



NATIONAL REPORT
on
Intercultural Dialog: General
Awareness, Policy and Practice, Needs
and Best Practices

ITALY

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The Network



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1. Executive Summary

The term *Intercultural Dialogue (ICD)* has been used since 1980 but fewer studies have been conducted. In the last years, the concept has been widely used in international conventions such as United Nations, UNESCO, the European Union, as a policy tool to address social change and justice on an international level. Also, a few concepts were used together with ICD, such as culture, heritage, identity, diversity. These concepts may provide as rhetorical instruments to promote distinct political goals beyond intercultural dialogue as such (Lähdesmäki and Wagener, 2015).

In this spirit, the present research assesses how Italy conceptualizes and operationalizes the intercultural dialogue, what are the main opportunities and issues, the policies and strategies, and the main stakeholders in the promotion of intercultural dialogue. The findings are showing that intercultural dialogue is imperative for peace, promotion of mutual understanding, and respect for human rights. It has been confirmed that the institutional structures and the national policies could support much better the promotion of intercultural dialogue. Moreover, it was highlighted the imperative need for better knowing the concept and the right drivers of an efficient dialogue. The collected data showed also that certain systems and tools such as educational institutions, programmes, and media are the crucial mechanisms in the implementation of intercultural dialogue.

To have a better view of how intercultural dialogue is understood and implemented a mixed methodology design has been used. Both the instruments were administrated to representatives that are working on issues of Intercultural Dialogue on a policy and practice level. The online survey was administrated to 31 Italian representatives. The survey consists of 14 quantitative and qualitative questions, being structured among three dimensions: “Understanding Intercultural Dialogue – General Awareness”, “Policy and Practice” and “Identifying needs of local actors for promoting Intercultural Dialogue”. The in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 Italian representatives. The descriptive data has been collected thanks to the use of a semi-structured interview guide following the three-dimension survey structure. The survey respondents represent the Puglia region, while the interviewees are coming from the following geographic regions: Puglia, Lazio, and Emilia-Romagna.

2. Introduction

2.1. About TOGETHER

The TOGETHER Project (*TOWards a cultural understanG of thE oTHER*) aims to promote greater co-operation between countries of the European Union and their neighbours in the Middle East and the Black Sea region based upon common European values and the cultures and traditions of participating countries.

The project aims to encourage sustainable development and address various challenges by embedding processes of intercultural dialogue in the agendas of local communities. TOGETHER will contribute to empowering local actors, enhancing their intercultural skills and competences and making them ‘ambassadors’ of cultural diversity and cross-cultural understanding. Innovative training materials, digital tools and content methodologies will be developed to successfully meet the needs of local actors and their communities. More information about this can be found at <http://thetogetherproject.eu>.

TOGETHER is funded by the European Union's 'Erasmus+' Programme and brings together 6 partner institutions from 5 different countries:

“CulturePolis” – Greece

“Eworx Ypiresies Ilektronikou Epicheirein Anonymos Etaireia” (Greece)

“Institute of Entrepreneurship Development” (IED) – Cyprus

“Fattoria Pugliese Diffusa” (FPD) – Italy

“Georgian Arts and Culture Center” (GACC) – Georgia

“Lebanese Development Network” (LDN) – Lebanon

2.2. About the report

The purpose of the report is to outline the state of the art in intercultural dialogue awareness and development in TOGETHER countries, and to identify the factors that underpin cross-cultural communication and a dynamic space for dialogue in local community settings. More specifically, we seek to provide insights into how intercultural dialogue is understood, identify its main challenges and needs, and understand how it is defined, planned and presented in policy and in practice. It further describes the learning and training needs of local community members.

The report begins with a brief overview of the country's background and its historical context with regard to intercultural dialogue. The next section outlines the methodology used to collect and analyze data, and is followed by findings according to the three main themes of research: 1) Intercultural Dialogue: General Understanding; 2) Policy & Practice; 3) The Needs of Local Actors. The last section contains concluding remarks and recommendations covering all three themes.

3. Country background

Nowadays, the cultural environment is changing extremely fast and is becoming more and more diversified. Europe, and not only, is a diverse continent characterized by a rich diversity of individuals and communities that are living in close proximity. Migration, the influence of social media on culture and communication are making cultural diversity an essential condition of human society. The European societies have suffered some social and political challenges due to the growth of interconnectedness and interdependence. Stereotypes, xenophobia, intolerance, violence, discrimination, racism are the main attitudes that are threatening peace and security. Within this, respect and mutual understanding, constructive dialogue, and tolerance among cultures are imperative (Lähdesmäki, Koistinen and Ylöne, 2020; UNESCO, 2018; Council of Europe, 2008). So, the adoption of a peaceful and inclusive society is the response, and this can be achieved through intercultural dialogue.

As various research points out, immigration in Italy is considered as a structural phenomenon that, far from being exhausted in the short term, will describe the country's future (Sciortino and Colombo, 2005, p.7; Cesareo, 2005, p7; Zanfrini, 2005, 126). According to the Social Services of Puglia Region (2020), on the 1st January 2020, there were registered 133,690 foreign residents in the region, with an incidence of 3.4% of the total population, a value lower than that recorded in the South of Italy (4.5%) and still very far from the national average (8.4%). But, compared to the previous year, there was an increase of 1,598 units.

The transformation of Italy and more generally of southern Europe from an area of origin of large migratory flows to an area of reception of population inflows from other regions of the world has occurred relatively quickly and in a substantially unexpected, unplanned, and scarcely regulated by public authorities. For Italy, the turning point was in the seventies, when the foreign entrances began to exceed the departures. In the same period, internal migrations, which for decades had provided to the more developed regions the needed workforce, began to decline (Pugliese, 2002).

The biggest part of migratory flows is coming from French Africa and are choosing Italy as a second option, with the hope to arrive at the desired destination. The sensational arrivals from Albania, started from the end of the eighties, after the fall of communism and the liberalization of freedom of movement (Ambrosini, 2015).

However, for a long time, the migratory phenomena have been seen in pathological light, which traces remain alive today in public debate, immigration is framed as a new social problem that has hit a country that is already fraught with difficulties (Ambrosini, 2015).

In an interview, Ejaz Ahmad, an Italian-Pakistan citizen, journalist, and intercultural mediator, said that “in Italy, multiculturalism already exists, but what is missing is the interculturalism and mutual integration. In everyday life, different colors and cultures are meeting, colliding, but do not blend. Yet, this blending between two or more cultures is not a threat, it is beautiful, it's an opportunity for growth compared to the immobility of stagnant cultures.” The issue of migration and reception are erroneously presented by the political class as complicated when in reality they are complex. The real challenge, therefore, in our time, that of globalization, consists in understanding the complexity of everything, without falling into trivial simplifications (Viriglio, 2019).

The migration numbers represent a challenge for all the European Union states and for the EU itself. The EU is going through a crisis of values where human rights, democracy, and the rule of law need a reliable defence. Day by day, the EU societies become more multicultural and the future depends on our ability as citizens to develop and sustain the intercultural dialogue. Understanding and accepting cultures and customs of other civilizations is an attitude that each person must adopt and not as a matter of “political correctness” (European Union, 2017).

