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| Intercultural Dialogue in UNESCO New Medium-Term Strategy |

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INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN UNESCO NEW MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY

Main trends in present-day UNESCO strategy in the realm of intercultural dialogue are presented, basing primarily upon texts of two documents, approved in November, 2021, at the 41st session of the General conference of UNESCO, namely, the new medium-term Strategy (2022–2029), and Program of the Organization (2022–2025). As to the former document, intercultural dialogue forms integral part of its Strategic objective 3, directed at the attainment of ‘inclusive, peaceful and just societies’, ensuring cultural diversity and sustainable development. As a result of systematic analysis of the text of the Medium-term Strategy, two basic objectives of intercultural dialogue, i.e. ‘healing fractures’ in the collective mentality, and ‘promoting shared values and memories’, are traced back. As to the latter document, Major program III, dedicated to social sciences and humanities, serves as focal for systematic analysis.

UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations Organization, which is responsible for its policies and activities in the fields of culture, science, and education. Intercultural dialogue has served as an essential and important part of its strategies at all stages of their development. The aim of the present paper consists in reviewing its basic contents and purport in the framework of the new medium-term Strategy of UNESCO, which is envisaged for years 2022 to 2029, and in tracing back its place in the general worldview of this international organization.

The new Strategy of UNESCO was elaborated in the course of the final years of the implementation of the previous medium-term strategy

As a result, presence of three-level framework of ‘intercultural understanding – intercultural competences – intercultural dialogue’ is detected, which forms the conceptual basis of the contemporary UNESCO approach to the promotion and enhancement of constructive cultural rapprochement. The paper is concluded with a general overview of present-day trends in the elaboration of the subject field of the cross-cultural, intercultural, and transcultural dialogue. The main trend consists in regarding it as a dynamic and open-ended process, aligned along an axis, leading from practice of tolerance and empathy towards deeply transformative experiences, and, farther, to the development of shared attitudes and worldviews.

Key words: intercultural dialogue, UNESCO strategy, inclusivity, cultural rapprochement, sustainable development.

(37 C/4), which was actual in the time span from 2014 till 2021. Following a number of both expert meetings and high-level discussions, its text was adopted in July 2022, as draft document 41 C/4 for the forthcoming 41st Session of UNESCO General Conference¹. In accordance with a roadmap, outlined by UNESCO General Conference in 40

¹ Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 (41 C/5), Part I: Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 (41 C/4) // URL: [Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 \(41 C/4\) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 \(41 C/5\), Part I: Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 \(41 C/4\) - UNESCO Digital Library](#), (accessed 15.03.2022).



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C/Resolution 102, the draft was regarded and approved by the 41st Session of UNESCO General Conference, which was convened in Paris in November 2022².

Mission statement forms the general framework of the new UNESCO Strategy. As stated in its preamble (I:8), “as a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO – pursuant to its Constitution – contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information”. This formulation, put as quotes, reiterated the mission statement of the previous 8-year strategy³.

Turning to the text of the UNESCO constitution, adopted in November 1945, we find a formulation which is somewhat different in details: “The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations” (I:1)⁴.

However the expert community is practically united in stating that basic continuity has definitely been present in all mission statements adopted by UNESCO since 1945, and that definite alter-

tations have been introduced mostly to respond the arising problems and challenges in an optimal way. This has been the case of the intercultural dialogue, which was obviously not present in the text of the Constitution *en pleines lettres*. Nevertheless, “collaboration among the nations” which may be found in its fragment just cited by us, meant basically the same. This thesis of ours may be corroborated by recurring to formulations, contained in other parts of the Constitution. Thus collaboration “in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples” comes the first on the list of priority purposes of UNESCO purposes (see Constitution, I:2(a).

UNESCO has in fact always stated that some of the terms and formulations adopted by it are subject to alterations, which has by no means affected their general contents. This has been definitely the case of the notion of the intercultural dialogue. Thus reading the text of the Action Plan of International Decade for Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), we find an objective of making “available in multiple languages key concepts and terms used by the UN system to discuss the common goal of achieving peace, such as “tolerance”, “culture of peace”, “unity-in-diversity”, “intercultural and interreligious dialogue”, “rapprochement of cultures” etc.”⁵.

Next to UNESCO mission, global priorities of this organization are stated. In line with approaches which were assumed much earlier, they are two, namely, assuring gender equality (primarily, the women’s one), and the development of Africa. No essential difference from documents issued earlier, may be traced back in the text of the new Strategy. The objective of intercultural rapprochement has not been included into the formulation of gender equality (I:21), although it forms indirect

² In accordance with the fact that the draft document, cited above, was entirely approved by the aforementioned session, and no final publication of the strategy was undertaken thereupon, we would further conduct our analysis of the new strategy, basing upon the text of the draft document 41 C/4.

