

Jewish organisation develops tools for intercultural dialogue

Education helps. Young people, adults, teachers are the key to understanding and respect in our future Europe. Jewish and Muslim people can be enemies but also partners with a common religious and historical basis, and shared experiences of discrimination. Dialogue and understanding between both communities is therefore essential. CEJI tries to give tools to an Inclusive Europe.

Robin Sclafani and Katy Nicholson

Established in 1991 as the Centre Européen Juif d'Information, CEJI's founding aim was to provide a link between Europe's Jewish communities and the European institutions, and the organisation remains a key point of reference for Jewish communities on EU matters, bringing Jewish experiences and concerns to the attention of EU decision-makers, and working to empower local organisa-

tions to become more interculturally and internationally active.

However, in response to the growing need to foster respect and understanding between all members of today's increasingly diverse European societies, CEJI has since extended its activities to better promote '*a democratic, diverse, inclusive and integrated Europe to guarantee the peaceful coexistence of its people.*' In co-operation with a broad range of NGO partners, the or-

ganisation now runs projects in the areas of diversity education, interfaith and intercultural dialogue and advocacy for EU-wide policies to effectively combat all forms of discrimination. CEJI – now known as 'A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe' to better reflect these broadened objectives – has recently been granted Participatory Status with the Council of Europe in recognition of its work in these areas.

DIVERSITY EDUCATION

CEJI has been involved in diversity education for over ten years. Working in partnership with the U.S.-based Anti-Defamation League's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute, CEJI offers short and long-term trainings, train-the-trainer and program development opportunities created to develop respect for diversity and the skills to succeed in multicultural societies. CEJI has also developed two subject-specific training modules to address particular social needs: religious diversity and gender/homophobia. All programs are adapted to various national contexts and to the needs of the target community. The actual programs are *Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training*; and *Fruitcakes: Tackling Gender-based Discrimination and Homophobia*.

SCHOOL-BASED AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

A significant proportion of CEJI's educational work is carried out in schools and with young people through the A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE™ and Peer Training Programs, a diversity training process and curricular resource designed for schools to enable them to be better prepared to meet the challenges of a multicultural school community. The programs, which have reached more than 25,000 young people in Europe since their introduction ten years ago, are implemented in schools in four European countries by national co-ordinating organisations: IRFAM and AGORA in Belgium, ARES in France, Intercultural Alliance (ICA) in the Netherlands and Oltreil-ponte in Italy.

Peer education is a great tool for the young influencing other young people, but it also has a snowball effect on adults and social sectors surrounding the young. Not only that, but the youth can develop projects that have a direct impact on wider social conditions – if only given encouragement and opportunity by adults and institutions supporting them. This is why CEJI planted the seeds for EPTO – the European Peer Training Organisation – to grow

into the impressive youth network it is today, the key to the provision of non-formal education with young people, established by CEJI in 1996 and now an independent organisation. EPTO educates youth leaders to discuss issues related to prejudice and discrimination, to lead workshops that challenge stereotypes and to become activists against exclusion within their youth organisations and schools. EPTO has to date trained more than 500 peer trainers in 21 countries, who have in turn reached more than 7,000 young people with the message of diversity, raising awareness and providing the skills to confront all forms of discrimination. Other recent EPTO activities include the development of the *Fruitcakes* training module on Gender Discrimination and Homophobia and participation in a European Youth Forum-supported faith-based expert group which aims to mainstream interfaith dialogue in European youth policies and initiatives.

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

While CEJI is particularly active in youth-focused diversity education, the organisation has also played a lead role in the development of a number of adult education programs in this field.

Developed by CEJI and six partner organisations with funding from the EU's Grundtvig Program and the Ford Foundation, the *Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training for Adult Educators* offers adult educators tools for situations where religious diversity and discrimination are a concern.