4. Methodology

The research aims to evaluate the needs, enabling factors, and best practices with regard to the state of the art in intercultural dialogue awareness and development in Italy.

The present research uses the mixed-methods design, which is a combination of collecting and analyzing quantitative survey data, conducting qualitative in-depth interviews, and desk-based research as a means of exploring the state of the art of intercultural dialogue awareness. To be eligible for this research, the participants had to meet the following criteria's: a) to be representatives of key public and civil society institutions working on issues of intercultural dialogue on a policy level and b) to be representatives of an organization working on issues of intercultural dialogue on a political level.

The study was designed around three main dimensions: “Understanding Intercultural Dialogue – General Awareness”, “Policy and Practice” and “Identifying needs of local actors for promoting Intercultural Dialogue”.

Desk-based research

The available national statistics, policies, programmes, and publications allowed us to go deeper into the subject of ICD development in Italy and helped us in elaborating the third chapter, entitled “Country’s background”.

Questionnaire

During this phase, a sample of 31 people has participated in an online survey (appendix 1) thanks to the use of google forms. Of which 29% of the respondents represent entities from the third sector, 22,6% public and private entities, and organizations from the local community, and only 3,2%, with a small enterprise.

In terms of demographics, 58,1% represents females and 49,1% males. In what regards the age, 49,1% is between 30-39 y.o., 25,8% between 20-29 y.o., 19,4% from 50 to 59 y.o., 9,7% from 40 to 49 y.o. and only one respondent is over 60 y.o. The majority of respondents have higher levels of education: university degree (48,4%) and master degree (22,6%) and only 12,9% have their high school diploma.

Interviews

Ten interviews were conducted face-to-face and via the online platform ZOOM as so: Group A - five representatives of key public and civil society institutions working on issues of Intercultural Dialogue on a policy level, such as: expert 1- mayor, teacher, and lawyer; expert 2- philosophy and history of ideas university teacher and part of the steering committee of the “Italian Association of Humanistic IT and digital culture”; expert 3- priest, executive director of the national

pastoral, executive director of the “CdL De Finibus Terrae” foundation; expert 4- elementary music and special needs teacher; expert 5- Italian and literature high school teacher.

Group B - five representatives of organizations working on issues of Intercultural Dialogue on a practice level, such as expert 1- founder of a folk music group from Salento; expert 2- president of an international association that works for the social promotion; expert 3- film director, theater teacher, and actor, born in Buenos Aires and for the last 15 years he lived in Bologna; expert 4- theater actor and social worker in an Immigration Reception Center and expert 5- president of an association that has the aim to valorize the traditions from Salento.

The mean age of the interviewed participants is 48 years old, from 28 to 75 y.o. The experts are coming from Puglia (n=7), Lazio (n=1), Emilia-Romagna (n=2).

Ethical Considerations

This study has been conducted following the recommendations for ethical research, respecting the anonymity, and with the Data Protection Act of Regulation (EU) No 2016/679 of the European Parliament and the council of 27 April on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and the free movement of the data.

Translation

Since both the survey and the interview guide were in English, a translation in the Italian language was necessary.

Limits

The present research has a few limits. A first limit regards the translation of the administration tools. Even if it was provided an equivalent translation, it does not guarantee that all the items have a metric equivalence to the other cultures. A second limit consists in the fact that the majority of the respondents are coming from the Puglia region, and so the conclusions are hard to be generalized to all of Italy.

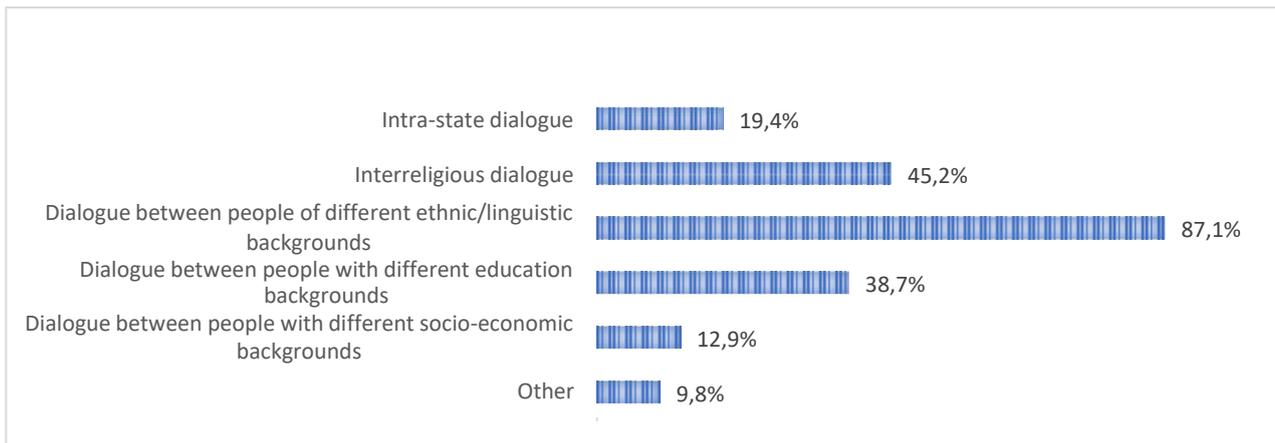
The present situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic created some issues in the process of survey distribution and interview implementation. So that, the survey had to be administrated online and the interview administration imposed some distance limits that created some communication barriers, such as the body language that couldn't be expressed in the virtual space as in face-to-face and it is well known, that Italians have an innate passion for communicating through the body language.

5. Key Finding

5.1. Intercultural Dialogue: General Understanding

The responses are presenting two states of understanding intercultural dialogue. First, as a communication tool, *“listening and understanding exercise”*; *“intercultural dialogue is the ability between two cultures (both as ethnicities and as social dialogue and intergenerational dialogue) to dialogue by mediating conflicts to reach a meeting point or, in any case, a peaceful confrontation”*. This understanding points out that ICD means listening truly to a person, being empathic with its thoughts and feelings, showing respect, and understanding better its perspective, motivation, and interest. Active listening means having an understanding attitude by not judging, accusing, or bringing criticism. Another stream of understanding intercultural dialogue shows its links with the concept of diversity: *“relationship between people of different linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious origins and heritages”*, *“discovery the ‘worlds’ of others for knowing and welcoming them”*, *“a reality that brings new perspectives”*.

According to the interviewees, ICD is understood through three dimensions: listening, interest and, sharing. It can be observed that both survey respondents and interviewees, agreed with the dimension of listening. The majority of our interviewees understand ICD as an achievement, a useful tool for gaining results, an enrichment and, an exchange of knowledge as long as we let ourselves be amazed by the "Other". According to both groups, open-mindedness is the basis of the dialogue. It could happen between two different persons, modest and curious that get closer, being aware of their own cultures and limits. Talking about limits, "defining who you are" is the first step toward the dialogue, that's one of the points that all the experts have highlighted; conversing with different cultures implies first of all knowing yourself and your heritage. If we know our identity, with all our natural qualities and flaws, we'll be able to know the Other, generating so, a worthy ICD based on exchanges, contacts, meetings, and, not contaminations. Identity, uniqueness, special features are fundamental characteristics that both groups underlined. Here we have to point out a slightly different opinion from one of GROUP A's components, expert no.2 who has a philosophical education and is sensitive toward racism issues. To expert no.2, cultures are networks, relational threads, a jumble of histories. What expert no. 2 wanted to highlight is that we do not need to make differences between cultures because humanity's nature is made of multiculturalism so that's actually why ICD is possible not through an effort but in a very natural way because it's part of our congenital identity. Problems are coming if the dialogue is understood as an effort between different parts. "Multiculturalism is a fact" has asserted expert no. 2, so becoming conscious of this fact ICD should be a spontaneous process.



