously neglected themes and drew heavily on interaction between different subjects. Teaching packs on the industrial revolution as the beginning of a technological space, on Europe and the constitution of its empires, on conflict in Europe, or a database on European economics represented new ways of organising historical knowledge under the headings of geography, economics, or indeed technology. By tackling subjects such as “human rights”, “initiation to citizenship” or “preventing xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism”, civics education was moving into hitherto unfamiliar territory. Teachers were very likely – in exploring topics such as “Greek tragedy and its influence on literature and European thought” or the “Roma/Gypsies in Europe” – to introduce their pupils to aspects of their culture that would almost certainly have been overlooked had they merely adhered slavishly to the curriculum. The methods of learning history advocated in the Committee of Ministers recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe – one of a series of statements on the subject – included, in particular, the wider and more structured use of historical sources, increased recourse to individual and collective research, and a cross-curricular, multidisciplinary approach. Here, too, was powerful encouragement for innovative teaching.

Championing an intercultural and European perspective thus created clear possibilities for innovation in the choice of content offered to students and the ways of serving it up – without having to wait for official curriculum reform that might or might not materialise – all the more so because the new European approaches indisputably enriched, rather than conflicted with, existing courses.

One innovative step is usually followed by others and so it was that the call for an interdisciplinary approach to introduce a European dimension heralded other innovative initiatives. As a rule, cross-curricular teaching allows teachers to get to know their pupils better. Firstly it gives them the opportunity of exchanging views about the students, and it also entails getting involved with students in project work, where young people’s skills or difficulties tend to be more apparent than they are in a traditional classroom context. By nature, therefore, cross-curricular teaching encourages the differentiated approach that is so often hailed as a prerequisite for pupils’ success and well-being, although sadly less often practised. The same is true with regard to teamwork. At the Council of Europe, as elsewhere, cross-curricular teaching was deemed essential as a means of enabling schools to deliver a type of education that would meet their pupils’ needs and without which the efforts of both teachers and students could well be wasted. Furthermore, cross-curricular teaching clearly remains the best way of bringing home to teachers the vital importance of teamwork.

Hopes were pinned in particular on areas of school activity not exclusively concerned with the transmission of knowledge. Increasingly it was deemed desirable for schools to look outwards at their entire immediate and more distant environment. Here again, it goes without saying that an interest in intra-culturality strongly favoured this outward-looking approach, for the constant concern of interculturality is to forge contacts with people and places other than the familiar ones. At the same time, the cross-curricular thinking that naturally flowed from such an approach provided ongoing stimulus to take teaching out of the confines of school buildings: in many cases this meant discovering human and physical resources that enabled students to acquire new knowledge and skills and, in every case, it broadened their horizons and fed the healthy curiosity fostered by intercultural, interdisciplinary teaching. Clearly teachers themselves would have to move with these developments. They were thus expected to become involved in the many initiatives associated with new practices such as the gathering of information and documentation, the creation of partnerships between schools and private and public bodies, and the implementation of foreign exchanges. All of this is a fair measure of the extent of real transformation based on Council of Europe research into education.

**Interculturality and skills development**

No discussion of educational innovation can be complete, however, without reference to the Council of Europe’s long-standing emphasis on the development
of skills rather than the mere acquisition of knowledge. In fact, this stance is closely linked to the preference for an intercultural perspective and it, too, demands highly innovative thinking.

The tendency to prioritise skills over knowledge goes back a long way. It first came to the fore in connection with the learning of modern languages – communication depending just as much on a varied set of skills as on the possession of particular knowledge. The *European Language Portfolio* was designed as a means of recording all the portfolio holder’s language skills.¹ History teachers, meanwhile, were urged to develop competencies such as the development of critical thinking, moral reasoning and intercultural education which were essential for analysis of historical evidence.² The “Education for democratic citizenship” project highlighted key skills that needed to be developed through this type of education, and in the field of civic education, too, emphasis was repeatedly placed on the skills that civic studies ought to foster. In addition, the project entitled “A secondary education for Europe” included a seminar on “Key competencies for Europe” which focused in particular on political skills and those necessary for participation in society.

