

Intercultural learning in European youth work: time to rethink?

A seminar about the role of intercultural learning in the European youth programmes
and in youth policy in Europe

Since the 1980s, the theory and practice of intercultural learning have increasingly come to influence the activities of European and international youth work. The Council of Europe and the European Commission have adopted intercultural learning as a key methodological approach within their youth programmes and it has become a quality feature of European youth work. Today, whether in the formal sector (education, training, employment) or in the non-formal sector (youth work), it is hard to find European or international youth programmes which do not consider a sustainable intercultural learning process as essential.

Nevertheless, Europe has changed beyond recognition since the first steps were made to mainstream intercultural learning in the European youth programmes. The multicultural composition of European society has become an issue of significant political controversy, to the point where immigration in any form has come to be seen as a threat by the public at large and the political classes. Fundamental aspects of the European project considered *acquis*, such as the right to asylum, protection for refugees or freedom of the media, are regularly put into question by national governments, even those bound by the conditionality of membership in the European Union. Europe has enlarged to include member states with very different democratic traditions, and by extension, very different approaches towards young people and their participation. The political conditions under which discussions of intercultural learning are taking place in Europe have changed radically.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that recent articles and papers addressing intercultural learning in the European youth field have critiqued its apparent de-politicisation. While some authors have levelled accusations of intellectual laziness and a lack of political courage at current practices of intercultural learning, others have treated questions of the quality of intercultural learning as practised in the European youth programmes and the general utility of intercultural learning for education and society. Others again have challenged the ways in which intercultural learning methodology translates key concepts into learning experiences and the usefulness of elevating "intercultural dialogue" to European panacea for all societal problems, from civil war to educational failure.

The changed conditions of contemporary European multi-cultural societies alluded to above, and the continued failure of state policies to achieve social integration and peace, are putting the mobilisational value of intercultural learning to the test. The comfortable centrality of intercultural learning in European youth work needs to be questioned. The time is ripe an in depth reflection on renewed and revised ways of conceptualising and implementing intercultural learning in the context of youth work in Europe.

The German National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme, in cooperation with the Institute for Applied Communication Research in Non-formal Education (IKAB), invites you to an exciting and challenging seminar during which the intercultural learning and its role in European youth work and youth policy will be reflected upon and discussed.

Aims and objectives of the seminar:

The seminar aims to:

- *To review* current understandings and practices of intercultural learning in European youth work;
- *To promote* cooperation and mutual learning between youth workers and trainers, youth policy experts and education researchers on concepts and practices of intercultural learning;
- *To contribute* to the conceptual development of intercultural learning in European youth work and the Youth in Action programme;
- *To identify* quality criteria for excellence in the implementation of intercultural learning in youth work and the training needs to those who are responsible for delivering it in the Youth in Action programme;
- *To formulate* proposals for improving the relevance and quality of intercultural learning as practised and delivered in the Youth in Action programme.

General target group: trainers, youth workers, educational experts, policy makers, researchers active in the Youth in Action programme and the broader European youth work field

Profile of participants:

Participants of this seminar will

- be actively working with intercultural learning theory and / or practice in European youth work, especially through the Youth in Action programme
- have a track record of innovation in the field of intercultural learning in formal and non-formal educational settings in Europe or at the national level
- be in positions of responsibility for policies or programmes with a strong intercultural learning component

Dates and place: The seminar will be held from 30 May - 2 June 2011 in Bonn, Germany. Participants are expected to arrive the 30th in the evening; departures are after breakfast on the 2nd.

Working language: The working language of the seminar will be English.

Practical arrangements:

Please submit your application form until 29th April, 2011. If your application is accepted, you will receive a confirmation and further information as soon as possible. Please do not book any tickets before you receive a confirmation of your participation.

If you are coming from a programme country: Please contact your National Agency for information about travel costs reimbursement and participation fee.

If you are coming from a neighbouring partner country: Please contact the German National Agency for information about travel costs reimbursement and participation fee.

Costs for board and lodging for all participants will be covered by the hosting German National Agency.

For further questions about the seminar, please contact Heidrun Boetzel from IKAB (info@ikab.de).