Graphic. 1. The main aspects of intercultural dialogue

The overwhelming majority of respondents strongly agree that the main aspect of intercultural dialogue (graphic 1) is “dialogue between people of different ethnic/linguistic backgrounds” (87,1%), being followed by the “interreligious dialogue” (45,2%) and “dialogue between people with different education background” (38,7%). While the socio-economical background (12,9%) is not considered such an essential component of intercultural dialogue. About 9,8% of the respondents consider that all the listed components are of big importance and not one in particular.

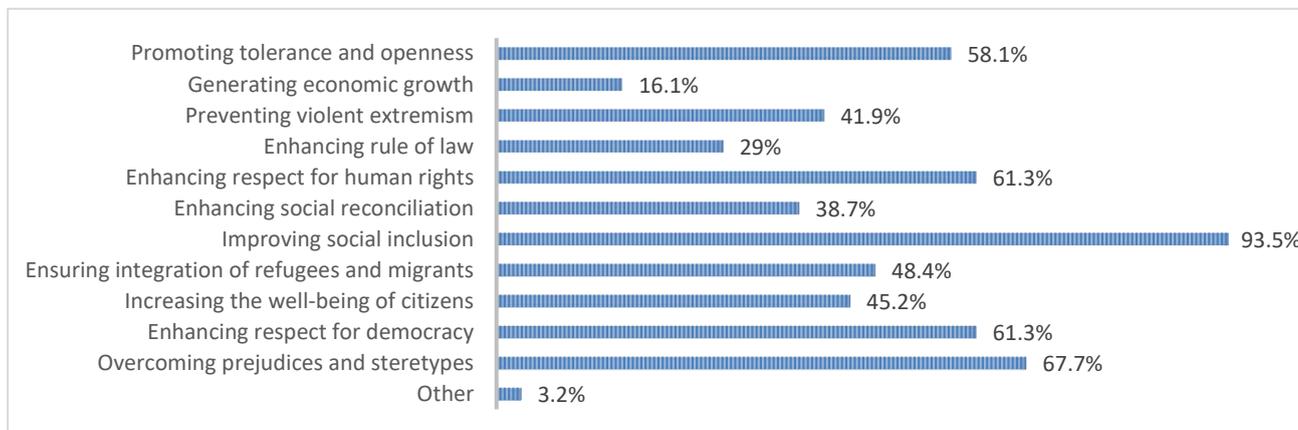
Intercultural dialogue and Sustainable Development

All the interlocutors have unanimously considered obvious and redundant the focus on the sustainable development related to the intercultural dialogue. For example, the impact of the ICD on the ONU's 2030 Agenda, is essentially fundamental. Both interviewed groups have found inopportune the need to specify it because that question shouldn't exist. The same response came from the survey, where all the participants agreed with the fact that ICD supports achieving UN sustainable development goals. None of the interviewees separated the importance of the ICD from the perspective of sustainable development. It would be a contradiction: defining sustainability through intercultural is a tautology. Being aware of the "other" culture implies itself a sensitive gaze at the environment, at the body, at the intelligence. The Agenda's targets lean exactly on topics and feelings that an open-minded, pacific, and curious dialogue would have already internalized. Making concrete and honest intercultural dialogue come true would already be sufficient. Achieving this, all the international communities wouldn't by now be forced to fulfill such a difficult but crucial. 2030 Agenda is interconnected. It would be a mistake thinking to separate tiles of a fundamental puzzle. To solve racism, we need to care about ecological problems, and to solve gender equality, we should fully understand how jobs and territory are conceived in the world. We always give a name to perspectives, but we never name their real components. From this point of view, we'll be talking about the total development of the individual more than sustainable development. From particularity to universality and so "we'll have to start from

those models of improvement realized by local communities that are the only ones that can sincerely tell about their needs and their hopes" as expert no.6 declared.

Graphic.2. Intercultural dialogue opportunities provided in Italy/ Italian communities

The majority of respondents consider that Intercultural Dialogue brings Italy's and its



communities a range of opportunities (graphic 2). For example, 93,5% consider that intercultural dialogue improves social inclusion and over 60% of the respondents states that some of the provided opportunities are: overcoming prejudice and stereotypes (67,7%), enhancing respect for democracy and human rights (61,3%). They also highlight the importance of enhancing social reconciliation, enriching cultural and social life, and combating violence. The findings point out that the economic dimension is the least relevant.

So, it can be said that intercultural dialogue is recognized as an important key in living in peace and as a tool to overcome prejudices, enhance equality, and improve the well-being of citizens.

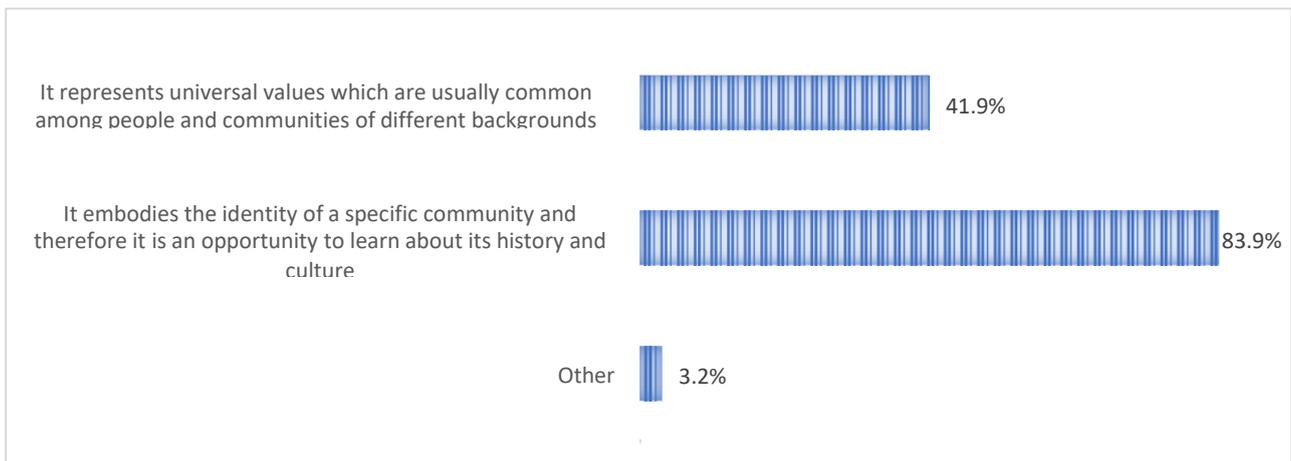
Cultural heritage: relevant or relative?