Most originally, however, the symposium asked whether the skills in question were likely to have a European dimension – in other words whether people living in Europe needed particular skills in order to make a success of their lives in society and at work. The answer certainly seems to have been that they do, for a survey produced a list of skills deemed essential in this regard, including fluency in more than one language, the ability to manage differences of opinion and conflicts, the ability to take a critical stance on certain aspects of our societies, and a willingness to listen to, and take account of, other people’s viewpoints.³ The clear impression thus came across that living in European societies required specific skills and that the particular nature of the skills was largely conditioned by the multiculturality of those societies and by the need for a sense of interculturality as well as openness to others and to difference.

It is hardly necessary to highlight the importance of the concept of skills as a powerful stimulus to innovation in education and training. It was by looking

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at the learning process from this perspective that educationalists were able to design courses with the focus on aims rather than content, to promote emphasis on the key aspects of learning paths, and to give multidisciplinary teaching a place on the curriculum. Moreover, it was the focus on skills that offered the best chance of enabling learners to shape their own learning process. A skills-based approach thus seemed the best option for bringing about the (sometimes radical) changes that were needed in education and training provision in order to adapt to the pressing demands of new circumstances. Often the shift was felt first in teacher training, where there was the strongest case for an early change of course. By adding its voice to the lobby for a skills-based approach, the Council of Europe was clearly signalling its wish to see innovation in teaching. The potential for a European and intercultural dimension to skills also underscored the link between the facet of interculturality discussed in this chapter and a type of teaching strongly geared towards innovation. Moreover, making the connection between innovation and skills seemed the best way to get a hearing from governments and teachers, for this was an approach that left maximum scope for initiative, recognising the need to respect different contexts and traditions, while at the same time presenting a convincing case for making certain necessary choices, albeit using a range of methods.

The impact of interculturality on in-service teacher training: theory and practice

The Council of Europe has always regarded teacher training as the most effective and realistic vehicle for introducing innovation in education. The “Innovation in primary education” project made this point strongly, noting in particular that the multiplier phase indispensable for the dissemination the results of research or experiences1 should never be neglected and that there was no substitute here for the role of teachers. That idea was recently underscored again in relation to education for democratic citizenship, an area where there was a particularly urgent need for teacher training, given that teachers could function either as “obstacles or catalysts.”2

All the Council’s initiatives on interculturality thus featured busy programmes of teacher training, mainly in the form of in-service training

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid, final report.
courses, which were the easiest to organise. The fact is that decisions on basic teacher-training courses are taken by governments, whereas in-service training – which is voluntary in almost every country – has always been flexible enough to include courses designed by international organisations, subject to agreement with the relevant national authority. For many years the Council of Europe has taken advantage of such arrangements, particularly with a view to raising teachers’ awareness of the intercultural dimension.

Migrants’ education and cultural development is another area that has seen a whole series of activities to raise teachers’ awareness about the relevance of “intercultural training” and an “intercultural approach” as important aspects of education. Many courses have been organised along these lines, particularly with assistance from the Council for Cultural Co-operation’s fellowship scheme (for example in Strasbourg in 1977, in Donaueschingen in 1979, 1980 and 1981, and in Ankara in 1980). A symposium on intercultural teacher training was also held in Aquila (Italy) in 1982 with a view to improving provision for pupils from immigrant backgrounds. In the field of modern language teaching, 1500 teachers came together in workshops as part of the project entitled “Language learning in Europe: the challenge of diversity”. The final report from this project emphasised the vital importance of teacher training, which it continued to regard as the key to innovation. The movement of renewal in history teaching also relied heavily on in-service training seminars, and a similar approach was adopted for the introduction of the European dimension into education, and even more reliance was placed on such methods in the case of education for democratic citizenship. Mention should also be made of the many seminars held under the auspices of the Council’s network of school links and exchanges, the aim of which has been to make teachers aware of information and options in a sector that might be unfamiliar to them.