The training program, which takes place over five days, includes subject-specific activities on antisemitism and islamophobia. It is not designed as a form of interfaith dialogue, nor does it propose itself as an expert in the variety of religious traditions. Instead it is designed in the spirit of anti-prejudice diversity education: to facilitate dialogue and sharing of experiences in the area of religion and culture; to recognise, respect and understand religious diversity; to recognise and confront contemporary manifestations of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination related to religion; and to develop indi-

vidual skills and institutional strategies for creating inclusive intercultural environments. The methodology is highly interactive and participatory, building upon participants' own experiences to address practical situations, and participants receive manuals containing pedagogical tools for use in their own educational and community contexts.

The module's intended target groups include adult educators who could benefit from increased awareness and capacities for working with religiously diverse populations, in addition to pedagogical tools for increasing the awareness and capacities of the adults with whom they work. Community associations engaged in adult education could benefit by having concrete programs that they can offer to improve intercultural relations. Individuals who experience religious discrimination may also benefit from the program. They can develop increased awareness of the issues involved in religious discrimination, new language and skills for confronting religious discrimination and engaging in positive intercultural relations, and a deeper appreciation of a multi-religious society.

The program was piloted at the Multi-Faith Centre in Derby, UK in October 2006 and training seminars for adult educators have since taken place in Bulgaria and Italy, reaching more than 40 adult educators from 11 European countries with a broad range of religious and cultural backgrounds. Trainings currently planned for 2008 will take place in Toulouse, France in February and Konya, Turkey in June. They are open to people of all faiths, beliefs and senses of religious and non-religious belonging, and funding is available from the from national Socrates agencies in the form of Lifelong Learning Programme grants from the EU's Grundtvig and Comenius Programmes to cover travel expenses.

CEJI also offers interested members of the public an opportunity to participate in 2-day religious diversity and anti-discrimination workshops based on the training for adult educators. Pilot English and French-language workshops were held in Brussels in June and November 2007, attended primarily by

representatives of European NGOs and educational institutions.

A second adult-focused training program, *Anti-Discrimination Training Measures in Public Authorities*, was developed between 2002 and 2004 by CEJI and the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) with the support of the EU's Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination. Program participants have included representatives of public authorities and NGOs in Northern Ireland and Germany.

The aim of the program is to ensure that public authorities are sensitive to the needs of all the different sections of the community they serve and act accordingly. It also aims to encourage equitable treatment towards the men and women they recruit and employ, who have similarly diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and equally diverse characteristics in terms of religious belief, age, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion, or marital status.

The approach encourages co-operation between public agencies as well as involves those affected by the policies and practices in question in their design, and to create awareness throughout the institutions concerned of the need to ensure that attitudes and behaviour are not coloured by prejudice.

PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATIONAL NETWORKS

CEJI brings its expertise in this field to a number of educational networks, including Teaching Religion in multicultural European Societies (TRES), a thematic network of academic institutions formed with the objective of highlighting, promoting and developing new strategies for the teaching of religion and theology in a multicultural European context. CEJI is also involved in the Network on Intercultural Learning in Europe (NILE), which promotes life-long intercultural learning in national policies and programs, and the A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE™. Diversity Education Network (ACODDEN), established by CEJI in 2000 with the EU support to serve as a European platform in the field of intercultural education.

Just as the teacher-student relation-

Comments from participants in the Religious Diversity & Anti-Discrimination Training Module:

'I achieved a much greater level of personal awareness not only of my religious experience, but also about its place among other unique diverse experiences. To me the course provided a precious opportunity for self-exploration which was a great added value to the strictly professional aspects of the program.'

'We all agree about the existence of religious diversity and the problems which arise from it. In order to tackle these issues, we must first look into our own diversity. In doing so, we learn a great deal - not only about ourselves but also about others - what we think, what we believe, what we hope. That is the mental and spiritual profit of diversity. That for me was an invaluable outcome of the training.'

ship does not operate in a vacuum, neither is the school environment operating in isolation from the rest of the society. This why during the next two years CEJI will be piloting a community-based initiative across five EU countries that brings a variety local stakeholders, including from the neighbourhood school as well as local youth, public authorities, social workers, business owners, and others, together for a process of diversity training, needs analysis and action planning. We are hoping that the exchange of points of view across a variety of sectors within a very localised neighbourhood will help mobilise resources and cooperation to improve conditions for all. This is another form of intercultural dialogue.

INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Intercultural dialogue means talking, and listening - to each others' perspectives, experiences, needs - and responding to them. Cooperating. It often requires addressing inequalities, healing traumas and tensions, changing institutional structures that may be inherently discriminatory.

EUROPEAN JEWISH-MUSLIM CO-OPERATION PLATFORM

A further key aspect of CEJI's work is its facilitation of a new European Platform for Jewish-Muslim Co-operation. The Platform, officially launched at an event at the European Parliament at the end of November 2007, aims to facilitate co-operation, dialogue and partnership between Jewish and Muslim communities at local, national and

trans-national levels within Europe; increase the visibility of and empower existing Jewish Muslim initiatives; and initiate and promote new opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between Jewish and Muslim communities.

The dialogue approach is particularly pertinent to relations between Muslim and Jewish communities, which have been greatly affected by the volatile political situation of recent years. Jewish and Muslim people find themselves not only as perceived enemies but also as possible partners with a common religious and historical base and shared experiences of discrimination. Fostering dialogue and understanding between both communities is therefore essential.

The Platform grew from a one-year Jewish Muslim Dialogue project, launched by CEJI in late 2005 and supported by the Ford Foundation and the European Commission. The project compiled national mapping reports containing information on partnerships, initiatives and best practice in the field of Jewish Muslim dialogue and produced these reports for Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The mapping reports were released at a European Conference on Jewish-Muslim Dialogue, which took place in Brussels from 15-17 April 2007. This event celebrated the many successful Jewish Muslim dialogue initiatives taking place in local communities and provided an opportunity to share experiences and good practice for over 70 Jewish and Muslim participants from five European countries. A major outcome of the Conference was a Declara-

tion of Commitment to Jewish Muslim Co-operation which agreed to establish the European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation.

ADVOCACY AT A EUROPEAN LEVEL

CEJI's project activities are underpinned by European-level advocacy work aiming to promote a Europe that is respectful of its diverse citizenship – both by promoting the positive strategies to create it, such as the inclusion of diversity education in school curricula across the EU, and by confronting that which prevents inclusion such as institutional discrimination and hate speech. Both aspects are crucial in the context of a surge of support for extremist right-wing views, bringing racism, islamophobia and antisemitism into mainstream European politics (Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, November 2006), coupled with a notable rise in antisemitism on the left of the political spectrum (UK's All-Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism) and the increasing vulnerability of Roma to racist violence and crime (Chair of the Board of the European Monitoring Centre on Rac-

ism and Xenophobia (EUMC), November 2006).

The recently published Guidelines for Policy-Makers on Citizenship Education for Diversity is an example of CEJI's activities in the area of education advocacy. Developed through a year-long project funded by the EU's Socrates Accompanying Measures Programme and the Compagnia di San Paolo, the Guidelines for Policy-Makers on Citizenship Education for Diversity are intended to support the implementation of diversity education in the school curriculum. Additional key outcomes of the project are an inventory of existing practices in the field of Citizenship Education for Diversity in formal secondary education and national reports from five European countries, (Further information, including down-

Recent advocacy work has included the publication of a Factsheet on Religious Discrimination and Legal Protection in the European Union in co-operation with the European Net work Against Racism (ENAR), which is available from www.ceji.org.

loads of the various publications associated with the project, can be found at www.ceji.org/acodden/ced.php).

CONCLUSION

People must be prepared to live successfully within diversity and to engage in effective intercultural dialogue. Whether young or old, a local shopowner, a school teacher or a high ranking public official, we must have the will, the attitude, skills and opportunities to make intercultural dialogue work.

This is the role of Education, life-long education, the combination of life experience and training that can and should take place throughout the various sectors of society.

In this context, CEJI's aim to provide a 'Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe' is more relevant than ever. Moving ahead, CEJI now aims to inspire more people and organisations to actively join us in the pursuit of inclusiveness in all sectors of European society.



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