The respondents emphasize the role that cultural heritage has on the development of intercultural dialogue, 83,9% of them stating that "it embodies the identity of a specific community and therefore it is an opportunity to learn about its history and culture". A wider perspective towards this topic in Italy and particularly in the South of Italy is offered by the interviews.

It was clear right from the beginning that both interviewed groups were sharing the same idea on cultural heritage: something to protect, to cherish, to share. It was observed that exactly through this heritage, it's possible to access the temple of cultures. A recurring opinion highlights the importance of defending each cultural heritage because it would be a real loss from a human point of view; it would be rather appropriate to guarantee the renewing and the transmission of each heritage to share. So, summing up the opinions, it can be said that cultural heritage is much more than *relevant* since defending it means constantly learning. On the back of this educational aspect, we highlight another point of view shared by the interviewees: cultural heritage is history that could make emerge a feeling of astonishment in those who are interested in discovering it; the experts have defined history as none

other than people of the past dialoguing with us through the heritage they left. Here, the issue has assumed, let's say, a genetic sense; the heritage answers to the question "Who I belong to?" and so finding and defining our identity we can meet the world and that culture that we have inside will be nothing more than the beauty of a community or of the communities that we've met and that have generated that heritage.

On this point too, it has to be reported the relevant opinion of two experts of both groups. Expert no.2 from GROUP A has defined the cultural heritage, concerning the intercultural dialogue, as a false problem. What he wanted to clarify is that there isn't an immense or a limited culture, what exists is culture, that's it. Expert no.2 doesn't find right the hierarchical approach that sometimes we have towards cultures, this reflects a capitalistic way of thinking. Culture means being together, sharing, without falling into the vortex of egocentricity. Expert no.7, from GROUP B, has expressed an analogous awareness. Here too, cultural heritage was intended as a limiting reality, something that could generate misunderstandings made of ethnic claims and a fierce sense of identity. The expert, who's socially operative in the intercultural promotion of Mediterranean harbors and of the sea as existential style, has declared that saying the word "typical" is nonsense. Mediterranean Europe, according to expert no.7, could be the pioneer in the advance of the communities' interrelation. The more we'll insist on the concept of typical identity, of tradition, creating also a difference between the countryside and the seaside, the more we'll withdraw into ourselves. So, no culture hierarchy or typical identities for these two experts; for them, cultural heritage is a fact that we don't need to define but to share.



Graphic 3. The contribution of Cultural Heritage to the development of intercultural dialogue in the context of local communities

Main Challenges and Needs

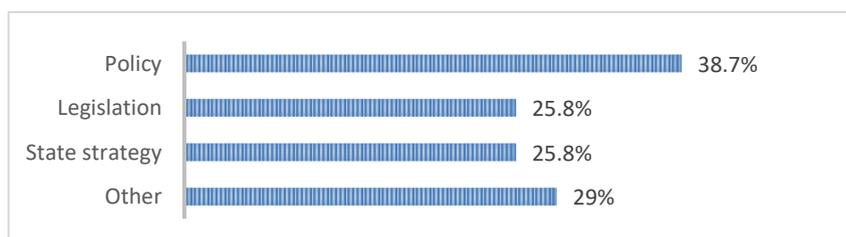
Regarding the challenges and the needs related to the promotion of the intercultural dialogue, GROUP A's point of view is slightly different from that of GROUP B's that works directly in the private and associative field.

GROUP A which is composed of political, catholic, educational, and academic institutions, has nearly always called on the "low dimension", the individual, the community; while GROUP B has expressed a much more cynical and disillusioned idea toward the individual, this group's representatives trust in the strong action of politics toward the associations, social initiatives, school which is too often left to their destiny. So, we see a group calling on the individual dimension while the other asking for more commitment from the institutions. Examining GROUP A's point of view we've noticed that there are three words that they've used the most during this topic: lifestyle, ethics, and awareness. According to them, the key to an authentic ICD is inside of us, inside the choices, the way of living, the way we look at the world every single day. This group believes in the action of each singular person independently from a national or international political feedback; they believe in the idea of each person who joins his/her counterpart gives birth to an educational mechanism and a source of consciousness, because as expert no.3 recalled, quoting Pope Francis *"To educate a child we need an entire community"*.

GROUP B, instead, as we've already specified in the introduction, thinks that real changes can be made by institutions because, as they've declared, nowadays the individual is too much involved in logics made of capitalism, of style, of frivolous thoughts; individuals need a guide that could positively encourage and support their everyday activities. Institutions, from political organisms to schools, are the first educators of feelings and awareness. Without this huge support, it would be difficult to create something concrete, trying only to delimit the damages or providing for what lacks. According to this group the society, nowadays, appears archaic. Prejudice's an enormous shade and the individual needs real support to face it.

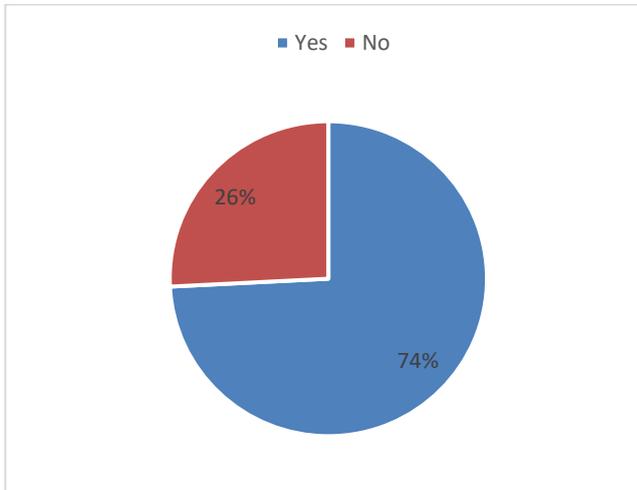
5.2. Policy & Practice

The findings are showing that most of the instruments are not so well known (graphic 4). It can be seen that only 38,7% of the respondents are stating that policies are the most known tool to promote intercultural dialogue in Italy, while 25,8% are stating that legislation or state strategy is the adopted instrument in promoting ICD. A relatively high percentage (29%) shows that 22,6% of the respondents do not know any strategy, while 3,2% are listing non-governmental strategies and the other 3,2% tools as cultural programmes and exchanges.

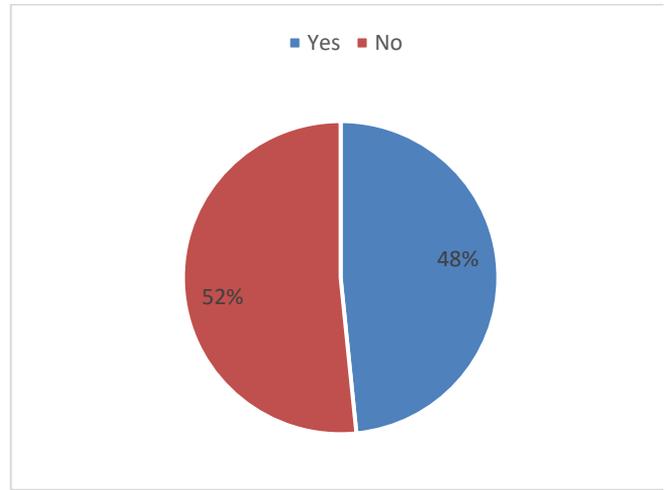


Graphic 4. Policies/legislation/state strategy that promote intercultural dialogue in Italy?