³ 37 C/4 2014-2021 Medium-term Strategy (2014). UNESCO.

⁴ UNESCO Constitution // URL: [UNESCO Constitution](https://www.unesco.org/en/constitution), (accessed 15.03.2022).

⁵ Action Plan 2013–2022 International Decade for Rapprochement of Cultures (2013). UNESCO, p.12.



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part of such urgent tasks, as “the elimination of gender-based violence, discrimination and censorship. As to African issues, “support for the development of intercultural competences” has been mentioned as crucially important for their implementation (I:22). Compared to the previous medium-term Strategy, the role of intercultural competences has been thus somewhat emphasized (the formulation of both priorities did not include it in the 2014–2021 Strategy)⁶.

Passing to the “Priority action for countries facing humanitarian crises or in fragile situations”, the need of “strengthening national capacities for risk prevention, reduction and response; fostering intercultural dialogue” has been mentioned in the text of the corresponding section of the new Strategy (I:29). This has always been an important task of UNESCO when dealing with situations of conflict or, crisis, and those preceding or, following them. Contrary to that, COVID-19 crisis presented a challenge which was qualitatively different from the majority of those dealt with by UNESCO in the course of its 75-year long history. “Addressing new data and policy gaps related to inclusion and intercultural dialogue, notably with regard to the education of crisis-affected people on the move; integrating culture into recovery and reconstruction programmes” has been named at the first place on the corresponding list of action priorities (I:30). This means that intercultural dialogue remains high on the UNESCO agenda, including the situation of crisis management and appeasement.

Next to the formulation of UNESCO mission and priorities, the turn of Strategic objectives comes, which form subject matter of chapter 2 of the new Strategy. The first fact that we’ve got to state is that their list has been strongly diminished, from nine in the previous medium-term Strategy –

⁶ 37 C/4 2014-2021 Medium-term Strategy (2014). UNESCO, p.15–16.

to four in the present one. Strategic objective 1 deals now with education issues, objective 2 – with environment, objective 3 – with social cohesion, and objective 4 – with technologies. One may state that intercultural dialogue has not been mentioned in the titles of the four new Strategic objectives, which is a contrast to the formulation of the previous ones. In fact, old objective 6 read: “Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles”.

Intercultural dialogue remains nevertheless high on the UNESCO agenda. To find a corroboration of this thesis, one has to turn to Strategic objective 3 of the new Strategy of UNESCO. Its full formulation reads: “Build inclusive, just and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage”. Reading it, one has to state that intercultural dialogue has remained integral part of the list of Strategic objectives, under the guise of “cultural diversity”. Two elements of the old agenda (inclusion and ethics) remain being linked to it, while the only true innovation consists in the fact that heritage issues have been inserted into the title of the objective (in the text of the old Strategy, “protecting, promoting and transmitting heritage” formed subject matter of separate Strategic objective 7).

The aforementioned innovation emerged as a result not of an abrupt shift, but of evolutionary development. To corroborate this thesis, it would be sufficient to regard how intercultural dialogue was regarded in both medium-term Strategies, i.e. the previous one, and the present Strategy. In the former case, the challenge of “new forms of inequality, discrimination, exclusion, violence, radicalization, extremism and bigotry, compounded by local tensions and conflicts” was stated, forming a challenge of the present-day, globalized world



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(6:60). “Mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives” through inter-cultural dialogue” formed the core of UNESCO response to it (6:60). This message (which we would call further ‘message A’, for the sake of brevity) was worded in the text of Strategic objective 6; its main purport consisted in highlighting the role of dialogue in building a safer world.

Passing to the text of the next Strategic objective, namely, objective 7, we find another important formulation: “In advancing dialogue, “learning to live together” and inclusiveness, UNESCO will promote the role of shared or cross-border cultural heritage and initiatives to build bridges among nations and communities” (6:72). This message (‘message B’) is different from the first one: it links dialogue to shared values and attitudes. In this way, two strategic formulations of intercultural dialogue were divided in the old UNESCO Strategy into subject matter of two different Strategic objectives.

