

# European Dialogue's Strategy 2007–2010

Building human rights and social justice through community engagement



## European Dialogue's Strategy 2007 – 2010

" Our goals are goals for the world and not just Europe, but our work concentrates on Europe because a revitalised Europe could contribute energy, expertise and resources to resolve many of the pressing global problems of our time."

European Dialogue's Founding Document 1990:  
Mary Kaldor and Kate Soper

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## 1. Introduction to European Dialogue

*European Dialogue works at local, national and international levels within the wider Europe to promote equality and social integration for excluded communities and vulnerable minorities.*

*We work to engage and support excluded communities and vulnerable minorities in their struggle to combat discrimination and racism, in the interests of human rights, equality and diversity.*

European Dialogue is a British based, not for profit organisation which works with international partners to engage and support excluded communities and vulnerable minorities in their struggle to combat discrimination, racism and intolerance, and to promote human rights, social cohesion and safe communities.

European Dialogue pilots innovative models of good practice, working with local, national and international experience and participation, on the implementation of national social inclusion policies at the local level across Europe.

*Promoting Minority Integration at the Local Level addressing service delivery in all policy areas*

*Promoting Access to Legal Rights and Criminal Justice at all levels of the criminal justice system*

*Promoting Equal Access to Inclusive Education to ensure equal life chances for minorities*

*Strategies for Combating Discrimination and Implementation of Anti-Discrimination Law*

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The key principle throughout all our work is minority empowerment. Minority communities themselves must lead the drive for equality; our role is to offer skills, strategies and resources to enable them to succeed in achieving their aims.

Our projects, supported by publications and training materials, are well monitored and evaluated, provide base line and other research data, and offer integrated and sustainable strategies to address local needs. We work with Roma and other vulnerable/minority ethnic groups in countries in transition and in post-conflict situations, primarily at the local level.

We work through a series of practical projects involving exchange of experience and capacity building partnerships with local actors, and share this experience nationally and internationally to assist with new policy development and to encourage a successful multiplier effect.

European Dialogue is a small and trusted organisation, offering a flexible, accessible yet professional approach. We are not 'a business'. We have a small committed staff and a team of 'hands-on' consultants who see the need for enabling change 'on the ground' – and most importantly perhaps, we have a network of committed (and potential) partners representing minorities across Europe with whom we are honoured to work.

“European Dialogue was launched to create and sustain within the context of an expanding Europe ‘new forms of dialogue, new or revitalised representational institutions through which citizens can negotiate with governments and each other, put pressure on political institutions, exchange their experience, and indeed, resolve public, non-state, non-private spheres of activity and the creation of European public opinion. This is what we mean by civil society.”

European Dialogue's Founding Document 1990: Mary Kaldor and Kate Soper



## 2. Introduction to the Strategy

We would like to thank the Barrow Cadbury Trust for giving us this opportunity to develop a 3-year strategy which builds upon the lessons we have learnt, and offers ways in which this experience can be adapted to a changed international environment with new threats and opportunities. We have talked and listened to a wide range of stakeholders and fellow travellers over that last 2 years or so, and what follows in this document is a strategy which we believe will take European Dialogue forward into this new political environment enabling it to make a significant contribution to the promotion of human rights, democracy and security throughout the wider Europe.

### Our history

European Dialogue was launched in 1990 to promote civic participation in the creation of an integrated, democratic, socially just, environmentally responsible Europe; a Europe respectful of diversity, human rights and equality. The integration of Europe, we thought, was too important to leave to governments alone. ED was founded upon the pan-European Nuclear Disarmament movement that, throughout the 1980s, conducted a democratic dialogue with democratic opposition groups from both sides of a divided Europe, for example the Czech Charta 77 movement, on the interlinked issues of peace, democracy and human rights. This network also created the pan-European Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HCA), of which European Dialogue is the British base. Over the years, European Dialogue has addressed issues raised by EU integration and enlargement, and engaged in active pan-European networking, advocacy, campaigning and debate with civic groups and alliances, national governments and European and international institutions throughout the wider OSCE region.