It is important to note, too, that experimentation has been a feature of most in-service teacher training projects. Many aspects of migrants’ education have been the subject of pilot projects or case studies in which teachers in the classroom were the major players. European “sites of citizenship” bring together a range of people including teachers, for whom such initiatives offer an excellent opportunity to explore issues such as civic education or education

for citizenship in greater depth. A similar process has taken place in the case of experiments linked to the introduction of a European dimension.

Another aspect of these training activities was the production of resource materials designed to equip teachers with additional information and new ideas about teaching methods. The first steps in this direction were taken in the field of migrants’ education, with the production of teaching packs on the culture of migrants’ main countries of origin and reports about intercultural education initiatives in different countries (to give just a few examples). A further series of teaching packs served a similar purpose in connection with the introduction of a European dimension. The “History” programme worked in the same way with a series of seminar reports intended as regular aids to teachers in the classroom, while the Council’s initiatives in south-east Europe have placed even greater emphasis on the production of teaching resources with similar aims.

These various in-service teacher training programmes have had a definite impact in terms of allowing interculturality to be taken into account in teaching and thus more firmly implanted within education policy.

There has always been a danger that initiatives or documents promoting an intercultural perspective may be seen as emanating from some type of ivory tower remote from the realities of the classroom, and proposing measures that are not actually applicable. Such a reaction has been particularly tempting in cases where government or other circles have been wary of proposed changes because they would have undermined long-established habits. While the concept of integrating migrants could be accepted and indeed welcomed, radical changes in the way that migrants are actually served by education systems – with a view to recognising their differences effectively and responding to them positively – could be regarded as demanding strenuous efforts that were neither possible nor desirable. The same reaction was frequently encountered with regard to the introduction of a European dimension, with accusations that this would entail never-ending curricular changes and would unsettle teachers and pupils – an outcome best avoided. In short there was “often too large a gap between policy/official rhetoric and practice/what actually happens”.1

The various in-service training initiatives had a positive effect in helping to overcome such wariness and convincing teachers that the proposed measures were indeed feasible and would bring clear benefits. The initiatives thus served as testing grounds for proposed changes and in some cases the proposals were adjusted as a result, in order to make them more acceptable or easier to implement. In the context of the “Education for democratic citizenship” project, for example, experiments with “sites of citizenship”, involving numerous schools and teachers, gave a clear indication of what was possible. In the final analysis all these in-service training activities could be seen as a process of acclimatisation at various levels to the changes required by the introduction of an intercultural perspective into educational practice. First to be acclimatised were the teachers who took part in the training courses and explored the new perspective, in some cases without any clear prior expectation of what awaited them. Next to be affected were their colleagues, whose acclimatisation was achieved by observing the new practices implemented by course participants. Then supervisory authorities also had to become acclimatised to these practices. It is thus reasonable to assume that the in-service training process helped to reformulate the intercultural perspective, making it more readily and practically applicable in the classroom.

A further significant advantage of in-service training courses and seminars has been that they give their participants a real experience of interculturality. Even before 1989, these gatherings were bringing together representatives from a fairly wide range of cultural backgrounds for, although relative, the level of diversity in terms of traditions and circumstances in a Europe that extended beyond the European Community was nonetheless significant. Of course this diversity became more pronounced after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, despite the perfectly legitimate feeling on the part of people in central and eastern European countries that they were being reunited with a Europe from which they had been cut off. Here too, however, it was impossible to overlook major differences of context – which are still apparent today in the “sites of citizenship” project (to take that initiative as an example once again). “Sites of citizenship” meetings are definitely multicultural in terms of the variety of languages, histories, religions, customs, artistic heritage and economic circumstances represented. The education systems involved are also far from standardised with regard to their structure and functioning. Yet