The most common examples given by the respondents are welcoming strategies of immigrants, the action plan on the integration of third-country nationals, cultural mediator, discussion forum, “Muslim Friendly” project launched by Puglia region, intercultural exchanges, the “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue” and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Graphic 5. Activities, projects and programmes that have favoured the promotion of intercultural dialogue in Italy



Graphic 6. Funding opportunities available for intercultural dialogue related activities?

In graphic 5, it can be seen that a vast majority of the respondents (74,2%) are aware of programmes that promote ICD in Italy. The European Union programmes that are offering exchange opportunities and intercultural activities, such as Erasmus+, have been the most common answer, being followed by the Italian SPRAR Programme, Carta di Leuca (appendix 2), European Volunteering Service, and other intercultural exchanges realized in schools/universities/theaters, etc.

Almost half of the respondents (51,6%) have any knowledge about funding opportunities (graphic 6) related to ICD activities and most of them recognize the European Union Programmes as the main funding institution. A few respondents mentioned national grants such as “Fondo Asilo Migrazione e Integrazione” (FAMI) and some local school actions.

For this section, the qualitative methodology highlighted that both groups have concordant opinions. All the interlocutors had a similar line of reasoning and contemporarily they feel frustrated by the complexity of finding clear political features that could satisfy the main question. Sometimes they have admitted their lack of information related to political issues but at the same time, they've noticed how much difficult it was to answer because that political overview related to the ICD promotion is opalescent, silent or maybe it is so absent that it can't leave any traces. It was noticed a real ignorance and confusion related to these ongoing political issues. Anyway, there was a fil rouge among the interlocutors about the main challenges that politicians should face to encourage the ICD: searching for civil rules oriented to a common and shared cohabitation in a world that is tighter and

tighter and always evolving. Talking concretely our experts have enunciated different points that could lead to the realization of an efficient ICD:

- *Enduring the sensitizing of different age categories.* Institutions should encourage and support. The associations and the individuals should work being sure that there is political support. Where there is an insensitive field, the local municipality should begin programs that encourage and excite the individuals.

- *Real and convenient welcoming.* Open-mindedness is the keyword both for institutions and so for the individual. Globalization leads us to evolution and receptiveness so it's really important to prepare ourselves to live it in the right way. *"If you welcome there won't be a problem, if you create conflicts there will be problems"* declared expert no.1.

- *Hearty tourism.* It is important to create meeting opportunities, that is the only way we have to solve intercultural and peace problems. *"Only the confrontation creates knowledge. Knowledge disarms gazes and these disarmed gazes will be able to look toward a shared horizon"*, said expert no.3. A really good idea is that of walking paths. Let's think about the Via Francigena or the Camino de Santiago and so on. It's fundamental to make the new generations walk.

- *Dialogic school.* In these institutional contexts, the dialogue is not promoted. Some of the ideas emerged during the interviews, such as creative writing and cultural debates between young people with the mediation of experts. Italian school, unfortunately, has a too Eurocentric approach. It would be fundamental dialoguing with the foreigner. Narrating about Dante but at the same time discovering the *Bhagavadgītā* since the primary school; discovering the oriental and Greek philosophy; with the other culture we could talk about Petrarca, and with all the classroom we could know more about *One thousand and one nights*, Borges, Pinter, Mahmood Darwish, and Mandela. It's not useful to keep focusing on the Latin culture, that was essential only when we knew just 20% of the whole world. Nowadays we're aware of the real globe dimension and it could be a missed opportunity that of non-dialoguing with the different cultures that share the same space.

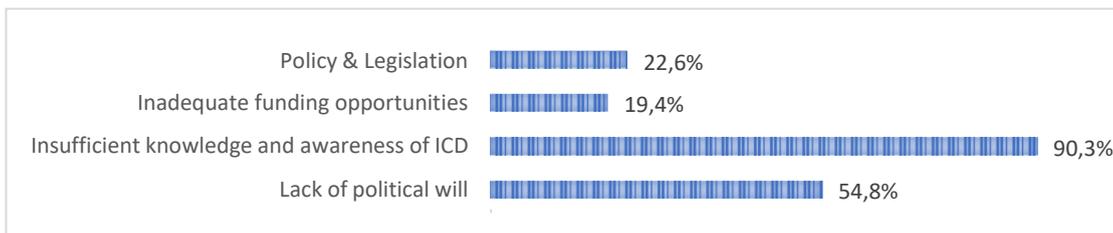
- *Operative school.* Focused and structured trips with a seasonal frequency; integrating to history the geography and let this one having much more space during the didactic calendar. *"Geography, geo-history, geopolitics, I would say that a geography of cultures is an honest perception of our world, an awareness of the unity of different colors and of the freedom that could give an early study of astronomy because it's important to realize the immensity since we're children, the human limit compared to heavens, Astronomy and a seriously-taught geography will remind us that we're all the same"* affirmed expert no. 9.

- *Always promoting arts and sport.* Arts have a fundamental role during the growth and for the enrichment of the individual just like sciences and foreign languages in schools. Theatre *"with its*

healthy intimacy, sometimes conflictual, creates a little utopia among that group of persons that works on the stage; a utopia that is strictly connected with brotherhood because what theatre teaches to you is that if something goes wrong to you well it will go wrong to your colleague too. It has to go right to both, to everybody, to make the thing works. That is dialogue" declared expert no.8. Similarly, sport is a reality where a sense of unity and brotherhood reigns. *"Sport, culture, and arts are a dialogue in name of integration; they beat exclusion and bad habits related to the demonization of the "other" that is different from me."* said expert no.10.

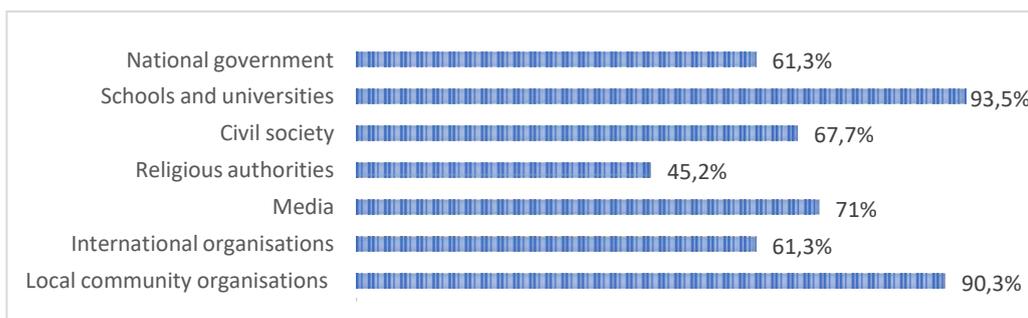
5.3. Needs of Local Actors

Country respondents stressed two main challenges to ensure the promotion of ICD in Italy (graphic 7): 1) insufficient knowledge and awareness of Intercultural Dialogue (90,3%) and 2) lack of political will (54,8%). Also, it is visible that the absence of a national policy and legislation (22,6%) and the inadequate funding opportunities (19,4%) are common challenges that weaken intercultural dialogue implementation. This direction could be linked to the lack of political will. So, further research could address this topic. Respondents encourage greater awareness of ICD.



