

# *Practice Exchanges for Intercultural Capacity-Building*

## An activity format of the Platform for Intercultural Europe with local partners



## An Introduction and Hosting Invitation To Member And Partner Organisations October 2010

### **Background**

Practice Exchanges for Intercultural Capacity-Building are an activity format of the Platform for Intercultural Europe which is based on the policy paper it elaborated through public consultation in the course of 2007/8: "The Rainbow Paper. Intercultural Dialogue – from Practice to Policy and back"<sup>1</sup>. This document contains four chapters of recommendations which the Platform for Intercultural Europe put forward at the end of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 and aims to implement progressively through its work plan. The Practice Exchanges are designed to address the issues of the Rainbow Paper's chapter II on building capacity for intercultural dialogue in (civic) organisations. They examine questions relating to reviewing staff compositions and governance structures, serving constituencies, growing intellectual resources and advancing through comparison in a European perspective. The core topic of Practice Exchanges is therefore the intercultural adaptation of civic organisations. However, depending on local specificities, intercultural project work, especially if it is conceived as a contribution to systemic change can also be the subject of Practice Exchanges. Given the Platform for Intercultural Europe's political role in the EU cultural policy domain, we are particularly interested in relevant practice in the cultural sector, but especially where collaborations with other sectors are evident. The practice of non-cultural sectors can be in focus where the host can carry a significant part of the activity cost, or where specific fundraising for the Practice Exchange is undertaken.

A number of Practice Exchanges have already taken place:

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://rainbowpaper.labforculture.org/signup/>

- In Malmö, southern Sweden on 15/16th July 2009<sup>2</sup>: This brought together professionals from artistic and cultural organisations from across the Nordic region. It was hosted by the Nordic Forum for Interculture.
- In Vienna, Austria on 20/21<sup>st</sup> November 2009: This brought together representatives from the cultural sector and from minority and migrants' rights organizations. It was hosted by IG Kultur Österreich.
- In Rome, Italy on 28/29<sup>th</sup> May 2010: This brought together representatives from trade unions as well as the civil society. It was hosted by the Italian Trade Union CGIL.

The Platform plans to hold at least two activities of this kind per year in the foreseeable future and is looking for organisations to host them in locations not yet covered<sup>3</sup>. This outline is intended to inform potential partner organisations about the tasks involved in hosting a Practice Exchange.

## **Basic Concept**

The concept of Practice Exchanges recognises the urgent need to enable and facilitate dialogue about how different people and groups make sense of their experiences. This concept builds on the principle that intercultural dialogue is a democratic process that requires and enhances participants' competences for democratic engagement. Furthermore, the Practice Exchanges reflect the obligations and aspirations of the European Union by valuing diversity and by seeking common solutions, which can be also adapted to local situations.

During a Regional Practice Exchange, representatives of civic (i.e. non-governmental or at least arms-length) organisations from ideally a variety of sectors of activity (and, if possible, from a regional set of countries, which share a common political and social framework) and representing different cultural backgrounds come together. For one to two days they exchange experiences, practice and methods on intercultural strategies, policies and possibilities. The Practice Exchanges are aimed at practitioners who have some track record of working with intercultural issues. In other words, they are not intended to bring together professionals who are novices or who still need to be convinced of the need to take interculturalism on board. Central to the programme can be the presentation of case studies or practice examples, which are then discussed. What is most important is to focus on specific issues where disagreement

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<sup>2</sup> To get inspired you can read the report on [www.intercultural-europe.org](http://www.intercultural-europe.org) (scheduled for end July).

<sup>3</sup> Given the rules applying to our current funding under the EU Culture programme, we are primarily looking to partner with organisations located in an EU Member State. Occasionally, hosts can also be located in EU applicant countries (Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey) or in EU associated countries (Serbia).

exists and discussion based on empirical research can play a role to find common points. The purpose of this exchange is to draw out comparable knowledge, which can inform the Platform for Intercultural Europe's policy work or even lead directly to recommendations, which can be addressed to policy-makers at local to European level. An additional option is to bring relevant policy-makers (politicians and civil servants) into the programme of a Practice Exchange (on the second day, for example).