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for all those present at such meetings, by far the strongest impressions registrated are of neighbourliness and cordiality, to the extent that any distinction in this context between western Europe on the one hand and central and eastern Europe on the other has become obsolete. Nonetheless these gatherings offer an outstanding opportunity to experience interculturality and, of course, to recognise that it is at work not only when we encounter cultures very different from our own but also when similar cultures come together. Such meetings are undoubtedly essential for bringing out what is probably the most influential facet of interculturality – namely, openness to others and to difference. In any event, they clearly represent an extremely useful experience for teachers seeking the best ways of giving their pupils an awareness of interculturality and equipping them with the attitudes and behaviour patterns that become necessary when interculturality is taken into account. Fortunately the development of school exchanges means that an ever-growing number of students also have the opportunity of experiencing interculturality “for real”. Nonetheless it is teachers, first and foremost, who can appreciate the full potential and complexity of such an experience and can then draw on it in the classroom situation.
CONCLUSIONS

Interculturality as a cohesive entity with many facets

Is interculturality a single concept or does it assume different forms at different periods of history and in the context of different priorities? On the basis of the foregoing, the first proposition seems more likely. The facets of interculturality suggested present the concept in different lights without requiring its deconstruction into a series of separate approaches. The nature of interculturality can be illustrated with reference to communication as one of its facets. Communication could easily be seen as a sort of catch-all concept masking the other specific and diverse manifestations of interculturality. Yet the fact is that while language learning centres on communication, it also entails taking account of “otherness” and adopting a critical approach in order to achieve its declared objectives, which extend beyond mere competence in one-to-one expression and comprehension.

To look at the question from another angle, the fact of moving on from one project to another, or focusing first on one then on a different problem, implies no discontinuity in the notion of interculturality. This was demonstrated inasmuch as the special attention devoted to migration-related issues did not prevent work on the wider question of addressing difference among school pupils generally. A similar phenomenon is apparent today with the adoption of the broader approach which includes new minorities – reflecting “recognition of the fact that multicultural societies are here to stay”.

Likewise, the current focus on citizenship has not brought any lessening of interest in aspects of interculturality first addressed at an earlier stage.

With regard to working methods there has been marked consistency in the way that projects have been run and meetings have been organised, conducted and followed up. Intellectually, too, there is clear evidence of continuity. For example, the importance of comparing education systems has been continuously stressed. This was something highlighted by the European education ministers as far back as in 1962 and one of the first comparative studies that the Council commissioned – Thomas and Majault’s Primary and secondary

2. SCME, 1962, Resolution No. 1.
education, modern trends and common trends, 1964 – is echoed in the contemporary work by Denis Kallen on Secondary education in Europe – problems and prospects, produced as part of the project on “A secondary education for Europe”, and in case studies collected for purposes of exploring similarities and contrasts between various countries’ reform strategies.

**Interculturality as strategy and practice within a single policy**

Two main factors underpin the cohesiveness of the intercultural approach. On the one hand, this approach constitutes a series of practices within a strategy for implementing the policy of an organisation whose concerns are respect for human rights and the principles of democracy. This also substantially explains why the intercultural perspective could be extended, without any break in continuity, to fields other than those where it was initially applied. Moreover, at their meetings between 1997 and 2000, the European education ministers underscored the need for – and benefits of – such continuity in terms of helping the member states with initiatives to implement the Council’s fundamental values and principles. On the other hand, if interculturality presents a multiplicity of different but intimately connected facets, it is because it forms part of projects or activities all of which interrelate. The 2001 recommendation on history teaching highlighted the links between the two projects on “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century” and “Education for democratic citizenship”. But in fact it was clear from the assessment of completed projects carried out at the 1997 session of the Standing Conference of European Education Ministers that virtually all the projects had features in common.

**The bases of interculturality**

It would, however, be going too far to see interculturality merely as a means of pursuing a particular end and thus as a practice which derives its meaning from outside itself. On the contrary, the substantive works produced in connection with the various projects clearly demonstrate the need to move beyond a purely pragmatic conception of interculturality in order to recognise its originality and independence as a concept. This is the thrust of Antonio

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Perotti’s *The case for intercultural education*¹ and of *Differences and cultures in Europe*, a collaborative work by Carmel Camilleri² and several other researchers.