Graphic 7. The main challenges encountered by promoting intercultural dialogue in Italy

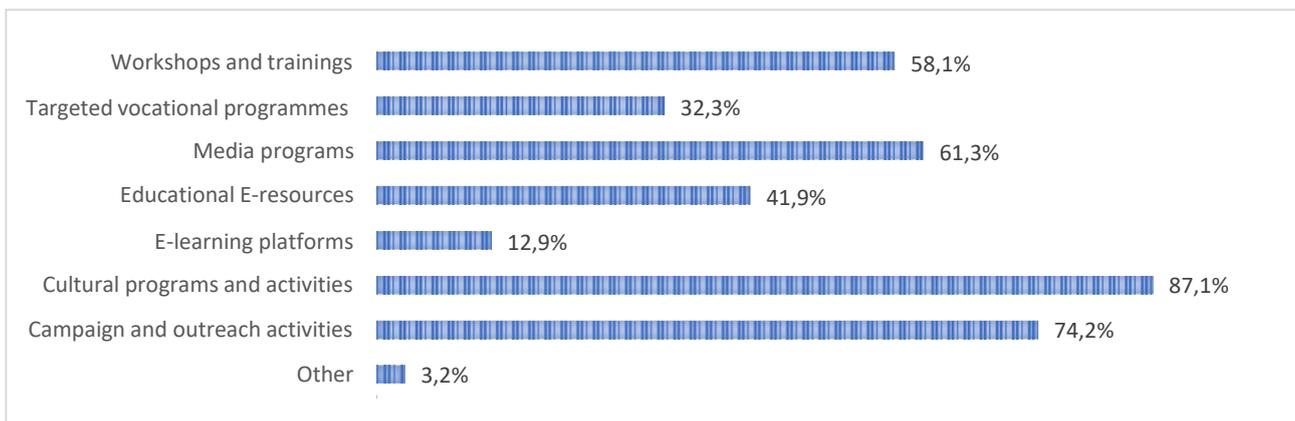
The responses highlight the relevance of educational institutions (93,5%) and local community organizations as key stakeholders in the implementation of intercultural dialogue (graphic 8), which reaffirms the relevant contribution of educational activities in promoting ICD. Also, the role of media (71%) and civil society (67,7%) is highly rated. Lower importance is attributed to the religious authorities (45,2%).



Graphic 8. Stakeholders that can take measures to effectively address these challenges

For a better implementation of the intercultural dialogue in Italy, the vast majority of respondents affirmed that financial and specialized human resources are the most important factors to move on and develop more promoting actions. Also, the responses stress out the participatory issue, so that, better promotion of the ICD could be done if citizens, local actors, and institutions would bring its involvement. So, the responses demonstrate that intercultural dialogue imposes varied factors, actors, and institutions for ensuring its implementation.

Respondents highlight certain activities as effective for promoting ICD (graphic 9). In particular, the cultural programmes (87,1%) and the communication campaigns (74,2%) comprising the media programmes (61,3%) are the crucial promotion mechanisms. The findings are showing that the educational programmes bring a smaller, but yet important contribution, e.g.: workshops and training (58,1%) and targeted vocational programmes (32,3%) are the next mechanisms chosen by the Italian respondents in promoting intercultural dialogue.



Graphic 9. Activities that can contribute best to promoting intercultural dialogue in Italy

The wide range of the investigation conducted allows tracing challenges and needs on a vast social immersion. It has been involved in politics, school, religious institutions, theatre, immigration context, show business, and associationism. All these aspects support the biggest inclusion of voices that constitute a community. These voices, the local actors, push for the following actions:

- *For the associationism:* Listening and openness from **local administrations**. Announcing reasonable and accessible **competitions** limiting all the bureaucratic barriers. Little realities are subjected to inexperience related to bureaucracy, so they always risk being excluded even though the good effort of their intercultural initiatives.
- *For the workers of the first reception center.* Openness and immediate determination from the **school** and the **religious communities** affiliated with the UE.
- *For tourism.* Believing more in **Southern Europe**. European South and Mediterranean countries are, moreover, bridled in dishonesty, clientelism, and corruption prejudices. *"Let's say that in general*

the south, due to a certain scarcity of sources and technologies, remains the last reservoir of humanity. I think that we should start from this horizon to create a dialogue with the human being. Not by chance, TOGETHER project is coordinated by 5 countries located on the "sea between the lands" of South" said expert no.9.

- *For the school.* There is an absolute need for a **school reform** related to the management of the educational offer and the presence of new professional figures. *"It is necessary to invest in new figures that should be associated with the existing ones. We need experts specialized in linguistic and cultural mediation; theatre experts, educators specialized in laboratory activities, so we'll be able to face the educational poverty, the alienation of some guys, the cultural and social awareness. We need professional figures from a sociological, philosophical, and psychological profile in each school."* declared expert no.4. The educational offer should be **multifaceted**. The didactic calendar should be optimized to guarantee practical activities such as debate, trips, and arts.

- *For the theatre-* Promoting it with **constant subsidies** without thinking that it is a hobby, a non-athletic people's pastime but rather a place where you can develop your mind and your character, a place where empathy and problem solving are constantly stimulated.

Building on the findings, the educational programs are considered the key element in the implementation of the ICD, and this reaffirms the respondents' high estimation for the contribution of educational actions to promoting intercultural dialogue.

6. Conclusions

The present research evaluated the needs, enabling factors, and best practices with regard to the state of the art in intercultural dialogue awareness and development in Italy.

Intercultural dialogue has a precise definition in strategic documents such as the “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue”, “UNESCO Convention on cultural diversity”, so instead of offering a clear definition of the concept, the survey and interview respondents related to aspects such as: active listening; mutual understanding; sharing; diversity; open-mindedness; exchange, contact, meeting, and not a contamination; openness towards the Other; respect; direct interaction with people coming from a diverse culture, etc. Intercultural Dialogue has been seen by the respondents as an achievement, a useful moment of gaining results, *an enrichment and an exchange of knowledge as long as we let ourselves being amazed by the “Other”*.

Dialogue, as an interlocutory act between two or more persons, an exchange of ideas and opinions which aims to create a shared understanding, can't be imposed by a decree, or be a formal compliance. Dialogue is the *curiosity* and *desire* to describe and understand both identities (yours and the unknown one). Dialogue is a personal attitude, a habitus that should be acquired according to a specific willing act. Who does it? It's not institutions but persons in the flesh. The present research has brought into attention that institutions should create the opportunity to guarantee to people the freedom of expression, a linguistic and behaviour code that could connect interlocutors but moreover a “functional horizon”, that is a reasonable answer to all the questions that are at the base of each dialogue (Why dialoguing? Who needs it? When we will see the benefits?). Institutions, from the family dimension to the political organisms, should commit themselves to not hindering all the little seeds that could lead to a will of dialoguing, a dialogue that could oppose closure, indifference, unrestrained ignorance. In a century where populism, nationalism, neo – racism are growing more and more, if we really want to avoid possible conflicts that could be even worse, ICD has to impose itself as the only source capable of imagining and creating a civil cohabitation based on peace and justice for everybody.