### **The Role of the Host Organisation**

The first motivation for any organisation interested in hosting a Practice Exchange must be to help facilitate learning about ways to make organisations in all their aspects reflect and serve the diversity of the population in which they are embedded, or in what way intercultural project work enhances participation in diverse populations. Host organisations must also be motivated to contribute to the larger exercise of informing intergovernmental policy making at European level with the aggregated insights of practitioners and thus to support the Platform for Intercultural Europe in its political role under the EU Structured Dialogue<sup>4</sup>. To host a Practice Exchange it is not a profit-making proposition; rather a host makes at least in kind (non-monetary) contributions and ideally covers part of the activity costs. Hosts do, in either case, gain valuable inspiration and can receive international attention through a Practice Exchange. Because of the idealistic commitment involved, members of the Platform for Intercultural Europe are given priority amongst interested hosts (provided their proposals is of the necessary quality).

The role of the host organisation comprises the following principal tasks (details can be negotiated).

- **Proposal of a short event description and programme**, which:
  - shows how the basic concept of the Practice Exchanges is adapted to the specific situation of a particular location or region,
  - outlines any history of collaborations which the host organisation might have with the potential participants,
  - describes any relevant public policy initiatives of recent years of the countries in question,
  - contains a proposed date and venue, and sets out all envisaged practical arrangements.

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<sup>4</sup> For details on the Platform's political role, please go to: <http://www.intercultural-europe.org/template.php?page=political-role>

- **Identification of a minimum of 30 suitable participants who:**
  - If possible, come from at least 3 countries, which could be considered to belong to the same region in Europe.
  - Work in any domain with an interest in intercultural action (arts & culture, education, youth work, social work etc), but
  - are able to contribute to the Practice Exchange in English unless the host organisation is able to provide simultaneous interpretation (or the Platform for Intercultural Europe can cover this cost).
  - are willing to cover their own travel cost. (If the host organisation can design a programme, which contains an interesting proposition for participants, we have no general objections against charging a participation fee to cover some expenses. However, a first consideration would be that participants cover their own expenses rather than charge them a fee.)

Two further points:

- It is desirable that the participants do not come from one domain alone, but that the event also helps the exchange across sectors (for example that arts & culture organisations are brought together with representatives from organisations which deal with anti-discrimination or minority issues). Cross-sectoral work is a founding principle of the Platform because interculturalism needs broad alliances.
  - The activity must be open to previous participants of the Platform or indeed actively involve them. The Platform secretariat makes proposals accordingly.
- **Issuing of invitations and handling of the registration management** (this can be negotiated if it poses a problem).
  - **Taking charge of the event organisation** (venue, catering and hotel arrangements, etc) (some help from the Platform secretariat negotiable). There should be no venue hire costs (this would be in kind sponsorship by the host organisations).
  - **Drawing up a draft budget** for the meeting expenses based on written quotes from any third parties involved (hotels, caterers, etc.). Catering choices should be modest. Accommodation should not normally exceed three star standard.

**The role of the Platform is to:**

- Cover the travel expenses of the staff of the host organisation, one night's hotel accommodation for all participants, some venue costs (technical cost and service charge), and all catering costs. The financial support of the Platform should be in the region of 10 000 EUR. We are of course interested in moderate spending, so that we can hold more rather than fewer practice exchanges.
- Provide the moderator, a commentator, note-taker(s) and a report writer for the event.
- Promote the results of the Practice Exchange and their inclusion in European level policy discussions.

### **Process And Timing**

Interested organisations should submit their proposal in writing

- no later than 5 months before the envisaged date for a Practice Exchange
- Applications should be addressed to [dialogue@intercultural-europe.org](mailto:dialogue@intercultural-europe.org).

Proposals (including applied concept description, programme and budget) are examined by the platform secretariat and selected in consultation with its steering group. A host organisation is only considered to be engaged after the signature of a written agreement. After conclusion of an agreement all documents pertaining to a Practice Exchange are formatted in the Platform's organisational style.