



# Citizens' Dialogues and cultures: for a more social and supportive Europe !

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14, 15, 16 November 2013 at Marseille-Provence, European Capital of Culture

« For a more social and supportive Europe, it does concern me ! Europe is about us ! »



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 The approach "Making Europe more social and supportive: it does concern me! Europe is about us!" is co-financed by the INCLUSION project supported financially by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013). This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields. For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

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The event “**Citizens’ Dialogue and Cultures: making Europe more social and supportive** » was held in Marseilles between November 14th and November 16th 2013, as part of the Civil Society approach « Making Europe more social and supportive: it does concern me! Europe is about us! ». The Civil Society approach aims at **promoting active citizenship** and the participation of all, including those at risk of exclusion, in order to **fight against poverty** in Europe. The meeting in Marseilles, which gathered more than 160 participants of at least twenty different nationalities, constituted one of the first steps of the approach: it aimed at reflecting on several issues through the pooling of experience between countries and the contribution and testimony of those concerned (for instance, former victims of human trafficking, homeless persons, etc.). The objective is to frame the approach’s messages for a European advocacy campaign, especially to devise an **advocacy campaign tailored to the 2014 European elections**.

The first day was devoted to the “**Citizens’ Dialogue**” and to its preparation within workshops. Participants pondered on issues pertaining to the EU that they wished to raise before Vivian Reding, Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, and Christiane Taubira, the incumbent French Minister of Justice, whose mission was to answer to questions asked by participating citizens.

The second day enabled participants to work on the 9 issues which had previously been chosen during the workshops: Ageing population/ Intergeneration/ Dependency; Housing/ Mental health; Participation; Human trafficking; Discriminations/ Roma; Justice and detention; Migration; Youth employment; Financial regulation. That work was rich in exchanges, especially thanks to the **participation of persons in a position of vulnerability** who benefited from the assistance of attending organisations. It enabled participants to identify key issues they wished to raise during the 2014 European elections. The goal is to launch a **European advocacy campaign** to help raising awareness amongst candidates to the European Parliament elections.

Convinced that the access to culture and that respecting cultural differences is a mean to fight against poverty, participants visited the MuCEM (Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations) to epitomise their vision. The visit of the MuCEM also drew the link with the **commemoration of the migrants who died at sea**. That commemoration took place after the visit with a “circle of silence” and a memorial walk in the Bay of Marseille.

The third day provided participants with the opportunity to exchange on another dimension: **advocacy methodology**. Workshops were organized to exchange on this issue. The working groups realised that working together and uniting to spearhead common messages – notably at the European level – is key. This followed the presentation (the day before) by Caritas Europa on “Child poverty” – an advocacy tool full of optimism in that it stresses the success of Caritas’ advocacy with the EU (most of Caritas’ recommendations have been heeded in the European Commission’s recommendation on children’s wellbeing).

To mark the end of the meeting, **cultural animations** which had been produced by participants from a variety of backgrounds sought to convey a message: that culture is a mean of expressing oneself which should be taken into account when giving a voice to persons in positions of vulnerability.

Not only has this meeting enabled both experts and persons directly concerned by the issues discussed to reflect on certain questions and issues which will be raised during the European elections, but it has also beyond doubt helped **strengthen a civil society network** fighting for common causes. This sort of meeting makes it possible to engage in long-term exchanges, the pooling of practices and the definition of common advocacy strategies and actions.