Although the first study, published in 1994, largely post-dated the main period of interest in migrants’ education, this subject – in which Perotti was heavily involved – is central to his thinking. Nonetheless, he succeeds in identifying the two key concerns that should lend momentum to every intercultural initiative. First is the recognition that all societies, and by extension all education systems, are multicultural, that is, that they include people from different cultures. This, of course, is the factor that makes interculturality both necessary and possible. Yet interculturality implies more than the mere recognition of plurality in coexisting cultures. It entails forging relationships between such cultures, which – on the basis of their differences and similarities – will develop the mutual understanding and two-way respect that permits the emergence of a new culture. Within this new culture, the cultures originally present, and juxtaposed more or less harmoniously in the multicultural situation, will combine to form something greater than the sum of the parts. Interculturality is necessarily generated by culture, and in this process there is a major role for education, which must in principle be intercultural in order to respond to the situation and to society’s requirements. There should thus be no question of separate education for groups such as migrants, but rather of “co-education”.³ For the same reasons, learning about human rights and democratic values should be prioritised in educational activities in order to promote effective awareness of interculturality.⁴ It is this type of learning that makes possible construction of the new culture which should result from an intercultural approach, otherwise such an approach would constitute no more than a hollow half-way house or a juxtaposition preventing any coming together.

While the second study referred to above was part of the project entitled “Democracy, human rights, minorities: educational and cultural aspects”, it too raised questions of much wider relevance. It focused on the notions of culture and cultural identity, pointing out that their main defining feature was

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¹ Council of Europe, 1994.
² *Differences and cultures in Europe*, compiled by Carmel Camilleri, with contributions by Francis Affergan, Carmel Camilleri, Jacqueline Costa-Lacoux, Michel Oriol, Council of Europe, 1995.
⁴ Ibid, p. 96.
their constant configuration in a dialectic between the two opposing imperatives of introspection in pursuit of unity, and communication with others. Hence the question:

Today Europe is trying to achieve self-definition on the basis of its own history. Has the time not come to look beyond inward-looking and hermetic conceptions of culture and to build up a relational universalism that would include cultural differences and not deny them?¹

What gives interculturality its particular character is the fact that it necessarily takes account of specificity in cultural identity – and inherent in the diversity of cultural identity is the complex relationship between self and otherness.

In terms of the nature and role of interculturality, the originality of the Council of Europe’s approach has been to regard it less as an instrument of policy than as a tool for policy making. If that distinction is not clear, interculturality risks being seen as a concept too readily bandied about without conviction. No one questions the relevance of interculturality in the organisation of migrants’ education or in efforts to assure minorities’ rights. In such cases the contact between different cultures, with the need to determine how they will inter-relate, is evident. The same holds good for modern language teaching and media education. But why – short of semantic confusion between interculturality and internationality, or an inflated interpretation of interculturality to encompass any idea or activity involving relations between various countries, cultures or individuals – should there be talk of an intercultural dimension in education for democratic citizenship?

The Council of Europe has no problem with such an interpretation because, in its eyes, interculturality is ubiquitous – and this is not convenient oversimplification. Interculturality is ubiquitous because of the specific nature of the realities on which it is based and with which it has to work. These realities are groups and communities whose identities, far from being homogenous and fixed for all time, in fact represent “a process of assimilation and differentiation in which the definition of the self constantly intrudes on the definition of the other.”² Moreover, the same model is replicated within each individual person, hence the potential under psychoanalysis to create “conditions in which the subject becomes a stranger to himself” [editorial

¹. Differences and cultures in Europe, op.cit., p. 16.
². Ibid. p. 135.
It is thus clear why education and interculturality, in particular, can never be dissociated: “Interculturality is the most basic human relationship, and education must necessarily mean the joint recognition and acceptance of an intercultural approach to which people consent and, most importantly, in which they invest” [editorial translation].