### European integration

Since 1990, national, ethnic, religious and cultural identities have re-emerged in Europe alongside the positive desire for self-determination, and have led to conflict, instability, racism, discrimination, and lack of tolerance. In response, our

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original wide agenda has increasingly focused on working with minorities and other vulnerable communities, as we see their empowerment and integration as crucial to the creation of a socially cohesive Europe. Our main areas of work have been in the Balkan region, Russia and the Caucasus, and in particular in central and eastern Europe where, since 1993, we have played a significant role in empowering Roma communities to advocate for their rights.

Accession to the European Union for countries in central and eastern Europe has given a positive impetus for democratic change and implementation of human rights standards, and opened new opportunities for co-operation and social development within EU membership structures. For those waiting in the wings, such as Turkey, it could continue to provide a positive incentive to implement democratising reforms. A strong argument in favour of Turkish accession to the EU is the perceived (by some) threat of a militant, militarised, 'Muslim fundamentalism' which has taken the place of the communist threat as a 'driver' for conflict and division. These challenges of the global world are mirrored in domestic conflict around issues of representation, rights, race, culture and identity. There is a strong need for Europe to connect with 'Islam'.

In the Balkans, progress has been made in rebuilding post-war societies, but there are still many displaced persons (many of them Roma), a need to resolve inter-ethnic conflict and build trust and confidence, re-build economies, and stabilise the region.

To bring these issues of intolerance, exclusion and discrimination 'back home' – discrimination and social exclusion are major concerns for Western European, including British, Gypsy and Traveller communities, a situation that ED's forward strategy seeks to address. These issues are particularly acute for travelling communities.

### Europe's near neighbours

In the interests of global and wider European security, there is a need to offer support for human rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law for EU 'near neighbours' such as Moldova, Ukraine, and Central Asian states. Recent political developments in Russia indicate a strong need to maintain support for democratic structures and minority rights.

Globally, and within Europe, inequality and poverty remain sources of conflict, engendering displacement and migration, creating new challenges for social cohesion, and hence for sustainable security. The rights and remedies for migrants and refugees will play a strong role in defining the future shape of Europe. The perceived 'unravelling' of the European consensus and failure to find a common European identity that encompasses diversity are real threats to sustainable European integration.

In conclusion, the broad consensus underpinning this strategy is that European Dialogue should continue to work with partners in Europe and the wider OSCE

region, a region which, at its 'edges' engages key issues for European and global stability. We can explore extension of our minority empowerment models to former Soviet Republics, the former Yugoslavia (the Balkans) and Central Asian states. These target countries share a common recent history and political institutions which would benefit from European Dialogue's long history of working within the former Soviet Union. The focus on minority empowerment and integration remains relevant, if not more so in this age of 'terrorism' within this new environment.

However, this current consensus should not preclude revisiting this strategy at a later date to address ways in which European Dialogue's experience might be relevant in a wider international context.



### 3. European Dialogue's Strategic Goal

*The strategic goal of European Dialogue in the coming years is to establish ourselves as, and become recognised as, a leading NGO working across Europe to promote equality and integration for excluded communities and other vulnerable minorities, particularly by means of innovative projects at the local level and through transnational exchange of experience.*

Based on extensive project work, European Dialogue has developed key models for the integration of minorities, and to promote equality and social inclusion:

#### **1. Promoting Minority Integration at the Local Level**

Developed within the Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe RrAJE programme. We work through Roma and minority empowerment and the development of equal and strategic partnerships with local government to secure fair and unbiased access to services within a holistic multi-agency approach. We offer rights-based education which is locally relevant insofar as it empowers people to know and claim their rights as citizens. We exchange knowledge and experience trans-nationally on the strengths and weaknesses of anti-discrimination and other relevant legislation and its implementation.

#### **2. Promoting Access to Legal Rights and Criminal Justice**

Developed within the Russian and Turkish access to justice programmes, and the transnational 'Police and Roma: towards safety for multi-ethnic communities' programme. We work to address discrimination and promote access to fair and unbiased criminal justice for Roma and other minority communities. We actively promote community-based policing practices in the interests of safer communities. This involves a focus on building bridges and improving relations between minorities, police and other criminal justice agencies in the framework of promotion of international standards and models of good practice on community engagement.

