

NEWS REPORT

Date: 5 January 2010
Expert: Emmanuelle Bribosia
Title: Assizes on Inter-culturality
Country: Belgium

Context

Issue at stake: National debate on the issue of inter-culturality in 2009-2010

Ground of discrimination: of All grounds

Source: Political development

Field: All fields

Content

Political development: On 18 March 2008, the Federal Government decided to initiate a national debate on multiculturalism and diversity named the “Assizes on Inter-culturality”. Its aim was to discuss with the main field actors on how to promote a society of diversity and integration, without discrimination, where all cultural specificities are respected, as well as where a set of common values can be shared. According to the Government, it is time for Belgium to reconsider the way for people to live together. The work of the Assizes started in September 2009 and should be pursued until September 2010. Its official partners are the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, the Institute for Equality between Women and Men, the non-profit organisation “Promotion of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity on the Labour Market”, the Federal Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, numerous NGO’s and field actors as well as more than 50 legal persons or public bodies selected on the basis of projects they submitted to the pilot Committee.

Actually, the Assizes on Inter-culturality are not a brand new idea. They are pursuing the work of the Commission on Intercultural Dialogue, which took place in 2004-2005 at the initiative of the Federal Government (see its Final Report available in French on the website of the Assizes on Inter-culturality :<http://www.interculturalite.be/Rapport-final-de-la-Commission-du-lang=fr>).

The Assizes on Inter-culturality have several main goals. First, they aim at bringing key actors together to foster proposals of action or law reform. Secondly, they seek at raising people’s awareness on inter-culturality, at favouring dialogue on sensitive issues and at helping people to know each other’s culture. One hundred projects were selected last September to fulfil this goal. Thirdly, they

endeavour to develop a greater communication at the national level in order to promote inter-culturality. To do so, several communication campaigns have been set up. Finally, the Assizes' purpose is to enhance the exchange of good practices between the field actors and public authorities.

The Assizes are covering 11 main themes: 1. Role of the media in promoting inter-culturality; 2. Recognition of cultural minorities; 3. Neutrality of public services regarding religious freedom and the wearing of religious symbols; 4. Educational policy regarding inter-culturality; 5. Fight against discrimination (mainly at work and during recruitment procedures); 6. Definition of reasonable accommodation linked to inter-culturality; 7. Integration policy (chiefly related to newly arrived immigrants); 8. Fight against racism; 9. Policies on diversity in the political world; 10. Multiple discrimination; 11. Role of public authorities and NGOs in the integration process and the promotion of inter-culturality.

Internet link source and additional information:

Assizes on Inter-culturality: *Assises de l'Interculturalité 2009 – 2010*:

<http://www.interculturalite.be/>

Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism: *Centre pour l'Égalité des Chances et de Lutte Contre le Racisme* : <http://www.diversite.be/>

Ministry for Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue : *Service Public Fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation Sociale*: <http://www.emploi.belgique.be/home.aspx>