

Roma 2010

UNICA Conference: Europe through student's eyes



FORUM 4

**UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN FUTURE OF
EUROPE:**

**THE CHALLENGE OF
MULTICULTURALISM**

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MULTICULTURALISM

It is that conception according to which, in a society several cultures and communities coexist in a reciprocal respect, and where there is no assimilation, direct or indirect, of the minor culture to the dominant one.



MAIN CONCEPTS

It is important to have clear in mind some important concepts, when starting to talk about multiculturalism, such as:

- **CULTURAL IDENTITY:** *cultural background which every population has built during the centuries . It's formed by cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics which made every population representative of a original own distinctive peculiarities.*
- **GLOBALIZATION:** *process by which regional societies, economies and cultures have become integrated through a global network of communication, transportation and trade. This process brought the European Union to tackle the transformation outcoming by the opening of the borders among the states and of the work market; facing for the real first time a new “multicultural world”.*



- **PLURALISM:** *it is the term used when smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities and their values and practices are accepted by the wider culture.*
- **INTOLERANCE:** *negative behavior against people of a different culture or religion caused by the great movements of immigrants sometimes not well accepted by the hosting countries.*



OUR MULTICULTURAL EUROPE



It is a fact nowadays that our is a multicultural Europe: in fact, after that each country has opened its borders to European citizens, there are no more limitations travelling and working across Europe. Those are the results of GLOBALIZATION.

•AN EASIER WAY TO MOVE ALL AROUND EUROPE.

-1993: the Single Market is completed, with the “four freedoms” (Goods, services, people and capitals free to move)

-1993: the “Maastricht” treaty

-1999: treaty of Amsterdam.

-The “Schengen” agreements.

-1987: Erasmus project



- **IMMIGRATION:** *without Immigration movements there couldn't be cultural exchanges. It is also relevant the growth of these movements in the last few years.*





IMMIGRATION IN ITALY

MAIN FOREIGN COMMUNITIES LIVING IN ITALY: we would like to take as an example the situation in Italy. It shows how substantial are foreign communities now living in Italy, and how deeply the situation changed in the past 5 years.

	2005	2010	%
ROMANIA	248.849	953.000	283
ALBANIA	316.659	472.000	49
MOROCCO	294.945	433.000	46,8
CHINA	111.712	181.000	62
UCRAINA	93.441	172.000	84,1
POLONIA	50.794	107.000	110,6
MACEDONIA	68.460	98.000	67,6



HOW DOES GOVERNMENTS APPROACH MULTICULTURALISM?

1) PROBLEMS:

- **New immigration law:** *Despite the evidence, rules regulating the entrance and the staying of immigrant workers are becoming more and more restrictive; the difficulties in having the residence permit lead to backdoor activities. Another hard point is that it is only the police force entitled to issue the permit, which easily conveys the idea that, that of immigration, is “in primis” a safeness problem.*

The achievement of the same rights for local and foreigners in living and working is the first step towards a real integration.



- **The problem of justice:** *“All the people are equal before the law”. So there should be no doubt about how to act (legally speaking) when people from different system of law are involved.*

- **Religion teachings at school:** *another big question; is it right, in a class made by students from different cultures_ (so not only of different Religion, but also of different way of look to religion) to held Religion classes? And what religion has to be thought?*

(Just as an example, the recent debate across Italy about the problem of keeping or not a Crocifix inside each classroom).



- **2) CHALLENGES:**

- **EU: a growing family:** *from the first 6 countries members that founded the EU in the 90's, they become now 27.*
- *New countries have applied to become members (Croatia, Turkey, Iceland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).*
- **Cultural activities promoting "Integration":** *from sports to arts, governments organize activities aimed at spreading a feeling of integration and stimulating an intercultural debate among hosting and hosted subjects. (Ex: "Culture" program; the "integration weekend" organized every year from the Italian Association UISP; etc.)*
- **A renewed effort in improving public sensitivity:** *in this direction, not only rethoric. For example the attempt to motivate people to learn a foreign language to communicate with neighbours.*



HOW DOES PEOPLE LIVE MULTICULTURALISM?

Before that through Government action, it is at an individual level that the integration with the “Other” has to be reached.

- **THE FEAR OF THE OTHER ONE OR THE ATTRACTION TOWARDS WHAT IS DIFFERENT?** A person from a different culture has a different point of view of the world: so curiosity and fear are two legitimate reaction to that different point of view. But you cannot have any idea if you neither know that point of view. This is integration from the individual position: the sensitivity to be aware of the difference and to concede an equal level to the “others’ way”. Only then you can appreciate it, or depart from it.
- **THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF THE OTHER:** from the classmate at school, to the possibility to find magazines in original, foreign, languages. Discriminate it or learn from what is different?



SOME THEORIES

Some sociologists have developed their ideas about the subject:

- **Giovanni Sartori:** *says that pluralism is based on the deal among all the cultures and not on the promotion of the single identities as parts of this bigger group.*
- **Charles Taylor:** *says instead that all the cultures have a value just for the fact that they represent an own cultural identity.*

WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT MULTICULTURALISM?



TWO SOLUTIONS

THE PLURALIST MODEL (or Subtraction model): it tends to preserve (if not to reinforce) the belonging of immigrants to their national community, even stressing the tendency to discrimination.

+Stress on cultural identity VS –The risk of the polarization in superior/inferior culture.

THE ASSIMILATIONIST MODEL (or Addition model): it is inclined to integrate foreigners, granting a certain degree of equiparation with local citizens, also if it implies the renunciation of their ethnic/cultural roots.

+ Equality VS - The lost of characteristic traits of each culture



MULTICULTURALISM THROUGH STUDENTS EYES



- THE OPPORTUNITY TO GROW NEXT TO PEOPLE FROM OTHER CULTURES: *staying in your own country but studying and matching with peer from other countries and cultures. Nowadays, each of us has at least two or three international classmates (since primary school to University).*
- As a consequence this also give the chance of a every day confront: Ex. Practicing foreign languages, observing in practice foreigner customs and so on.*
- This means: to be better accustomed to live and work with foreigners*



- **THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY AND WORK ABROAD:** *thanks to the growing effort held by University, institutions of the European Union and other educational associations; the aim is to allow students to rise international experiences, discovering foreign cultures, integrating with local people and adapting to new cultural condition.*
- *In this way students can have several and different parameters: they can see (referring to every field): “how it works?” in other countries.*
- *Of course this will include students in international network: the advantages to have friends all over Europe (and the world as well).*



CONCLUSION

MANY QUESTIONS LEFT WITHOUT ANSWER

- IS MULTICULTURALISM SOMETHING REALLY GOOD OR NOT?
- DOES IT UNDERMINE THE CONCEPT OF MULTIPLE APPARTENENCE, TYPICAL OF A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY?
- WHICH MODEL HAS TO BE FOLLOWED: UNITY AND ASSIMILATION OR DIVERSITY AND COEXISTENCE?

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?





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