### **3. Promoting Equal Access to Inclusive Education**

Based on the successful pilot in Bulgaria, the 'Promotion of Roma into Mainstream Education Resources' PRIMER project. We work intensively with communities to promote better access to and achievement in mainstream education for Roma and other excluded minority children, through culturally sensitive curricula, trainings for educators, teaching assistants, parental involvement, and appropriate education resources.

### **4. Strategies for Combating Discrimination and ensuring Implementation of Anti-Discrimination Law**

In the TRAILER project (Traveller and Roma Action for Implementation of Legal and Equality Rights) we offered trainings to NGOs, activists, community representatives, legal practitioners and service providers to deepen their understanding and knowledge of national legislation and international frameworks in tackling discrimination, and enabling them to take cases of discrimination through formal legal channels.



## 4. European Dialogue's Strategic Objectives

In the coming years, and in order to achieve its strategic goal, European Dialogue will be guided by the following strategic objectives, which outline the values and principles which inform our work.

- We will respond to societies in crisis or conflict. Acting in areas of transition, including post-conflict situations, offers fluidity and opportunities to pioneer new approaches to resolve conflict and promote security through promotion of human rights and equality of opportunity, citizenship and participatory democracy.
- We will continue to work with the most vulnerable in society, in particular ethnic minorities and Roma (being especially sensitive to the needs of women and children), to promote the effective realisation of their human rights and active participatory citizenship.
- We will promote human and minority rights but recognise the differences within communities including age, gender, educational, economic and geographical variations to which are projects are sensitive and where we emphasise working with the most vulnerable.
- We will respond to needs and pilot high quality projects with civil society actors and governmental institutions, primarily at local and regional level, to combat discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity, participatory democracy and social justice in practical and constructive ways. These projects are designed strategically; they are valuable in themselves but also valuable in influencing local and central government policy, programming and human rights.
- We will emphasise our areas of expertise in particular in forming genuine enduring partnerships based on common human rights values (not financial opportunities), inter-personal relationships, and transparency that the flexibility

of our small size brings.

- We will concentrate on our core strengths of access to education, community policing/access to justice, integrated community development, and the practical realisation of rights locally. We will work through transnational partnerships that give and receive knowledge and share decision-making through programming, analysis and policy formation based on local and international knowledge.
- We will use the knowledge of local partners and local experts, and offer flexible and appropriate consultancy and expertise from the UK to strengthen the capacity of partners and partnerships to develop good policy and practice in the implementation of human rights and international standards.
- We will promote community engagement in policy development and implementation as a key factor for minority empowerment and sustainability. The full and equal participation of the community ensures that the lessons learnt and models developed are owned locally and can be embraced with pride and enthusiasm by the host communities.
- We will offer capacity building and training in meeting EU, Council of Europe and other international standards in public service delivery for NGOs, public service providers, and criminal justice institutions, including the police. We will also strengthen our own structures and capacity to make ED a viable sustainable institution.
- We will disseminate and share the lessons learnt from these local models of best policy and practice in the equal delivery of rights and services in order to empower and integrate minorities both nationally and internationally.
- We will advocate policies which show proven ability to address inequality and exclusion, aiming to inform change in governmental and intergovernmental policy, where possible through alliances. European Dialogue works especially at grass roots level to develop and pilot innovative projects with partners in the region, and support community empowerment and engagement. We work at the local level as this is where denial of access to justice is most sharply experienced.

#### How will we deliver?

- Our work is based on an exchange of experience of good policy and practice with the UK and internationally, offering expertise, project support, study visits and placements.
- We offer a unique linkage between local grass roots needs and policy development at national and international levels.
- European Dialogue establishes partnerships which are fully participatory, share decision-making at every level, and are based on mutual respect and learning.

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- Underpinning all this work is the development of people, mainly from marginalised and vulnerable communities, empowering them to play a full and equal role in mainstream society, and to participate in the development and implementation of social policy which impacts upon their quality of life.
- Our projects are well-monitored and evaluated.
- We have extensive experience of, and contacts in, Europe and its near neighbours, and work well at local level through to international level.
- A major strength is a proven ability to work in committed, long-term, equal, transparent and genuine partnerships with marginalised groups, sharing decision-making at all stages. A valuable lesson learnt is that successful community engagement and renewal has to involve local people and be delivered through genuine partnerships in order to put in place the foundations for sustainability.
- We show a proven ability to analyse and think through policy options, in equal partnership with minority NGOs, and offer relevant expertise and training, advocacy, and connections with national and international policy making institutions.
- We have extensive experience of managing transnational programmes, and have developed innovative models for minority empowerment and development, and have organised international and national conferences and seminars, and published reports which document our projects and provide practical guidance.
- Finally, we are a gender-sensitive organisation, both organisationally and in project work.