Formulations of the new Strategy follow the same structural pattern. First, “rising inequalities around income and opportunities and discrimination based on race, gender, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, age and sexual orientation” are regarded as attributes of ‘fractured societies’, which form a basic challenge of present-day world (II:50). Building ‘open, peaceful societies’ forms a constructive opposition to that dangerous trend. In order to move in the right direction, UNESCO feels it being timely ‘to promote, safeguard and protect diverse cultural expressions and types of heritage (built, moveable, underwater, documentary and intangible)” (II:51). Moving in this direction would provide a strong and constructive to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

The first group of tasks, which might be tentatively called as ‘healing fractures’, directly prolongs an important function of intercultural dia-

logue, which was earlier called by us as ‘message A’. The second group of tasks, linking the dialogue to ‘shared values and memories’ practically coincides with ‘message B’. The main innovation consists in joining both messages in the framework of a single Strategic objective, and in ensuring fruitful interaction between them. Importance of this merger was confirmed in the text of the main Outcomes of Strategic objective 3. The first one of them, marked in the text as Outcome 5, reads: ‘Enhance the protection and promotion of the diversity of heritage and cultural expressions’. Ensuring the ‘diversity of heritage’ implies series of intercultural dialogues, those conducted with one’s past, and those with both past and present-day cultural attitudes and stereotypes of other people.

Taking into account cultural heritage, and especially, its shared components, implied that UNESCO regarded dialogue between people whose past had provided them with intercultural values and skills, as being particularly constructive and fruitful. Speaking in general terms, this attitude is regarded in present-day discussions of UNESCO experts as belonging to the intercultural paradigm, which is opposed to the multicultural one. The latter one is regarded presently as implying passive, although responsible and respectful, coexistence of different cultures, the former one – their vivid interaction and collaboration⁷. The opposition regarded above, should be regarded as rather soft, being nearer to complementarity. “Interculturality” refers to the existence and equitable interaction of

⁷ Spivak, D. (2017). Dialogue and heritage in the cultural strategy of UNESCO: a brief overview. *Culture and Dialogue*, 5, 242-252. DOI:[10.1163/24683949-12340035](https://doi.org/10.1163/24683949-12340035). Cf.: Zapata-Barrero, R. (2017). The intercultural turn in Europe: process of policy paradigm change and formation. In: Mansouri, F. (Ed.). (2017). *Interculturalism at the Crossroads. Comparative Perspectives on Concepts, Policies and Practice*. UNESCO. ISBN: 978-92-3-100218-2



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diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect',- stated UNESCO as early as in 2005, in the main text of Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (III:4,8)⁸.

Adjacent dimensions of dialogue may be found in chapter II:56 of the new medium-term UNESCO Strategy (2022-2029). The first one consists in promoting responsible citizenship competencies and attitudes: "Particular efforts will be made in the area of global citizenship education, encouraging education systems to lay the foundations to enhance, uphold and apply rights and develop the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours that learners need to become responsible citizens". This aspect has been present in practically all normative documents approved by UNESCO up till now, as strict observance and promotion of human rights and liberties has always belonged to the core of activities of this international organization.

The second dimension consists in highlighting "a holistic approach that promotes non-discrimination, equality, respect and tolerance", via the mechanism of 'common histories and shared memories, including those around the General History of Africa, the Slave Route and the Silk Roads' (both citations belong to the item II:56, mentioned above). Programs mentioned in the latter citation point out a most constructive direction of actions. Slave Route project, initiated as early as in 1994, used major routes of the transatlantic slave trade as an axis of sharing memories and conducting dialogues. This project turned out to be most fruitful

⁸ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. (2005) // URL: [Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(unesco.org\)](https://www.unesco.org/en/convention-diversity-cultural-expressions), (accessed 15.03.2022).

in working with painful and ominous memories, in the framework of different geographic regions and cultures. Thus UNESCO chair, represented by the author of the present paper, conducted a seminar dedicated to history of serfdom in old Russia, and later published its proceedings, which have been highly esteemed by UNESCO, and recommended to global reading audience at its official web site⁹.

Studying analytic and working materials, which have been issued in the course of implementation of the Slave Route program, one may trace back a wealth of important intuitions and observations. 'Deep dialogue' may serve as a good example. In practical terms, it consists in moving from exchange of opinions to deeper sharing of emotional traumas, deconstructing underlying prejudices, and, finally, healing of tensions. To cite a constructive formulation, which stems from a recent analytic report, issued in UNESCO framework, 'deep dialogue that consists in dialogic processes [is] aimed at mutual understanding. As a starting point, they involve recognition of an injustice and dehumanization, and then work towards affirming dignity and deepening relationships. They can also help reimagine social conditions and structural peace'¹⁰.

Silk Roads project has formed another important direction of UNESCO activities since 1988. Historical networks designed in the course of history between Western Europe and the Far East have

⁹ Spivak, D. (Ed.) (2005). Serfdom in Russia and its abolition: history and present-day issues. Eidos. ISBN 5-88607-028 (web version: URL: [Serfdom in Russia and its abolition: history and present-day issues: proceedings - UNESCO Digital Library](https://www.unesco.org/digital-library/serfdom-in-russia), accessed 15.03.2022); for the official UNESCO web site, cf.: The Slave Route publications // URL: [The Slave Route \(unesco.org\)](https://www.unesco.org/en/serfdom), (accessed 15.03.2022).