The OECD takes the view that most multicultural education programmes lack a clear and solid theoretical basis. It would be difficult to sustain this allegation in the case of the Council of Europe’s work on interculturality. Ambiguity in interculturality is usually due to fuzzy definitions of culture or of methods of contact between cultures, and their repercussions. Yet it is precisely here that the Council’s various projects have had a welcome clarifying function. This is evident, for example, in the work compiled by Carmel Camilleri, which points out that, in fixing the aims of research into interculturality, all cultures should be placed on an equal footing, without hierarchy. In particular, this study highlights the difficult choice to be made between absolute relativism, making no distinctions in terms of worth, and relativism within a context, bearing in mind the fact that every culture defines itself as a dynamic relationship between people and their environment, and that every solution is therefore original and without equivalent.

### Interculturality on a European scale

This in-depth research offers a more solidly based notion of interculturality and at the same time extends its scope for, as we have seen, it is no longer applied only to particular categories of people, such as migrants. A further feature of interculturality as interpreted by the Council of Europe, however, is the fact that it needs to be applied in a manner and on a scale that will give it full rein.

It should not become bogged down with consideration of problems narrowly confined to technical aspects of education. This can happen with regard to the recognition of pupils’ special needs if, like the OECD, we consider only those

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pupils in difficulty – or “at risk”, to use the latest terminology. Even where the concern is to promote equity, there is a danger that efforts may be confined to the improvement of performance, with cultural differences entering the frame only where they constitute potential barriers to success. From such a perspective the aim is simply to improve pupils’ performance rather than helping them to develop within the diversity of their identities. Conversely, where interculturality is managed at global level, as it is by Unesco, the initial impression of considerable similarity with the Council of Europe’s work soon gives way under closer scrutiny. The network of Unesco clubs – at first glance a vast and splendid laboratory for interculturality – does not actually lend itself effectively to real exchanges if these are organised on a global scale between cultures and civilisations whose members have little genuine contact most of the time.

It would appear that, in order to be effective, exchanges need to take place within a narrower, or at least a better defined, area. One can thus appreciate the Council of Europe’s concern not to lose sight of global intercultural horizons (and to this end it has organised activities in Japan and Canada, for example) but at the same time to practise interculturality preferably on a European scale, and not only for reasons relating to its own statute. The European context can offer differences that are sufficiently marked to demand more than a merely formal effort of taking them into account and overcoming them, but at the same time initiatives within Europe have a reasonable chance of success because their objectives are more readily identifiable and tangible. This is the nub of a problem (frequently raised at the Council of Europe and elsewhere) concerning comparisons in the field of education, which, in order to be feasible and meaningful, must be made between education systems that are relatively, though not entirely, different. Here again we touch on the theme of European diversity – a diversity that is real but not excessive. It would seem as if interculturality has to be conceived of in realistic terms, in situations where the gaps between cultures and the fractures within them are not unbridgeable. A point made right at the beginning of the Council of Europe’s work is also pertinent here – namely that each international organisation possesses its own characteristics and its own culture, and these have to be taken into account, particularly in activities involving multilateral co-operation.¹

¹. SCME, 1975, Resolution No. 3.
Reconciling proximity and distance

This preference for interculturality on a European scale needs to be seen in association with the two most common approaches to interculturality – approaches that might initially seem to be at odds with one another. The first entails quite direct contact between the representatives of different cultures, such as that which takes place in the situation of migrants’ education, in the various types of exchange between individuals and institutions, and in cross-border contacts. By contrast, the other approach is based on connecting interlocutors or partners via a means of communication, be it a language or a source of information. In reality, however, the two approaches cannot always be separated. Practising a foreign language may be a means of accessing media or an occasion for meeting and conversing with people. Interculturality thus inevitably entails reconciling proximity and distance, and the degree of either needs to be accepted or negotiated according to the context.

Proximity, notional or actual, is essential in permitting awareness of difference; only proximity is likely to engender the curiosity and sympathy without which people rarely take the first step towards others. Of key importance here is the proximity principle, that is, the desire for proximity, which will outweigh the tendency to see cultures and the behaviour of their representatives as mutually opposing or existing in a hierarchy. Actual proximity – or at least relative proximity – is also necessary, however, so that frequent contact can prevent people from systematically overestimating the obstacles to effective recognition of multiculturality and the practice of genuine interculturality.