## 5. Implementing European Dialogue's Strategic Objectives over the next three years

Over the next three years, European Dialogue will aim to achieve the following objectives, which will provide the solid foundation for achieving its overall strategic goal. European Dialogue will:

1. Pilot projects based upon its three key models of integrated Roma/minority community development, race equality in education, and access to justice, in a range of countries where there is an identifiable need, within the OSCE region, and with a new focus on Europe's 'near neighbours', the Caucasus region and Central Asian States through partnerships with strong HCA NGOs based in these regions. In particular –

- We will develop an extension of the PRIMER Roma education project to Serbia, Macedonia and Moldova, based upon research, strong partnerships and an identifiable need and sources of funding. We will seek out, including in partnership with the Roma Education Fund, other target regions where this programme would have a positive impact.

- We will develop at least one 'Access to Justice' programme based upon our programmes in the Russian Federation (EMAJ) and Turkey, and upon the trans-national ODIHR 'Police and Roma: towards safety for multi-ethnic communities' projects. These programmes will offer rights-based education and training, and focus on community empowerment and engagement, address all levels of the criminal justice system, including promotion of community policing and institutional reform of the police to conform with international standards. Initial countries to be targeted are Western European countries with significant Gypsy and Traveller communities, central Europe, Turkey and the Balkans. We will include working for the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers wherever appropriate. We will seek EU funding with contributions from other international funding sources.

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- We will build on our work in Russia (EMAJ) in partnership with Roma NGO partners and explore an intercultural dialogue to continue working towards tolerance and minority rights and integration.

- We will build upon our Turkey and Accession to the European Union project, which exchanged experience of models of good practice, with all levels of criminal justice system, in satisfying Copenhagen Criteria in relation to the rule of law and treatment of minorities. We will develop a project with HCA Turkey and Bilgi University to address Roma/minority rights and integration.

- We will develop stronger links and dialogue with HCA (and other) groups in the Caucasus and Central Asia and seek ways in which our key models and experience can support identified needs. We should also seek to strengthen links with international networks of Roma and other minority NGOs.

2. Develop a capacity building programme to address UK Gypsy and Traveller exclusion in the UK, linking these issues into European networks. Build upon our current project with the Home Office to provide guidance for police on policing Gypsy and Traveller communities.

3. Develop programmes of capacity building for NGO partners, offering particular expertise in EU processes and accession criteria, as well as a detailed understanding of the legal and social circumstances of Roma and other minorities in individual countries. This is particularly appropriate for the empowerment and social inclusion of Roma communities in the Balkans region.

4. Develop a programme to exchange experience of Muslim identity and issues around integration into mainstream society with the UK and other relevant Western European countries e.g. France, and to exchange this experience with countries with predominantly Muslim populations eg Turkey; and develop strategies for exchanging communities of practice within a European context; and to explore the contribution of Islam to the European identity.

5. Establish strategic partnerships and alliances with Roma and other relevant NGOs in current and candidate EU member states to develop capacity building programmes for empowerment and community development. This will necessitate building stronger alliances and partnerships to strengthen our access to significant funding and to add value to our work. European Dialogue should be especially active in all candidate and potential accession countries, with the task of introducing good practice and strengthening Roma and other ethnic/minority communities and their organisations at both strategic and operational levels.

6. Develop programmes to deliver training to relevant stakeholders such as public authorities, an area in which European Dialogue has specific expertise available, particularly on diversity training. The extension of models of good

practice in minority empowerment and development into regions experiencing transition and with potential for conflict could make a significant contribution to stability.