¹⁰ Healing the wounds of slave trade and slavery. Approaches and practices: a desk review. (2021) //URL: [22-02-UNESCO_Slave_book.pdf](https://www.unesco.org/digital-library/healing-the-wounds-of-slave-trade-and-slavery), p.11, (accessed 15.03.2022).



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provided ample possibilities for innovative research in this field. ‘In the words of UNESCO’s Director General (2017-Present), Audrey Azoulay, “we must learn from the exchanges that took place along the Silk Roads. These exchanges weaved connections between peoples and cultures across Asia and Europe – with this in mind, we can work to foster much needed dialogue and mutual respect going forward”¹¹. The link between shared memories, on the one hand, and intercultural dialogue, on the other, forms theoretical basis of the latter formulation.

Our last remark on the new UNESCO medium-term Strategy – notably, on its Strategic objective 3, dealing with intercultural dialogue – consists in the fact that one doesn’t find here any reference to basic documents of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, which is in contrast with the previous Strategy, where such references were abundant. Formal reason for that consists in the fact that the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures comes to an end in the year 2022, which forms starting point for the new UNESCO Strategy (2022-2029). As to essential reasons, one feels authorized to remark that the vision of intercultural dialogue, proper for the aforementioned Decade, was rather static and limited to knowledge and communication: ‘Therefore, it is important to provide opportunities for citizens to not only learn about the values, attitudes, behaviors of those living in specific other cultures, but also to support conversations relating to values, attitudes, and behaviors shared across groups as a way of fostering social cohesion’¹². As we have

mentioned above, time has come now for more dynamic and participatory intercourse.

As to new UNESCO programs, mentioned in the text of Strategic objective 3 of the new medium-term Strategy, International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022–2032) is to be mentioned. Analyzing the text of the Global Action Plan of the Decade, we may notice that intercultural dialogue is regarded as a powerful and highly efficient instrument of ensuring cultural diversity, related to other priorities of UNESCO. In line with it, the Global Action Plan advocates ‘greater awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity and multilingualism, and of their contribution to self-empowerment, sustainable development, good governance, respect for human rights, as well as the importance of cultural diversity and biodiversity, interculturality, intercultural dialogue and peace education in building open, inclusive, democratic and participatory societies’ (II:2.2)¹³. One may remark that the axis which joins cultural diversity, interculturality, and inclusivity with the intercultural dialogue, as an instrument for their attainment, seems to be pivotal for this thesis, being in its turn basic for the design of the concept of the Indigenous Languages Decade as a whole. However elaboration of its new facets remains topic of other normative documents.

General attitudes and directions, outlined in UNESCO medium-term Strategy (2022–2029), were elaborated in the main text Program and Budget of this international organization for years 2022 to 2025, approved by the same 41st session of its General Conference. The Program consisted of five main components (called major programs),

¹¹ The UNESCO Silk Roads programme // URL: [The UNESCO Silk Roads Programme | Silk Roads Programme](#), (accessed 15.03.2022).

¹² Action Plan 2013–2022 International Decade for Rapprochement of Cultures (2013). UNESCO, p.12–13.

¹³ Global Action Plan of the International Decade of indigenous Languages (2022–2032) // URL: [Global action plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages \(2022–2032\) UNESCO Digital Library](#), p.9, (accessed: 15.03.2022).



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entitled Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, and, finally, Communication and Information.

Major program III, dedicated, as we have just noted, to social sciences and humanities, contains several focal points related to intercultural dialogue. The main innovation consists in the task which reads: 'Promote a human-rights-based approach to tackle all forms of discrimination and racism, advance *intercultural understanding* and *intercultural competences*, and develop normative standards, knowledge and capacities to advance effective policies, institutions and practices, including through the roadmap against racism and discrimination and the framework for *intercultural dialogue*' (28:1,viii, italics added)¹⁴. What we find here is basically a plan of actions in the realm of rapprochement, both at the psychological plane, and the societal one, leading from passive interest in intercultural issues - to the formation of range of intercultural competences, which in their turn bring us to full-blown, active rapprochement. The corresponding scheme would be: 'intercultural understanding – intercultural competences – intercultural dialogue'.

International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010), as well as the Slave Routes project, and the Silk Roads one, were marked in the text of Major program III, directly preceding the text cited above (28:1, vii), as forming the nearest context for proper interpretation of intercultural dialogue. The two latter projects have been already briefly reviewed by us above.

