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EDUCATION IN ARTS AND CULTURE WITH REGARD TO THE INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

In the context of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, EDUCULT – The Institute for Cultural Policy and Cultural Management was assigned by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture to prepare a report, »Arts, Culture and Intercultural Dialogue« on the challenges of interculturality mainly as a cultural policy issue.

Austria as a small state in the heart of Europe has been considerably influenced by its migrants throughout its existence. And this is also true for its cultural institutions, which have achieved international recognition not despite but because of the involvement of artists representing a wide range of different cultural backgrounds. At the moment about 10 % of the Austrian population do not own an Austrian passport; in its capital Vienna the proportion of immigrants is about 25 %. In Viennese primary schools meanwhile more than 50 % of the pupils have a migration background. This means changes in and necessary adaptations of the social and cultural life for all Austrians.

At the beginning of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue there is still a confusing uncertainty in the formal and textual aspects of terminology of 'Intercultural Dialogue'. In this context the starting point of the research was to analyse definitions on the European level (e. g.: ERICarts project on »National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in the EU« or the White Book discussion of the Council of Europe), translate the term for the Austrian situation and modify it in practical terms with the actors in the field.

The primary goal of the report was to deliver basics for the decision making processes mainly for cultural politicians but also for the management of cultural institutions taking into account the ongoing changes of the demographic struc-

ture of Austrian (and by that of European) society. Therefore the report gives an outline of the current demographic but also legal, political and institutional framework – in which cultural institutions are dealing with intercultural dialogue (or not). Particular emphasis is put on education which seems to be particularly challenged by the increasing need for intercultural dialogue. In this context the authors took advantage of another report, »Diversity and Co-operation« – which was carried out by EDUCULT at the end of 2007 and which gives for the first time an overview of the framework for arts and cultural education in Austria. Additionally the report highlights the quality of intercultural dialogue in higher arts education institutions which is crucial for awareness raising in cultural institutions, when it comes to the conceptualisation and organisation of new audience development programs. It contains assessments of problems and perspectives for those working in the field and it offers recommendations for those groups which are actively involved in the organisation of intercultural dialogue (politicians, administrators, managers, representatives of cultural institutions and initiatives, NGOs, migrant initiatives, associations ...).

The report – delivered by EDUCULT – has not been produced on the office desk. The assessments are the result of a series of consultations with representatives working in the field. Therefore a number of interviews and round tables in Vienna, and the regional capitals Graz and Linz were organised, thus actively involving the recipients of this kind of research. Among them were experts coming from different institutions and disciplines such as staff of arts and cultural institutions, youth and social workers, as well as representatives of migrant communities, media or private businesses. Together they created a multifaceted picture of what intercultural dialogue is, can and should be about in a modern, complex and multiply interweaved society.

For the authors it was of particular interest to learn more about intercultural dialogue in practical terms: What are the different approaches? Are there any criteria of quality? What does intercultural dialogue mean for recruiting and qualification strategies, for programming, for marketing and audience development? In what way does the political, administrative and institutional framework have to change in order to make intercultural dialogue a success story? The answers have been transformed into recommendations defining the prerequisites of a more sustainable development. In this context the great majority of our interview partners plead for an intercultural dialogue »on an equal footing« representing mutual interests. Those involved in the dialogue need to be prepared to learn from each

other and are able to look at difference as something positive and productive. But maybe the most important recommendation is directed towards the long-established population: Intercultural Dialogue is not just a duty for migrants but for all members of a pluralistic society wherever their members come from and whatever cultural background they represent. The recommendations tend to include the dimension of intercultural dialogue in all aspects of strategic planning. For cultural institutions this would mean taking intercultural dialogue into account not only when it is related to an extraordinary event for migrants but systematically in all strategic fields like staff development, training and further training, marketing, audience development, education and mediation. As a matter of course, the relationship between cultural administration and cultural initiatives of migrant communities is crucial. Too often they are excluded from cultural policy measures and participation in decision-making processes and have a precarious status. The report is completed by a number of examples of good practice, which are categorized alongside the proposals of ERICarts, »National Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue in the EU«. These examples seem worth discussing in a more detailed way.

The findings of the report – which make visible a broad range of opportunities to improve intercultural dialogue mainly in the cultural scene – should not seduce us into thinking that the problems of intercultural dialogue can be solely solved in the cultural sphere. In the light of the creeping »culturalisation« of recent years, a process trying to conceal the growing social and economic problems, the report can also be seen as a warning pointing out that culture is not the appropriate tool to solve societal problems. Instead, the authors interpret the political claim for intercultural dialogue mainly as a chance to further develop cultural policy as a cross-sectoral issue with manifold links to the economy, public welfare, education or media.

This report has been accepted by the Austrian Ministry of Education, Culture and the Arts and the National Committee for the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Afterwards a number of projects – some of them a direct implementation of the recommendations of the report – have started. Therefore the presentation of the report was not only an opportunity to present the strategic outlines but also to assess how the results of the report had been brought to life in a more sustainable way.