At the same time, the existence of such obstacles and the risk that they may provoke misunderstandings or conflicts makes it desirable that people should have space – again both notional and actual – into which they can step back and thus work through upsets or friction.

In other words there exists a dual pitfall or dual illusion that must be avoided: namely, belief in the possibility of a state of fusion where all cultures merge in harmonious coexistence or hybridise completely and successfully; and the expectation that interculturality can guarantee meetings between individuals and communities of all types. What interculturality does, as the prefix suggests, is to build bridges between neighbours, not to eliminate all the distance that separates them.

Every form of experience with interculturality confirms the relevance of this twofold warning. In the case of migrants, the aim has always been integration,
not assimilation. And while I may be able to communicate with someone who
does not speak my language, I should not forget, irrespective of levels of flu-
cency, that my interlocutor’s language and culture are different, otherwise I
will find myself seeking a form of communication that is unattainable except
in very rare cases of true bilingualism. Similarly, it is extremely difficult for
two people from different countries to arrive at the same reading of one coun-
try’s history. There is, moreover, every incentive for ensuring that the need to
reconcile proximity and distance is clearly understood – rather than merely
remaining implicit – in order to avoid the illusions and disappointments that
dog so many ill-conceived and badly implemented interculturality initiatives.

Prospects for conflict resolution

The heterogeneous nature of our countries, cities and societies, and the fact
that they have become interfaces between cultures which see themselves as
existing (or which wish to exist) in opposition to one another, has made con-
flict a normal social condition.¹ Interculturality – with its overriding impetus
for outreach, while not ignoring the need for limits that will make the process
acceptable to both parties – is certainly capable of supplying one of the best
solutions to the problems. It is reasonable to assume that such problems are
based on more than cultural factors, which tend, from an intercultural per-
pective, to be seen as overly important.² Such a perspective – made possible
by the plural nature of the cultures in themselves and by the pluralism that
necessarily characterises their relations – is likely nonetheless to offer a dual
advantage. Firstly it provides a useful framework for dispassionate but gen-
une exchanges of views, rather than the procedurally constricted negotiations
that might otherwise be the only form of exchange possible in particular
situations. Because of this, it should then become possible to bring a non-
political dimension to the conflict situation and thus to move beyond the
friend versus enemy dialectic (beloved of Carl Schmitt) and enter new terrain
where dialogue is conducted with greater warmth and potential solutions may
be more ambitious, while at the same time more real and lasting. Such, in any
case, is the Council of Europe’s aspiration, as encapsulated in the following:
“European reality is that of a multicultural society. The plan we need for this
Europe must be geared towards an intercultural society, and this implies

¹. See Grosjean, Etienne, “Cultural identity: a key element of the democratic challenge”, in
². See Marmoz, Louis and Derrij, Mohamed, op. cit., p. 43.
decomparmentalisation, exchange, interaction, and solidarity between cultural expressions, values, ways of life and symbolic representations which are different, but complementary.”  

The intercultural approach clearly remains the best way of enabling such a Europe to assert itself, accepting its plurality and embracing pluralism. Surely there can be no better way of promoting this approach than through intercultural education in its fullest sense, that is as a process of lifelong learning in which young people and adults acquire the attitudes and skills that will allow them to continue benefiting from the various cultures with which they come into contact and, in doing so, to develop what can legitimately be termed “European interculturality”.

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Interculturality is a set of processes through which relations between different cultures are constructed on a basis of equality and mutual respect. These considerations have always permeated the Council of Europe’s approach to education, given the Organisation’s emphasis on democracy and human rights. *Facets of interculturality in education* provides an overview of the Council’s work in this field and gives the reader a better understanding of these processes by making clear differences between them in order to discover what interculturality means in practice.

The various facets of interculturality described in this booklet include: confronting differences in the combat against discrimination; communication in the context of linguistic and media pluralism; and interculturality as a critical approach to history teaching and as an innovative classroom practice.

The author, Jean-Michel Leclerq, Docteur d’Etat, has taught comparative education at the University of Paris in Nanterre, and has published several books and articles on education in Europe and Japan.