

Western Balkans Security Conference 2008

Intercultural Dialogue – Conclusions

Today, Europe is characterized by its cultural diversity, as well as by the process of European cooperation and integration. Therefore, for the first time in history the countries and peoples of Europe have the chance to live together in peace, security and prosperity in a self-determined and sustainable manner. A functioning intercultural dialogue is an essential pre-condition in this context.

Cultural diversity is a source of enrichment and opportunities, but also a challenge to ensure a unifying fabric of generally accepted values and rules for living together. Democracy and the rule of law, individual human rights, equality of men and women, and the separation of religion and state are essential foundations of our free, modern societies and a fruitful intercultural dialogue.

Currently, European countries are concerned by immigration, intercultural dialogue and integration to different degrees. Hence, experience differs from country to country, as do the related know-how and the approaches to political solutions.

Despite these differences, intercultural dialogue is becoming a growing challenge for Europe as a whole. This is due, for instance, to the increasing international interdependence and the persistent migration pressure on Europe, which will also concern the countries of Central and South East Europe, given their dynamic economic performance.

Thus, coordinated measures in the fields of intercultural dialogue and integration and the step-by-step development of a common European framework for these policy areas are continuously gaining importance for Europe as a whole.

The Central and South East European countries of the Salzburg Forum and their Western Balkan partners have the potential to play a particularly formative role in this context. All of them have gained both positive and negative experience with co-existence of different cultures and can therefore draw relevant conclusions.

Moreover, they are now living together in peace on a relatively small space and are all working towards a common future within the framework of the European Union.

Ministers of Interior have a special role to play in this context: being responsible for internal security, they are bound to take a particular interest in people living together harmoniously in their countries and beyond. Thus, a functioning intercultural dialogue is an important instrument of preventive security policy.

The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum and their partners from the Western Balkans (The Group of the Friends of the Salzburg Forum) are therefore launching an Intercultural Dialogue and Internal Security project, also intended as a contribution to the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008. Their objectives are as follows:

- Promotion of intercultural dialogue in their own countries, as well as in Central and South East Europe as a whole;
- Exchange of national experience and development of best-practice models;
- Input of common contributions to the debate in Europe as a whole.

To this end, the members of the Salzburg Forum and their partners from the Western Balkans will develop an Intercultural Dialogue and Internal Security concept, including a corresponding set of measures, by the summer of 2009. Together, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Austria will assume the coordinating role in further activities.

**Conclusions of the Salzburg Forum Member States
on the Occasion of the Western Balkan Security Conference
in Vienna from 16 to 18 July 2008**

The Ministers of the Salzburg Forum, gathered within the framework of their traditional ministerial summer meeting and on the occasion of the Western Balkan Security Conference in Vienna from 16 to 18 July 2008, discussed central issues of current EU activities in the home affairs area.

The subjects discussed at this high-level meeting included the future EU home affairs policy, as well as the French initiative for the European Pact on Migration and Asylum.

After an in-depth discussion, the Salzburg Forum Member States decided

- To further strengthen the Central European Operational Network (CEON) in order to achieve maximum security for the Salzburg Forum Member States and their citizens;
- To support an EU-wide asylum and migration policy concept developed through different political initiatives, e.g. the French proposal for the European Pact on Migration and Asylum;
- To support Poland and Ukraine in the organisation of the European Football Championship in 2012 and to hold a workshop on Austria's experience with the EURO 2008 Championship within the framework of the Salzburg Forum Working group on Major Events;
- To support the Western Balkan States even more intensively in their efforts to reach EU standards in the area of home affairs (as outlined in the Joint Declaration of the Western Balkan Security Conference).

The members of the Salzburg Forum, welcoming the projects of the French EU Presidency in the home affairs area, as well as the initiatives of the Hungarian Presidency of the Salzburg Forum, intend to continue their joint efforts to arrive at effective solutions for the security of European citizens.