As to the 2010 International Year, one may suppose that it was mentioned, *inter alia*, because it contained an earlier version of the three-step process of cultural rapprochement, which we have just found in the text of the Major program III. Con-

¹⁴ Records of the General Conference 41st session. (2022). Vol.1: Resolutions. UNESCO, p.36.

ducting analysis of the Action Plan for the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2010), we notice that its strategy consisted of four interrelated tasks: 'Promoting reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity' (3.1), 'Building a framework for commonly shared values' (3.2), 'Strengthening quality education and the building of intercultural competences' (3.3), and 'Fostering dialogue for sustainable development' (3.4)¹⁵. What we see here is in fact the same three-step process of moving from knowledge and value-sharing to intercultural competences, and, finally, to the implementation of active and responsible dialogue.

An adjacent text on International Day of Conscience emphasized the importance of normative documents related to the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013–2022)¹⁶. Another part of the 2022–2025 Program – namely, Major program IV 'Culture' – stressed the necessity of the implementation of 'the six UNESCO culture conventions and the recommendations associated with them'¹⁷. One feels authorized to agree that the theoretical potential of both subject fields, as well as their practical value, are essential and quite actual for meeting the challenges of the present-day world. Relevant fragments of normative texts mentioned above, were briefly reviewed by us above, in the text of the present paper.

Both strategic documents, briefly presented above, belong to the core of the mission of UNESCO in the present-day world. Basic trends in their implementation belong to a special dimension of the activities of the international organization,

¹⁵ Action Plan 2013-2022 International Decade for Rapprochement of Cultures (2013). UNESCO, p.2–3.

¹⁶ Records of the General Conference 41st session. (2022). Vol.1: Resolutions. UNESCO, p.38.

¹⁷ Records of the General Conference 41st session. (2022). Vol.1: Resolutions. UNESCO, p.40.



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described usually as Functions. The main features of this agenda have not changed qualitatively since the previous mid-term Strategy. (1) ‘Serving as a laboratory of ideas, generating innovative proposals and policy advice’ serves as the first function of the new 2022–2029 Strategy, followed by (2) ‘Developing and reinforcing the global agenda in its fields of competence through policy analysis, monitoring and benchmarking’, (3) ‘Setting norms and standards in its fields of competence and supporting their implementation’, (4) ‘Strengthening international and regional cooperation in its fields of competence, and fostering alliances, intellectual, financial and technical cooperation, knowledge-sharing, mobilizing resources and operational partnerships’, and, finally, (5) ‘Providing advice for policy development and implementation, and developing institutional and human capacities’ (I:9)¹⁸.

A number of topics have been somewhat reformulated in the text cited above – or, supplemented, compared to relevant items of the previous (2014–2021) Strategy (IV:12)¹⁹. E.g. official terms have been inserted into the formulation of each function, which might delineate a new subject field for the following strategic documents (*‘laboratory of ideas – clearing-house – standard-setter – catalyst and motor for international cooperation – capacity-builder’*).

In-depth analysis of basic trends in the elaboration of UNESCO functions, and in their implementation, forms subject field of a separate work. It would suffice to add here that UNESCO tends to regard its main functions and tasks as being intertwined at all levels, which in its turn brings

about necessity of day-to-day intersectoral cooperation. “This balanced and interlinked approach to functions will guide the work of UNESCO, allowing it to work in close partnership with Member States to support the development and implementation of relevant operational capacities and solutions, while also paving the way for programme adaptation to new missions in a more balanced and innovative way, particularly in response to crises and emergencies” (I:11)²⁰. The value of ‘interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and integrated approaches’ for the elaboration of UNESCO strategic objectives has also been stressed in the introductory part of the new mid-term Strategy (1:3).

Concluding our brief and preliminary analysis of basic ideas and attitudes of the new UNESCO mid-term Strategy for years 2022 till 2029, we feel authorized to state that it forms a constructive continuation of the previous Strategy (2014–2021), reformed and adapted to both challenges of the present-day world, and possibilities of sustainable growth, opened by it. Intercultural dialogue remains being a focal direction of the activities of UNESCO, which is being developed in a most creative and responsible way. New trends in the elaboration of this subject field consist in emphasizing the full purport of *‘common histories and shared memories’* in promoting dialogue in the spirit of interculturality; and in structuring dialogue as purposeful and active progress along the axis defined by such key notions as *‘intercultural understanding – intercultural competences – intercultural dialogue’*. As a result, concept of intercultural dialogue, being elaborated in the framework of

¹⁸ URL: [Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 \(41 C/4\) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 \(41 C/5\), Part I: Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 \(41 C/4\) UNESCO Digital Library](#), (accessed 15.03.2022), p. 2.

¹⁹ 37 C/4 2014-2021 Medium-term Strategy (2014). UNESCO, p. 14.