7. Develop strategic partnerships with groups who offer complementary skills to strengthen project outcomes, particularly with respect to working with the media and research skills.
8. Explore issues in the fields of gender and youth, looking at the role of these groups within their wider communities, and by developing existing connections with women's networks and youth organisations.
9. Establish on-going and improved relationships with the British Department for International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the European Commission, Council of Europe and other European Institutions, as well as strengthened partnerships with the OSCE, the Roma Education Fund and other international institutions.

Institutionally, European Dialogue will aim to achieve the following strategic objectives:

1. Improve its ability to disseminate and replicate the outcomes and methodology of its project work, extend the publication base and offer policy debates which emerge from our work.
2. Seek to recruit, develop and retain a core body of staff and secure a sustainable level of financial and other resources adequate for effective ongoing implementation of the strategy.
3. Maintain and improve its own professional-standard website, publish high-quality reports and develop other communication and dissemination channels, resulting in a raised profile and the capacity to make links and exchange experience with relevant NGOs and academic institutions both within the UK and across Europe.
4. European Dialogue should continue to engage interns to support project research and development, and implementation. Through such agencies as the OSI Roma Participation Programme, ED should seek to further strengthen Roma community capacity by working with Roma interns on all aspects of programming, and offer training e.g. in project management, monitoring and evaluation, and British institutions concerned with service delivery and access to rights.



## Appendix: Milestone projects

Prior and additional project work and initiatives, and full details and reports can be accessed on European Dialogue's website [www.europeandialogue.org](http://www.europeandialogue.org)

**1997** Roma leaders visit to UK to offer support to Roma asylum seekers.

**1998** Roma Education conference in Peterborough UK with participation from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary. Funded by EU and in partnership with hCa Roma Section in Brno, Czech Republic.

**1998** 'People's Europe' – the major civil society conference for over 400 delegates from across Europe, held in London to coincide with the inter-governmental conference (IGC) held during British Presidency of EU. Funded FCO, European Commission, and European Parliament.

**1999** European Workshop on Roma – Police Relations (the Turvey workshop) participants from Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia. Spain, Slovakia, UK. Funded by ERRC, Project on Ethnic Relations, DfID, and Council of Europe.

**2000** Establishing Citizens Pact for SEE with partners from HCA. Research and development of Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe (RrAJE) programme for DfID.

**2001–4** RrAJE (Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe) programme – six local level projects in 4 pre-accession countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania) to combat discrimination and promote strategic community development to assist with implementation of National Roma Strategies at local and national levels. Funded by DfID, OSI RPP, OSI LGI.

**2003–05** Ethnic Minorities and Access to Justice in the Russian Federation (EMAJ). Working in 4 project sites to improve dialogue and mutual understanding and promote international standards in policing multi-ethnic communities. Funded EIDHR and Global Opportunities Fund (GOF) of the FCO.

**2004–06** TRAILER programme. Comparing anti-discrimination legislation and implementation in UK, Ireland, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Romania. Funded by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

**2005–06** Turkey and Accession to the EU. Training for Judges, lawyers, defenders

and police in how to implement international standards and Copenhagen Criteria. Funded by EIDHR and GOF.

**2004–06** PRIMER project. Promoting inclusion of Roma children in mainstream education resources in 2 sites in Bulgaria. Funded Big Lottery. Based on work done in RrAJE programme. Developing extension of RrAJE and Primer into Balkans –BiH, Macedonia and Serbia.

**2004–007** Police and Roma: towards Safety for multi-ethnic communities. A broad programme in partnership with the OSCE ODIHR to explore compliance or otherwise with OSCE Action Plan for Roma and Sinti in OSCE region, including the Balkans; developing and supporting the review by Romanian police of their policy and practice vis a vis international standards and policing of Roma and other minority communities – The Strategic Police Initiative. Funded by the OSCE ODIHR.

**2006** A Western European Workshop focusing on specific issues raised by non-settled Gypsy and Travelling communities.

**2006–008** Programme to build the capacity of The National Federation of Romany Gypsy Liaison groups to represent UK-based Gypsies and Travellers to achieve their rights. In partnership with the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison group. Funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust.

**2007** Preparation for the Home Office of a practical guidance document for all police in England and Wales in relation to good practice in policing of Gypsy and Traveller communities.

**2006–008** SARR BiH. A programme to assist BiH in the development and implementation of National Action Plans for the integration of Roma. Funded by the EU.