



**Diversity en Europe**

— *In varietate Concordia (CE Bruxelles, 2000)*



— **issue 6**

**a newsletter edited by the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv)- [www.iriv.net](http://www.iriv.net)**

*« These strangers in a foreign World  
Protection asked of me-  
Befriend them, lest yourself in Heaven  
Be found a refugee »*

*« Ces Etrangères, en Monde inconnu  
Asile m'ont demandé  
Accueille-les, car Toi-même au Ciel  
Pourrait être une Réfugiée »*

**Emily Dickinson** (Quatrains II-2, 1864-65, Amherst, Massachusetts, Etats-Unis)  
**traduction en français de Claire Malroux** (NRF, Poésie/Gallimard, Paris, 2000)

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## Cultural diversity

The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (Iriv) has published since September 2016 a newsletter dedicated to migration- *Regards Croisés sur la Migration*.

The first issues (September 2016 - March 2018) were dedicated to a comparison between Paris and Berlin based on testimonies gathered among migrants interviewed in the two European capital cities. Since 2018, our newsletter has been entitled “Diversity in Europe”. Its main aim is now to tackle the issue of diversity- the motto chosen by the European Union (EU) since 2000 and in 2004 after the last biggest enlargement of the European Union (from 15 to 25 EU members).

The first issue (November 2018) was focussed on diversity at school with Rotterdam (in the Netherlands) whose inhabitants coming from abroad represent more than 70 % of the total population which is both a challenge and an opportunity to experience new approaches. Paris also has in its schools very diverse students in its classrooms.

The second issue (March 2019) was dedicated to religious & cultural diversity, with a focus on the Jewish community. If the Judaeo-Christian roots of the European Union are obvious, the European Union is a secular project with a genuine cultural identity open to all religions- “*United in diversity*”. This issue suggested a comparison between Paris and Thessaloniki, two cities sharing an history of troubled times during World War II.

The third issue (November 2019) tackled the issue of interreligious dialogue with articles on diversity in Switzerland and France. This is especially important in secular countries where all religions have to be respected together with the right to be free from any religious belonging or belief. A “republican” approach has allowed a civil peace for the past century in most of our European societies (but during World War II).

The fourth issue (March 2020) was focused on Education and Interfaith dialogue among multicultural countries. A first article analysed diversity inclusion in the USA, insisting on the necessity to enhance a “glocal diversity mindset”. A second article reminded of the example of Sarajevo, a city of peaceful existence between Jews, Muslims, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats in a European country, Bosnia, with a historical “multifaceted, universal identity” that was brutally treated during the bloody Balkan war (1992-1995)

The 5<sup>th</sup> issue tackled the issue of diversity in the Mediterranean region with two articles dealing with diverse strategies. The first article was dedicated to diversity in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, as a crossroad of Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Asia – a contradictory combination of economic and political interests in favour of an expense of solidarity and at the same time a total inefficiency of the European Union which raises mixed feelings. The second article was focused on the diverse strategies conducted by main actors in the Middle East with the necessity for the European Union to support its first and foremost allies in the region.

This sixth issue deals with artistic diversity and intercultural education. The first article presents the diversity in Mexico with the great wealth of craftsmanship which is very unique according to the communities. The second article addresses the necessary intercultural dialogue and education which is essential in modern societies with the example of music as a universal language.

Bénédicte Halba, president of iriv  
Vanessa Vivero, architecte (Mexico)

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## Diversité culturelle et artistique du Mexique

Cultural diversity in Mexico includes historical plurality, ethnic and linguistic diversity, as well as traditions peculiar to each, and this diversity is visible in artistic and craft expressions.

The Mexican population is a mixed population born to the Spaniards and the Natives from the conquest of Mexico in 1521, but many indigenous cultures have kept their identity to the present day.

There are currently 70 indigenous peoples in Mexico (1), in a country of over 128 million inhabitants, which represents 10.1% of the Mexican population (2) and 68 indigenous languages in addition to Spanish (3).

The state of Chiapas is the one with the greatest cultural diversity with 14 indigenous peoples, followed by the state of Oaxaca with 13 indigenous peoples. (4)

Crafts are the artistic expression more representative of each people. The traditional embroidered clothing is remarkable. The patterns represent elements of their beliefs, traditions, and history.

Ceramics are also particular to each people; it is often an economic means of subsistence for women.

These crafts are distinguished using natural materials and manual procedures.

For example, the art of the Huichol people, in the states of Jalisco y Nayarit, strongly represents their traditions and beliefs, mainly in paintings elaborated with woollen thread on wooden frames, or figures elaborated with wood and covered with coloured beads. An example of Huichol art can be found at the Palais Royal metro in Paris. It has a pearl base and measures 2.40 m by 3.00 m. This framework was offered to France by the Mexican government in 1997.

Thus, each people have their own handicrafts which are made and sold in the municipalities where they live, which makes them truly special. The often-colourful designs always represent cultural elements, and its meaning can only be understood by members of their community. Nevertheless, they are often extremely attractive by the diversity of colours and figures they use and attract the attention of the general public.

The art of certain peoples is particularly appreciated, such as the fabrics of the Tsotsil people in the state of Chiapas and where several variants of the Mayan language are spoken. (5) The fabrics are made from the wool of sheep, with a loom, called tzotzopastli (6) made of wood that attaches to the belt. The threads are prepared by boiling them beforehand in the atole (7), and they are then coloured with natural shades from plants or clay (8).