²⁰ URL: [Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 \(41 C/4\) and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022–2025 \(41 C/5\), Part I: Draft Medium-Term Strategy for 2022–2029 \(41 C/4\) UNESCO Digital Library](#), (accessed 15.03.2022), p.3.



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UNESCO, forms a constructive field of present-day academic research.

Thus having presented our main conclusions concerning some novel features of intercultural dialogue, we have to acknowledge that no introductory review of scientific literature delineating this vast subject field was presented at its beginning. The main reason for this consisted in our intent to present viewpoints expressed in the new UNESCO mid-term Strategy in the most explicit and accurate way. A minor reason consists in the fact that literature created by the present time seems to be quite voluminous. As it was stated by authors of a recent report, as much as 16,582 peer-reviewed papers and book chapters dedicated to this topic, and to the topic of interculturality, intimately related to it, were published over the period ranging from the year 2000, and ending with year 2017. There is no doubt that systematic review of this amount of literature forms subject of a special paper or, rather, series of papers²¹.

Taking this into account, we wish to supplement this paper with a brief introduction into the subject. As a matter of fact, it would suffice to cite here the definition of intercultural dialogue, approved by UNESCO.

Turning to such basic documents, issued by UNESCO, i.e. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), and Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), we have to state that they contain highly valuable insights to the field; however, no definitive definition is to be found there.

²¹ Elias, A., Mansouri, F. (2020). A systematic review of studies on interculturalism and intercultural dialogue. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 41, 4 (URL: [A Systematic Review of Studies on Interculturalism and Intercultural Dialogue: Journal of Intercultural Studies: Vol 41, No 4 \(tandfonline.com\)](#), (accessed 15.03.2022). As a matter of fact, exact number was assessed at 11,712, after having removed duplicates.

Thus, in the Preamble to the former document, we find a formulation ‘that respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security’²². In the text of the latter one, we find an objective I:1,c, which reads: ‘to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favor of intercultural respect and a culture of peace’²³.

This situation was created quite intently. In order to get an insight into the strategy of UNESCO in this field, it would be sufficient to regard the text of a special survey on intercultural dialogue, issued by the organization in 2017, especially chapter 3, entitled ‘Defining intercultural dialogue’. No basic definition is to be found there, However the main cause for this is stated quite clearly: ‘how intercultural dialogue is defined is inextricably linked to the concept of diversity, which can vary within and between countries’²⁴. This means that UNESCO leaves an exact definition to be formed by each culture, basing on its experience and priorities: ‘To date, there is no universally agreed formal definition of intercultural dialogue or a single one-size-fits-all model of implementation. Instead, the emphasis is placed on the specific context of the country’²⁵. A cluster of definitions is to arise as a result of this process. ‘Unity

²² UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity // URL: [UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: UNESCO](#), (accessed 15.03.2022).

²³ Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005 // URL: [Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(unesco.org\)](#), (accessed 15.03.2022).

²⁴ UNESCO survey on intercultural dialogue 2017. *Analysis of findings*. (2018). UNESCO, p.16.

²⁵ Ibidem.



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in diversity' is to be provided in this framework not by formulation a single definition, but by delineating common dimensions of the cluster.

To begin with, 'two main streams' are singled out in various national approaches to the intercultural dialogue: 'The first conceives of intercultural dialogue as an environmental prerequisite for peace and social cohesion. The second understands intercultural dialogue as an instrumental tool for education and advocacy, and as a means to contribute to initiatives such as those seeking to integrate refugees and counter radicalization, discrimination and racism'. Next, principles are formulated, including primarily 'dialogue, respect, tolerance, mutual understanding, and openness'. After that, 'essential components' of the dialogue are delineated, comprising 'inter- and intra-state one, dialogue(s) between people with different cultural and education background, dialogue(s) between people with different ethnic and linguistic background, and, finally, interfaith dialogue'²⁶. Outcomes of the intercultural dialogue include, primarily, 'economic development, good governance and democracy, personal and social well-being, social policy and social change, harmonious interreligious coexistence, and human rights'.

Finally, an 'indicative example' of definition is cited: 'While the word 'dialogue' can often refer simply to a conversation between different people, the term is also used to describe *a form of interaction between two or more persons/entities (who might hold opposing, differing or irreconcilable views) that emphasizes self-expression and reciprocal listening without judgment in a spirit of openness, and has a transformative potential*' (italics added)²⁷.

²⁶ UNESCO survey on intercultural dialogue 2017. *Analysis of findings*. (2018). UNESCO, p. 18.

²⁷ UNESCO survey on intercultural dialogue 2017. *Analysis of findings*. (2018). UNESCO, p. 17.

