

**Summer University for Democracy  
Ethics and Politics**

**Presentation of the Council of Europe Report  
Living Together: Combining Diversity and Freedom in XXI Century Europe**

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Dear Madam Chair,  
Dear Secretary General Jagland,  
Dear Director General Laurens,  
Ladies and Gentleman,  
Dear Friends,

I am very happy that I can be here with you. I would like to especially thank Director Jean-Louis Laurens for inviting me to this important event today and Secretary General Jagland for having set in motion the process that has led to the preparation of the Report on Living Together, the main ideas of which I want to share with you here today.

Nine personalities were invited by Secretary General Jagland in the Summer of last year to form an independent advisory group, whose task was to look at the challenges to the European model of life that arise from „*resurgence of intolerance, xenophobia, exclusion and discrimination*” on our continent, to look at the danger of mishandling diversity like we, Europeans did many times in the past, sometimes with tragic consequences. We were asked to assess, under the able leadership of Joschka Fischer, the seriousness of those risks, identify their sources and, finally, make proposals for „living together” in open society. I believe it is a first attempt to look at the challenge of living together in a comprehensive and strategic way, above institutional lines.

Over a period of 8 months we worked very intensively as a Group – the report is a fruit of our labour and of all those with whom we met, to whom we talked - all those that know that living together is the only way to go and that already work on it.

You might say that our world is full of well -intentioned reports. Nevertheless I would like to invite you to look through it and discover yourselves whether it could be useful for your work and your life.

Our aim was to deliver a comprehensive piece of work, on three levels:

*Firstly*, providing a fact-based intellectual framework for understanding the issues in their political, sociological and economic context.

*Secondly*, including existing examples of working for non-discrimination, inclusion and fruitful diversity by various groups or individuals whose activity in this field our

Group has found as „*commendable and worthy of emulation*”. There is a wealth of good practise to share.

*Thirdly*, putting forward a package of guiding principles, of recommendations and proposals, directed to various „strategically situated’ structures that can have a direct or indirect influence on political decisions: we looked at the role of governments, lokal and regional authorities, European and international institutions, employers, trade unions, or those segments of civil society that have a responsibility for communicating and delivering visions and ideas: mass media, NGOs, churches, even celebrities and recognized „role models”.

In practical terms, we believe that giving the Report the widest possible circulation may serve as an invitation to further debate but also to action, and also through the good practise the Report could be seen a sort of useful handbook.

When I was thinking on how to encourage you to read the Report, what came to my mind was this short phrase used by the CNN in its public relations campaign : „*Go Beyond Borders*”.

Let me explain briefly what I mean here.

In our Report we look at what is behind the aggressiveness, discursive vitriol and discriminatory practices in reaction to growing cultural diversity in Europe. We insist that this diversity is a reality which is here to stay. Immigrants are here, they are going to stay and actually even more of them are going to come to our shores, and live among us in our towns and neighbourhoods around the corner. Thus first we should see the problem from their perspective: many people from other countries and other continents want a better life for themselves and their children. They get on the plane, on the train or on the boat in extreme cases, arrive here and live among us. We should be very careful – in our policies on the states’ and European level, as well as on the level of common attitudes, that „among” is not a substitute for ‘together’. To avoid that error we should be guided by the principle of inclusion. We have to be open to the plight of the immigrants like those on Lampedusa, who need immediate care and attention. In this respect, when it comes to immediate and necessary response to a crisis, it must be based on solidarity and burden-sharing. But it goes without saying that the policy of humane managing of inflow of people is not a substitute for well-crafted long-term policies that would serve to integrate immigrants into the mainstream of society. It is our obligation to encourage the immigrants’ aspirations to become citizens of Europe. In this respect the Report calls for fashioning „*a comprehensive, coherent and transparent*” policy for the whole continent. We call on the states to „*extent the full rights and obligations of citizenship, including the right to vote, to as many of their resident population as possible, and as an interim step, to give to all foreign residents the right to vote in local elections*”.

In this context ‘going beyond borders” means for us the necessity of getting out of our comfort zone and accepting the Other as one of us. I am aware that there is a whole stack of scholarly texts on the issue of the Other as a partner, or a threat, or a mirror of ourselves. For many of you it is probably a subject of philosophical investigations. But we have to translate this high-brow, specialized discourse into a language of everyday attitude and behaviour by people in the streets of our cities toward people that may differ from them in terms of culture they bring from their home countries.

The question is not "if" or "whether" but simply "how" we can live really together, on the same street, in the same community, how can we share our humanity despite the obvious differences, how can we reconcile respect for the neighbour that we know very little about with the need for security that is also, rightly, our expectation? These

are not abstract questions, they are questions that are being solved, in everyday experience, by people in various places all around Europe that try to cope as best as they can with something that they are not yet accustomed to – growing immigration inflows. Our intension is to help them by providing principles, tools, and examples of what others have already done.