Each municipality of Tsotsil culture has its traditions, and its way of decorating and weaving its traditional clothes. Ocosingo, Oxchuc, Chanal, Amatenango, Chamula, Huixtan are examples, and each city corresponds to its particular pattern and colours (9).

They use the fabrics to make clothes, sheets, tablecloths, pillow covers, bags, or even dolls. Thus, everything is done completely by hand; this unique craft is appreciated by society in general, and by interior designers who see all the artistic potential to decorate restaurants and rooms of "boutique hotels" (10) with fabrics that are even framed for give a traditional atmosphere.

So, each people have their own handicraft which is made and sold in the municipalities where they live, which makes it special. The often-colourful designs still represent elements of their culture, and its meaning can only be understood by the own members of each community. They are often extremely attractive by the diversity of their colours and their figures which they use to attract the attention of the general public

**Vanessa Vivero, architecte, 03 /2021**

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## From cultural diversity to intercultural education and vice versa

In its „White paper on Intercultural Dialogue“ entitled “Living together As equals in Dignity“(1), the Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs insisted in its introduction : „Managing Europe’s increasing cultural diversity“ is „rooted in the history of our continent and enhanced by globalisation“. It also underlined that „our common future depends on our ability to safeguard and develop human rights, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law and to promote mutual understanding “. In this perspective “the intercultural approach offers a forward-looking model for managing cultural diversity”. The main innovation of the document was the concept put forward “a conception based on individual human dignity (embracing our common humanity and common destiny)” as “European identity to be realised” should be based on “shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as respect for the equal dignity of every individual.” In this spirit “Intercultural dialogue has an important role to play” as it “allows to prevent ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural divides”. It should enable us “to move forward together, to deal with our different identities constructively and democratically on the basis of shared universal values”. The paper is not naïve as its authors are perfectly aware that some preconditions are to be met such as ‘the democratic governance of cultural diversity’ to be adapted; “democratic citizenship and participation” to be strengthened; “intercultural competences” to be taught and learned; “spaces for intercultural dialogue” to be created and widened ; and intercultural dialogue “to be taken to the international level”.

In this spirit the Pestalozzi series, published by the Council of Europe afterwards, perfectly tackle the issue (2). The second volume entitled “Intercultural competence for all” looked at “the various implications of promoting the development of intercultural competence as a main concern of mainstream education” since “intercultural competence addresses the root of a range of issues our societies face: stereotyping, discrimination, all forms of racism, and so on, all of which are exacerbated in times of economic difficulty.” As a result, the “ability to understand one another across and beyond all types of cultural barriers is a fundamental prerequisite for making our diverse democratic societies work”. They insisted on the “urgent need for a concerted effort to develop the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge that contribute to intercultural competence in the everyday practice of teaching and learning, so that generations may be equipped to participate in an increasingly global and complex environment”. In a third book focused on “Developing intercultural competence through education” the editors of the Series have taken “one step further on the way to fully integrating intercultural competences as key competences”. The idea is “to offer an educational rationale and conceptual framework” but also ‘to describe the constitutive elements of intercultural competence to be developed in and through education in formal, nonformal and informal contexts”.

An illustration of such approach may also be given on the ground by artistic groups, for instance in music as this is a universal language. We would like to focus on three unique examples. The first one is “the choir founded by current conductor and artistic director Laurence Equilbey, dedicated to the performance of the major a cappella works as well as to contemporary repertoire. Recently rated by Gramophone Magazine as one of the top ten choirs in the world, today accentus is an ensemble of 32 professional singers performing at the highest artistic level” (3). Its diversity and intercultural approach are linked to the original music pieces that were not any more played, in complement to the profiles of the musicians and singers. Another example is the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO), born in 1936 as the Palestine Orchestra, created by “the great Polish-born Jewish violinist and musician, Bronislaw Huberman, who foresaw the Holocaust, and persuaded 75 Jewish musicians from major European orchestras to immigrate to Palestine”(4). Since the beginning Huberman invited the greatest conductors of the time, such as Arturo Toscanini, in 1936, “who abandoned his renowned NBC Orchestra for several weeks “to render paternal care to the newly born...” as he had previously escaped the rise of Fascism in his homeland of Italy”. Later, after the state of Israel was born, the orchestra changed its name to the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra “and became an integral part of the life of the Jewish nation reborn in its ancient land”. The diversity of the IPO is linked to its history, the music played and the profiles of its members, such as the Indian conductor Zubin Mehta, who has conducted for fifty years the IPO (1969-2019). A last example is given by The New York Arabic Orchestra, the “New York City’s leading institute in classical and contemporary Arabic music, directed by world-renowned virtuoso and educator, Bassam Saba” (5). The Orchestra “brings together a culturally diverse group of musicians - as diverse as the city itself - around one common passion: Arabic Music”. Its diversity lies in the profile of its Lebanese conductor Bassam Saba , the types of music played combining classical and jazz but also the profiles of its musicians. Our three examples have designed workshops for youngsters living in sensitive areas to explain their original approach and to make their knowledge, skills and competences be available for all.

Musical education may be a meaningful example for Intercultural education as an orchestra or a choir is a perfect illustration of a multicultural and diverse society- each musician/singer plays his/her music while following a common sheet music in order to serve the general message and make the music sound harmonious and respectful of all cultures and identities.

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### Article written by Vanessa Vivero

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