It was noticed a real insensibility, ignorance and confusion related to the ongoing political issues. It seemed that there's skepticism regarding their existence or, at any rate, regarding a political commitment. Most of the strategic tools such as policies, legislations, are not so well known (graphic 4). The vast majority of respondents stated that the European Union is always the first step toward something universal and worthy: a pacific, official and institutional intercultural

dialogue. The most common answer of actions and funding institutions are the European Union programs and grants.

All the interlocutors had a similar line of reasoning and contemporarily they feel frustrated by the complexity of finding clear political features that could satisfy the main question. Sometimes they have admitted their lack of information related to political issues but at the same time they've noticed how difficult it was to answer, because that political overview related to the ICD promotion is opalescent, silent or maybe it is so absent that it can't leave any traces.

Findings highlight that there is still a lot to do, a high need to raise awareness of the concept, spread the criticality of ICD and open people's minds. What's crystal clear is that education is one of the most powerful instruments. Educational learning and knowing surely has not an immediate effect but it can dig up deep down, form consciences, create conditions for eyes that could look over their own identity. ICD passes through open-minded consciousness and education could be the key.

The wide range of the investigation conducted, allows to trace challenges and needs on a vast social immersion. It has involved politics, school, religious institution, theatre, immigration context, show business and associationism. All these aspects support the biggest inclusion of voices that constitute a community.

7. Recommendation

As already highlighted, intercultural dialogue needs a synergic commitment fed by all the actors of a community and oriented toward the concrete realization of a dialogue that goes beyond cultural aspects, generating so, a communicative connection that links the human being all over the world. So, according to the three main areas related to the project, the following aspects need to be improved:

- Growing the **general awareness** of intercultural dialogue among people; sensitizing more and more all the age categories, supporting all the minimum everyday occasions of intercultural dialogue. A conscious mind is generated by concrete and constant consciousness-raising;
- Recommendations on **policy and practices**: encourage and support from institutions; all the local actors that invest their forces and time in the promotion of the intercultural dialogue, should work to be sure that there'll always be political support, that there'll always be a helpful hand for those individuals that want to spread the concept of intercultural dialogue; creating meeting opportunities that allow people from all over the world to confront themselves, to know each other and so to build a shared vision of the world they want; enhancing the school program trying to involve concepts that give to the students an international overview that could stimulate them a selfless look; arts and sports promotion are fundamental sources for the improvement of intercultural dialogue, as highlighted during the interviews, *“sport, culture and arts are a dialogue in name of integration; they beat the exclusion and the bad habit of demonizing the “other” that is different from me”*;
- Recommendations on **needs of local actors**: strategies that could facilitate the promotion of the intercultural dialogue, so talking practically:
 1. More listening and openness from local administrations, ministries, and international organisms toward all the associations, realities, that work on the intercultural dialogue; more easily accessible funds for their projects;
 2. Working on school reform; investing in new professional figures such a linguistic and cultural mediator, theatre expert, figures specialized in laboratory activities so it will be possible to face the educational poverty and to increase the feeling of cultural and social sharing; expanding the geographic horizon of the school program, creating an intellectual connection with the typology of literature, languages, traditions that are completely different from those that the student is used to;
 3. All the institutions, from family to international organisms, should never lose sight of the relevance of intercultural dialogue; they should always find the time to dedicate themselves to this theme, creating opportunities that go from the “intercultural words” of a mother to his son, to the intercultural meeting organized by an international organism.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Online Survey: Defining Needs, Actors And Best Practices For Intercultural Dialogue

The present survey was prepared as a part of the Comparative Analysis Report, which aims to evaluate the needs, enabling factors and the best practices of intercultural dialogue (ICD) in the following countries: Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Italy, and Lebanon. It is conducted in the framework of the project "TOGETHER - TOwards a cultural understandinG of thEoTHER", funded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union. The consortium of the project consists of 6 organizations from 5 different countries: CulturePolis – Greece, A.B. Institute of Entrepreneurship Development LTD (IED) – Cyprus, Eworx Ypiresies Ilektronikou Epicheirein Anonymos Etaireia (EWORX) – Greece, Fattoria Pugliese Diffusa APS (FPD) – Italy, Georgian Arts & Culture Center (GACC) – Georgia and the Lebanese Development Network (LDN) – Lebanon.

Your participation will help to understand the challenges and opportunities in promoting the Intercultural Dialogue in your country. Participation in this survey is confidential and anonymous.

The information you provide will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act of Regulation (EU) No 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data.

Thank you for your participation and please answer as honestly as possible.

I have read the information provided and fully understand my role within this research.

YES / NO

I agree to take part in this research.

YES/NO

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is your gender?

Female

Male

N/A

What is your age?

20-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

60+

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Some High School

High School

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Ph.D. or higher

Which sector do you represent?

- Public
- Private
- NGO/Civil Society
- Local Community organisation
- International Organisation
- Other

UNDERSTANDING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE-GENERAL AWARENESS

1. Please describe in your own words how do you understand intercultural dialogue?
2. In your opinion what are the main aspects of intercultural dialogue? Please select
 - Inter-state dialogue
 - Intra-state dialogue
 - Interreligious dialogue
 - Dialogue between people of different ethnic/linguistic backgrounds
 - Dialogue between people with different education backgrounds
 - Dialogue between people with different socio-economic backgrounds
 - Other – Please write
3. Do you think Intercultural Dialogue can support achieving the UN sustainable development goals?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I do not now
4. What opportunities does Intercultural Dialogue provide to your country/community? Please select
 - Promoting tolerance and openness
 - Generating economic growth
 - Preventing violent extremism
 - Enhancing rule of law
 - Enhancing respect for human rights
 - Enhancing social reconciliation
 - Improving social inclusion
 - Ensuring integration of refugees and migrants
 - Increasing the well-being of citizens
 - Enhancing respect for democracy
 - Overcoming prejudices and stereotypes
 - Please indicate other contributions of intercultural dialogue, if any
5. How do you believe cultural heritage contributes to the development of intercultural dialogue in the context of local communities?
 - It represents universal values which are usually common among people and communities of different backgrounds.

- It embodies the identity of a specific community and therefore it is an opportunity to learn about its history and culture.
- Other- Please specify

POLICY & PRACTICE

6. Do you know any policies/legislation/state strategy in place that promote ICD in your country?
- Policy
 - Legislation
 - State strategy
 - Other Please specify

6.1. Please specify which policy, legislation, state strategy, etc. you know.

7. Do you know about any activities, projects and programmes that have favoured the promotion of intercultural dialogue in your country?