On the level of principles the Report states very strongly that " *group identities are a voluntary matter for the individual concerned, and that no one should be forced to choose or accept one primary identity to the exclusion of others.*" We are of the view that in order to embrace diversity fully, European societies need to accept the idea of a „*hyphenated European*“. There should not be anything strange anymore that there are Turkish Germans, or North African Frenchwomen, or Asian Poles, for example. But such an attitude is not something that would come to most of us naturally – we would need a learning process to make this obvious. Nevertheless the principle has been stated – and I see it as one of the challenges that the Report puts before us.

When it comes to tools, the examples of pro-integration activities given in the Report provide some "technologies of diversity", if I may call it so – that show how to overcome the prejudices on both sides - immigrants and local populations - and how to establish a framework for understanding and cooperation for the betterment of a given community and „living together“ in peace.

For a peaceful living together, one more dimension of „going beyond borders“ might be mentioned here. For the immigrants already established in their new countries, it means that they cannot close themselves off out of the larger host communities. The danger of isolation and ‘communitarianist’ approach is often lurking inside the immigrant communities. It happens especially when immigrants feel hostility from the surrounding environment. The Report is quite clear about the fact that those impulses toward isolation are false choices, both for immigrants and for the European society.

We stress that European Convention of Human Right is a base document for regulating diversity, especially when it concerns the notions of individual freedom and equality before law. These values remain the cornerstones of what Europe is. They cannot be changed, dismissed or forgotten, because they are the key to our European identity.

From this unshakable conviction follows the understanding that every human being, whether native or of a migrant background, whatever her or his faith, culture and ethnicity, is entitled to equal treatment by the law, the authorities and her or his fellow citizens. But we also make it clear that the law must be **???** by anyone, there can be no exception from this obligation on account of somebody's cultural particularity. But this does not mean that the law could be used to enforce cultural uniformity on the population - the law should ensure equal treatment of all citizens and equal access for all to services of general interest. The other side of the coin is that immigrants like „*all other citizens in a democracy... should have a say in making the law*“. Thus the report identifies as threats to European values not only xenophobic parties, general intolerance and discrimination but also the rise of the „parallel societies“ whose members scarcely interact with the wider society around them.

If I were asked to name the 3 most important key words in the Report that somehow characterize its general ambience, I would say: freedom, participation and expression.

*Freedom*, in this context, is dependent on the network of institutional arrangements that facilitate the free movement of people. Certainly Schengen is such an arrangement and we must protect it.

*Participation* is realized in the thick matrix of political life that is open to change, able to accommodate the growing diversity of society and to absorb its demands into the veins of the system.

*Expression* is something that is recognized as a right of every person and valued as an addition to a rich fabric of our society, and not something that has to be dispensed of like an old cloth when an immigrant reaches European shores.

Our Report offers concrete tools to promote freedom, to increase participation and to encourage expression. When we were working on it, our overriding concern was to make the project of „living together” in pluralistic Europe in peace, mutual respect and recognition of the others, something vital to all of us. We do not want it to become a matter only for activists, experts in diversity and immigrants themselves. That is why we want to involve as many stake-holders as possible. Local authorities, NGOs, media, churches and individual citizens – they all should be engaged in a common effort to counter the stereotypes and misleading information about current and future immigrants. We feel strongly that in a new Europe, under the condition of observing the law, everybody should be welcomed and treasured as valuable person. In this spirit, we support the intercultural dialogue as a sort of precondition for peaceful living together in the years to come.

It does not mean that this dialogue is easy – just the opposite. Let me make here a more general comment. The main theme of your meeting is „Ethics and politics”. More and more, as I perceive it, the politics is enmeshed with ethical inquiry. And the ethics itself is no longer primarily a matter of abstract reasoning. The so-called applied ethics, directed to the concrete of correct aspects of social and political life is gaining importance. I think we will soon need more reflection on the issues like that of „ethics of immigration” to help us, the citizens, as well as us, the decision makers, cope with the manifold aspect of the immigration phenomenon. We are living in a complex and complicated cultural context and we will need to find the mechanisms of societal cooperation that would “minimise compulsion, maximise persuasion”, as the Report states. It means that the battle for diversity and freedom needs to be fought less by coercive legislation and more by fully implementing existing standards and by strengthening the voluntary work of individuals and civil society groups.

For we are all on our unending quest of „going beyond borders’ – each in our own, inimitable way. This is a natural process that cannot be stopped. Closing borders, both in a physical and mental way, would be totally counterproductive to each and every citizen and to the overall well-being of our society.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.