Basing upon this at this scaffolding, UNESCO experts have worked upon their definitions of intercultural dialogues, striving to adapt them to concrete situations and attitudes. For instance, two authors, who have been cited above, and whose scientific position is quite close to values and principles nourished by UNESCO, state in another article of theirs: 'Though its definitions vary across disciplines and application domains, there is broad consensus that intercultural dialogue, in general terms, seeks to bridge differences across cultural groups and individuals, while aiming to engender and facilitate intercultural affinities and respectful co-existence'²⁸.

As a matter of fact, authors of the aforementioned paper emphasized that both UNESCO definition, and those coined by a number of present-day scholars, reveal quite a strong affinity to the famous definition, elaborated by the Council of Europe in the framework of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008): 'Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organizations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes'²⁹.

²⁸ Mansouri, F., Elias, A. (2021). The intercultural dialogue index (ICDI): An index for assessing intercultural relations. *Social Indicators Research*, 155(5) URL: [https://www.researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351111111), (accessed 15.03.2022).

²⁹ Ganesh, Sh. (2008). Positioning intercultural dialogue – theories, pragmatics, and an agenda. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, Vol.4 (2), p. 81–86. Cf.: *White paper on intercultural dialogue*. 'Liv-



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As duly stated by a contemporary researcher, ‘the definition locates intercultural dialogue beyond mere tolerance of the other, and situates deep shared understandings, as well as new forms of creative and expressive communication, as dialogic outcomes’. Elaborating this vision of hers, a prominent researcher of the topic, W. Leeds-Hurwitz, outlined the general trend of creative development of intercultural dialogue: ‘Intercultural dialogues are designed to achieve understanding of cultural others as an immediate goal, taking the more advanced steps of achieving agreement and cooperation as potential later goals’³⁰.

Further elaboration of the definition of intercultural dialogue occurs currently primarily at the realm of intercultural competences. This subject field comprises such basic dimensions as ‘specific culture knowledge (know-what), skills (know-how), attitudes (know-to-be) and behaviors (know-to-engage)’. Relations between both terms seem to be quite specific. As stated by Chr. Rapanta and S. Trovão, ‘a common paradox in the sociocognitive learning literature ... emerges: from an *acquisition* perspective, intercultural competence is a prerequisite for engaging in intercultural dialogue; from a *participation* perspective, intercultural dialogue fosters intercultural competence’³¹. Other researchers of intercultural communication have tended to define corresponding subject field in a somewhat differing way. Thus J. Martin and Th. Nakayama

ing together as equals in dignity.’ (2008). Strasbourg: Council of Europe, p. 74–75.

³⁰ Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (2015). Intercultural Dialogue. In: Tracy K., Ilie C., Sandel T. (Eds.). *International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. Vol.2. Wiley-Blackwell, p. 860–868.

³¹ For both citations and valuable discussion, see: Rapanta, Chr., Trovão, S. (2021). Intercultural education for the twenty-first century: A comparative review of research. Maine, F., Vrikki, M. (Eds.). *Dialogue for intercultural understanding. Placing cultural literacy at the heart of learning*. Springer, 2021, p.12.

supposed that such dimensions as ‘motivation, attitudes, behaviors, and skills’ would be most adequate³². The so-called Gertsen model included ‘affective, cognitive and behavioral dimensions’³³. Further elaboration of this inspiring field of research forms topic of a special paper. The list of subject fields being adjacent to the intercultural dialogue, also seems to be quite extant. One of its shortest versions, reviewed recently by J. Brasil Alves and R. Cabecinhas, comprises ‘identity processes, alterity, social representations, collective memory, symbolic asymmetries, coloniality of power, being and knowledge’³⁴.

Regarding the notion of intercultural dialogue, one has to take into account that it is neither elementary nor simple. Thus some theorists tend to regard dialogue as activity which takes place in the field of interculturality. Other researchers prefer to describe interculturality as a dimension where a dialogue can be conducted. Regarding interculturality and dialogue as two realms which may intersect, forms another possible direction of theorizing³⁵.

In any case, the main trend of present-day systematic studies of intercultural dialogue consists in regarding it not as a static phenomenon, but as a dynamic process³⁶. A number of scientists have

³² Martin, J., Nakayama, Th. (2010). *Intercultural communication in contexts*. McGraw Hill p. 496.

³³ , S. (2007). Intercultural competence: the status and future of a controversial concept. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 7 (4), p. 255.

³⁴ Brasil Alves, J., Cabecinhas, R. (2019). Intercultural dialogue and intergroup relations in Europe: contributions of cultural studies and social psychology. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, Special Vol., p. 105–118.

