

“1st Adriatic-Ionian Intercultural Dialogue Conference” Corfu, 27-28 June 2008

Summary Conclusions of the Conference

The “1st Adriatic-Ionian Intercultural Dialogue Conference” proved to be by itself an excellent means of communication and dialogue having gathered around this theme an important number of both EU and European and South-Eastern Europe and Mediterranean experts and representatives of institutions, governments, NGOs, local authorities etc. All these people are now ready to join forces and exchange ideas for collaboration in the field of culture.

The conference has demonstrated the possibility of collaboration between important European institutions such as the European Parliament and in particular its offices in Greece, Italy and Slovenia and small NGOs like the “Europe of Cultures Forum: Adriatic-Ionian Chapter” which reflects the views and agendas for cultural cooperation of the civil society in the periphery of Europe.

All involved have to capitalize on the outcome of this event and come up with concrete proposals and action plans for closer collaboration using all existing and to come cultural gates, platforms etc. The Forum has made the commitment to consult its partners and conference participants on a concrete proposal for a “2nd Intercultural Dialogue Conference” in 2010 in another country of the broader region. It is hoped that the strong support received by the Slovenian EU presidency will be continued and proposals will be submitted to coming presidencies starting from France in second half 2008.

An important issue for reflection is the experienced rather low participation of local / regional instances, cultural organizations etc. in comparison to the importance of this conference and despite its local promotion. This phenomenon needs to be analysed with a view to identify the reasons why local cultural communities do not feel concerned by this type of international events. An awareness raising action may be needed. – in particular by the Forum via its new International Cultural Partnership Forum - CulturePolis.org.

The co-organisers and representatives of cultural organisations and other institutions are invited to diffuse largely the Corfu Declaration on Cooperation for Intercultural dialogue both to their respective management / membership structures and the general public hoping that this will strengthen the cultural collaboration among stakeholders in the broader region and improve intercultural dialogue.

The main conclusions of the conference are principally reflected in the “Corfu Declaration” text which summarises the presentations, discussions and suggestions made during the conference and makes a number of proposals for action. However, several important specific proposals emanating from individual presentations of national and EU programmes, initiatives, projects etc. may need to be promoted further at a multilateral level by all interested or

concerned.

The Corfu Declaration identifies the following main areas for action in the broader Adriatic-Ionian, Balkan and Mediterranean region that should be given consideration and further explored by all stakeholders in the region:

Main Areas for Action

- Promote the exchange of views on current cultural policies and experiences regarding cultural programmes and intercultural dialogue, notably through a permanent mechanism such as a bi-annual Intercultural Dialogue conference, taking place each time at a different country/region.
- Exploit existing digital collections and libraries in particular related to UNESCO sites to the benefit of and intensify cooperation with civil society and support participation of local government organisations in these efforts and promote cooperation of R&D projects in this direction.
- Strengthen the exchanges in the fields of art, cultural heritage and education to foster access to culture, promote the mobility of cultural workers and operators and the training of cultural actors, and promote synergies between initiatives and plans. For this purpose it is recommended that an itinerant intercultural dialogue festival be organised in Adriatic-Ionian and other South-Eastern Europe and Mediterranean countries with emphasis on young art creators in cinema and theatre.
- Enhance cooperation among stakeholders with the view to form consortia and participate in EU, national and regional programmes and thereof benefit from EU structural funds and other cooperation initiatives devoted to cultural cooperation and local/regional development.
- International cultural partnership Fora need to be supported and expanded to more regions. In this context the reinforcement of existing or under development cultural cooperation networks such as CulturePolis proposed by the Europe of Cultures Forum: Adriatic-Ionian Chapter have to be further explored to contribute to the definition of framework for cooperation.
- Encourage action aiming at the protection and promotion of arts and crafts, taking into account that these do not simply conserve, reproduce and renew cultural heritage but also enrich and adapt this heritage for the contemporary needs of societies. Efforts will be undertaken to make them become an important component of local and regional small - and medium - scale economies, often related to cultural tourism and other aspects of cultural heritage, as well as female empowerment and capacity building for other equity groups.
- Launch joint initiatives considering culture as a sector that creates jobs and generates income and is therefore relevant for sustainable development and in particular through cultural tourism. For this purpose the signatories want to

promote further engagement of small and medium-sized enterprises in the cultural and creative sectors at local and regional level.