Yes/ No

If yes, please specify

8. Do you know about any funding opportunities available for ICD related activities?

Yes/ No

If yes, please specify

IDENTIFYING NEEDS OF LOCAL ACTORS FOR PROMOTING ICD

9. What are the main challenges encountered by promoting ICD in your country?

- Policy & Legislation
- Inadequate funding opportunities
- Insufficient knowledge and awareness of ICD
- Lack of political will
- Other please specify

10. Which stakeholders can take measures to effectively address these challenges?

- National government
- Schools and universities
- Civil society
- Religious authorities
- The media
- International organisations
- Local community organisations
- Please list other organisations/stakeholders that you believe can help the promotion of intercultural dialogue in our country

11. What do you need for advancing your work on ICD?

Please list up to three

12. Please select which of the following activities can contribute best to promoting intercultural dialogue in your country:

Workshops and trainings

Targeted vocational programmes

Media programs

Educational E-resources

E-learning platforms

Cultural programs and activities

Campaign and outreach activities

Please list other activities, if any, that you think will help the promotion of intercultural dialogue in your country

13. Please indicate other ways to strengthen the process of promoting Intercultural Dialogue in our country.

Thank you for participating in the survey!

For any further information about the project please contact the organization

Appendix 2: Best Practice “Carta di Leuca”

Country	ITALY
Implementing institution	De Finibus Terrae – Parco Culturale Ecclesiale
Program/project Name	Carta di Leuca
Year and duration	2016 until present
URL for more information	https://www.camminidileuca.it/carta-di-leuca/
General description/ Overview	<p>Carta di Leuca is promoted by the “De Finibus Terrae Foundation” which was created to promote the Salento area (Southern Puglia), located in the center of the Mediterranean Sea. Carta di Leuca is a permanent, intercultural and interreligious laboratory of young people who live on the different shores of the Mediterranean and who mutually commit themselves to build a better future, having at heart the care of the planet, the centrality of the person, and the construction of paths of conviviality, respecting differences.</p> <p>The meaning of Carta di Leuca is in the "conviviality of differences": the prophecy of Don Tonino Bello indicates a commitment to combat poverty, Mafia, and any other form of illegality and abuse.</p>
Main activities	<p>In the heart of summer, Carta di Leuca becomes an international meeting that - through volunteer experiences and walks along the ancient streets - is proposed as a great opportunity to urge everyone's greater commitment towards Peace. Days of encounter, reflection, and journey, which are articulated through interventions, testimonies, and common work. The final document becomes an appeal to political decision-makers and governments, to build a future of peace in the Mediterranean.</p> <p>The call is proclaimed after a silent night march - "Towards dawn of Peace" - which runs from the grave of Don Tonino Bello to Leuca Sanctuary of Saint Mary "De Finibus Terrae".</p>
Summary of Results	<p>Since the first edition, hundreds of young people from the different sides of the Mediterranean have come to Leuca to participate at the Meeting, drafting and proclaiming the "Charter", but also attending in the various moments of celebration, conviviality, and culture. Days of encounter, reflection, and journey, which are articulated through interventions, testimonies, and common work. The final document - a synthesis of the different cultures, the different sensitivities, and also the different religious faiths to which young people belong - becomes an appeal to political decision-makers and governments, to build a future of peace in the Mediterranean.</p>
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographical obstacles and poor infrastructures: the public transport services are inadequate and therefore there are many organizational and economic difficulties. - Complexity in the management of the event: it is a large event that involves about 30 Mediterranean countries and often with few economic resources. <p>Covid-19- In the last year, it has been very difficult to carry out the planned</p>

	activities. Therefore, online sharing moments have been created, but they are not as effective as the event in presence.
Success criteria	Since the first edition, in 2016, young people from the different shores of the Mediterranean have come to Leuca and participate in the international meeting. During this event, people are drafting and proclaiming the Peace “Charter”. At the last in presence event, 800 kindergarten kids launched a message of Peace on the Mediterranean by realizing a flashmob called “PeaceMob”.
How TOGETHER program could use this information	<p>Carta di Leuca unifies different cultures by bringing together a diversity of Mediterranean people. As expert no.9 said in the interview, the North, which is always more industrialized, tends undeniably toward a growing alienation. So, <i>“Let’s say that in general the south, due to a certain scarcity of sources and technologies remains the last reservoir of humanity. I think that we should start from this horizon to create a dialogue with the human being. Not by chance, TOGETHER project is coordinated by 5 countries located on the “<u>seabetween the lands</u>” of South”</i>.</p> <p>Carta di Leuca is an example of intercultural dialogue and highlights the diversity of Europe.</p>

Appendix 3: Cultural Heritage – Language and literature

Country	Italy
Name of given Cultural Heritage site/practice/tradition	Language and literature
Years (if applicable)	During the educational period
Field, Subject, genre, form	Language and literature
URL for more information	N/A
General description/ Overview	<p>Multiculturalism is one of the principal characteristics of nowadays classrooms. Students, from different parts of the world and with different backgrounds, found themselves sharing cultural concepts based on the school programme realized by the Education Ministry of the country where they live in. Through the interviews, it was noticed that the Italian educational programme has Eurocentric planning. This doesn't mean that we're in front of a wrong educational approach but, from a content point of view, this could limit the catch-all experience that schools should give to their students. Examining in-depth the concept, the focus could be on one of the subjects that stimulate poetic thoughts and helps to strengthen the relationship between words and human beings. Literature is one of the most important cultural heritage of a country. Poets and novelists of the past are the definers of the linguistic present. Italians feel the influence of their poetry because it represents who they are. The way of being, of talking, is partly closely related to the way of how they are conceptualizing things. Italians, for example, are deeply attached to words made by verbose sentimentalism where things are described up to their soul, sentences, often, are melodious harmonies embellished with sound associations, rhymes, and charming metaphors. The research of beauty and the excessive attention to detail are at the base of the Italian language.</p> <p>Languages are a relevant component of a community's heritage; they're strictly connected to our identity.</p>
Why this heritage/tradition could be perceived as a facilitator of intercultural dialogue among countries?	<p>Language allows communication and communication means sharing, that's why studying language and its literature, not only as a subject that is part of the school program but also as a way to learn and share a heritage, could be a facilitator of intercultural dialogue among students that come from different countries. Discovering lesson after lesson what are the main characteristics of the Italian language, learning who are its most important representatives, the Italian student is introduced to a part of his / her heritage while the foreign student is concretely coming into contact with a heritage that is different from his / her. This could be the first relevant step toward the actualization of intercultural dialogue. At this point, what could be decisive, would be introducing to the classroom, the language and the literature that belongs to the foreign students. For example: if a classroom has students coming from Egypt, the teacher should prepare (letting herself be helped by the Egyptian students too) lessons focused on the fundamental characteristics of the Egyptian language, on the principal differences between the Italian and the Egyptian language, on the exponents and the poetry and the prose of the Egyptian</p>

	<p>language. The foreign students could be the “language expert” during the lesson, helping the teacher in the explanation and the pronunciation of words or sentences. This linguistic exchange between the students could help to create a real intercultural dialogue strengthened by linguistic sharing. In this way, it is created a dimension where all the cultures are involved and have the opportunity to express their peculiarities. What is remarkable, is that this type of intercultural dialogue is realized in a place where education and instruction are the main goals so the results of the ICD will be even more incisive and effective.</p>
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