³⁵ For more detailed discussion, see: Ganesh, Sh. (2008). Positioning intercultural dialogue – theories, pragmatics, and an agenda. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, Vol.4 (2), p.81–86.

³⁶ Demenchonok E. (Ed.). (2014). *Intercultural dialogue: in search of harmony in diversity* Cambridge



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carefully traced its initial stages. Some of them tend to place empathy at the beginning of fruitful intercultural communication³⁷. Others speak primarily about practicing tolerance and/or [cultural] hospitality³⁸. In other versions, ‘cross-cultural adjustment’ is regarded as being vital³⁹; the list of notions of this kind might easily be prolonged.

Medium stages of the dialogue(s) are regarded as more or less structuralized and transformative stages of intercultural communication, leading to improved cooperation, ‘deepened understanding’, renewed modes of consensus, ‘new forms of creative and expressive communication, as dialogic outcomes’⁴⁰. For quite a few authors, attaining the level of ‘transculturality – the ability for human beings to understand their questions as shared or common’ seems to serve as an optimal objective of the corresponding process⁴¹.

Scholars Publishers.; cf.: Astafieva, O.N. (2018). The development of UNESCO dialogue models and their inclusion in the cultural policy strategies. *KnE Engineering*, 3(8):1, 1–7. DOI:10.18502/keg.v3i8.3594.

³⁷ Lähdesmäki, T., Koistinen, A.-K. (2021). Explorations of linkages between intercultural dialogue, art, and empathy. In: Maine, F., Vrikki, M. (Eds.). *Dialogue for intercultural understanding. Placing cultural literacy at the heart of learning*. Springer, p.45. DOI:10.1007/978-3-030-71778-0_4.

³⁸ Jonkers, P. (2022). Inescapable boundaries as a challenge to intercultural dialogue. In: Fu Y. (Ed.). *Crossing boundaries: Challenges and opportunities of intercultural dialogue*. Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, p. 35.

³⁹ Fitzpatrick, F. (2020). *Understanding intercultural interaction. An analysis of key concepts*. Emerald Publishing, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Ganesh, Sh. (2008). Positioning intercultural dialogue – theories, pragmatics, and an agenda. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, Vol. 4 (2), p. 81–86.

⁴¹ Roothaan, A. (2019). Interkulturell, transkulturell, cross-cultural – warum wir alle drei Begriffe brauchen. *Polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*, 40, p.67.

Our general conclusion consists in stating the fact that intercultural dialogue has become an important realm of present-day multidisciplinary research. Main trends in its elaboration consist in defining it as a multi-lateral process of communication beyond the boundaries of cultures, passing a number of stages, from practicing tolerance and empathy, to deeply transformative experiences of developing shared worldview. UNESCO strategy tends to develop this outlook in a constructive and responsible way, which in its turn contributes to the construction of peaceful and sustainable world.

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МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНЫЙ ДИАЛОГ В НОВОЙ СРЕДНЕСРОЧНОЙ СТРАТЕГИИ ЮНЕСКО

Статья посвящена рассмотрению основных черт стратегии ЮНЕСКО в области межкультурного диалога, проведенному на основании, прежде всего, двух новых документов, утвержденных Генеральной конференцией ЮНЕСКО в ноябре 2021 года – Среднесрочной стратегии на срок с 2022 по 2029 год, а также Программы на срок 2022–2025 года. Что касается первого документа, то тематика межкультурного диалога представлена в нем как неотъемлемая составляющая инструментария Стратегической цели 3, направленной на упрочение «инклюзивных, мирных и справедливых обществ», всемерно способствующих культурному многообразию и устойчивому развитию. Последовательный анализ текста указанной стратегической цели позволяет выделить две ключевых цели межкультурного диалога на современном этапе, а именно, – «сглаживание разломов» в коллективном сознании, и «продвижение общих ценностей и [конструктов] памяти». Что касается второго из указанных документов, основные теоретические положения сосредоточены

в тексте Основной программы III. В результате его углубленного анализа, установлены признаки трехуровневого конструкта «межкультурное понимание – межкультурные компетенции – межкультурный диалог», служащего, в свою очередь, основанием для выстраивания и продвижения конструктивного межкультурного сближения. В заключение статьи, проведен краткий обзор современных тенденций развития предметной области кросс-культурного, межкультурного и транскультурного диалога. В качестве наиболее перспективного направления, выделено его понимание, как динамичного и незамкнутого процесса, выстроенного вдоль оси, начинающейся толерантностью и эмпатией, и приводящей к глубокой личностной трансформации, основанной на выявлении и рецепции общих установок и ценностей.

Ключевые слова: межкультурный диалог, стратегия ЮНЕСКО, инклюзивность, культурное сближение, устойчивое развитие.

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