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Introduction

On 21-22 June, 2007 an international Round Table “Caucasus – Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue” took place at Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia. The Round Table was organized by UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue (Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University), in co-operation with the Georgian National Commission for UNESCO in the framework of UNESCO’s “Caucasus Project”. The event was held with the financial support of Division of Cultural Policy and Intercultural Dialogue, Culture Sector, UNESCO.

The Caucasus – region of comparatively small size and extremely diverse population, especially needs to identify and develop tools and methods, regarding intercultural competences to facilitate intercultural dialogue. The region is facing challenge of globalization, therefore it is important to have a balance between tradition and modernity. The Round Table could be regarded as a step forward to understanding the specifics of the region as well as a good starting point for the cooperation on the regional and interregional levels.

The Round Table brought together the representatives of the UNESCO Chairs in Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Russian Federation. The Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO, represented by Mr. Bernard Jacquot, actively participated in the meeting.

The Round Table was inaugurated by professor Nino Chikovani, head of the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue, Tbilisi State University. The participants were welcomed by professor Giorgi Khubua, the rector of Ivan Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Mr. Bernard Jacquot, Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO, Mrs. Ketevan Kandelaki, Secretary-General of the Georgian National Commission for UNESCO, Mrs. Svetlana Sahakian, Department of International Relations and Cooperation with Diaspora, Ministry of Culture and Youth Affairs (Armenia), Mr. Asif Usubeliev, Head of the Scientific-Methodological Sector, Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Azerbaijan).

The Round Table centred on three sessions: 1. Regional approach: the Caucasus example; 2. Good practices and methodologies in the promotion of intercultural dialogue; 3. The network of UNESCO Chairs – perspective for a common programme and potential co-operation.

The participants came to the agreement on further co-operation and implemented Final Communiqué.
Nino Chikovani  
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**Caucasus: Experience of Intercultural Dialogue and Research Perspectives**

Contemporary political and scientific interest towards the Caucasus was mainly drawn by the post-Soviet regional conflicts. Not often the Caucasus is referred as the multicultural, multiethnic and multiconfessional region, with the history, which, like the past and present of the other similar regions, was determined by the valuable experience of the peaceful coexistence, collaboration and dialogue between different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

Could we talk about the real practice of intercultural dialogue in the Caucasus? Is there a regional resource for fruitful intercultural dialogue?

The problem can be seen at least from the two perspectives: factual and methodological approaches. Let’s start from the first one.

I

Intercultural dialogue, as a permanent process, has been existed in the Caucasus during the whole history of the region; the dialogue is perceived here not only as the contact, but exactly the dialogue, in terms of awareness and understanding of the other. This was the objective process, determined not by the ethno-cultural characteristics of the Caucasians, or by purposeful policy of the regional ruling elites, but rather by the socio-cultural reality, influenced by the geographical location of the Caucasus. The same processes of intercultural dialogue can be observed in each multicultural and multiconfessional areas, e.g. the Balkans, the South-Eastern Europe in whole, Central Asia. It should be noted as well, that the political history of the abovementioned regions is characterized by the dozens of similarities, be it the Middle Ages, the period of totalitarian states or the post-communist era. Furthermore, each of these regions stress the fact of existence at the crossroad of cultures, serving as a hallmark for their history, as well as the experience of the intercultural dialogue, reflected in their cultures.

Several examples. Professor of philosophy Ferid Mukhich admits that the role of Balkans in the world history was mainly determined by its geographical location. It was not only the crossroad, but the bridge at the same time; not only the main street but also the central site for the meetings of civilizations of the three continents. Hardly can we name any other place with so many conflicts and disturbances, as well as the fruitful and creative contact and collaboration between the people with different lifestyles and cultural experiences (Мухич 2003: 143). I think the Balkans may be easily replaced here by the Caucasus.
“The cultural and historical legacy served as a basis for sharply expressed cultural corridors, which may be observed in our homeland for the centuries long period” (Пырванов 2003: 36), – Bulgarian politicians refer to the results of existence at the crossroad for the history and culture of their country.

Generally, culture is interpreted as the complex system of the methods and tools for the adaptation to the environment. It is a set of answers to the challenges. According to another definition it is a structure of the standardized answers to the similar challenges.

How the environment can be characterized in the case of the Caucasus? What kind of challenges can be observed? In a geographical and cultural sense, the region has served both as bridge and barrier to contact between the North and the South, the East and the West. It used to be a crossroad and meeting point for the different cultures and civilizations. Generally, traffic is intensive at the crossroads at any time. This is true for our region as well, characterized with ordinary migration processes, trade links, diplomatic missions, as well as with refugees’ flows. As a result, ethnic, linguistic and confessional image of the Caucasus, like the natural landscape of the region, is quite diversified and colorful. The Caucasus represents a mosaic of cultures, confessions, ethnic groups and languages. Caucasian peoples belong to the four language groups: Caucasian, Indo-European, Turkic and Semite. Followers of three major religions are found here: Christianity, Islam in both its versions, and Judaism.

Under these circumstances, the existence and survival of the peoples of the region was only possible in conditions of dialogue with each other and with the wider world. It must be stressed that the dialogue of cultures was of a stable character in relation with the unstable and constantly changing political realities. Exactly the dialogue of cultures served as a basis for the formation of adaptive mechanisms, contributing to the coexistence of different peoples and traditions.

The concept of United Cultural Space is quite often used regarding the Caucasus and other similar spaces. We think it is the most appropriate concept, fully expressing the results of intercultural dialogue. The terms – Caucasian, Balkan, Baltic, etc. – designate not only the geographical space, but they refer to the identity with one particular cultural entity as well. These entities are best described in terms of diversity, cultural pluralism and unity. The concept of “Unity in Diversity” fits best with the sense of the Caucasus, as well as for the resembling cultural spaces.

As we have already mentioned, the process of intercultural dialogue was the everyday practice of general life, rather being the result of purposeful policy. Nevertheless, we should admit that the usual process of dialogue quite often was used as a tool for achieving of the political goals (e.g. cultural rivalry with the great neighbour, political unification of the region, etc.) Obviously, the centuries long practice of intercultural dialogue does not imply constant
peaceful coexistence. Neither the forms of dialogue were unchangeable for the course of time. However, the interrelation of the Caucasian cultures can be termed as a good practice of intercultural dialogue. I hope, our presentations will describe this practice and its particular examples.

II

Recently intercultural dialogue has been understood and ‘analyzed as the sociocultural phenomenon. There does not exist the accepted definition of the concept. In November 2006, the following definition of the term was offered by the Council of Europe: intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds, which leads to a deeper understanding of different world views and practices.

It appears necessary today to respond to the need for a deeper and more structured dialogue of cultures. The dialogue currently was formed as a new paradigm of security, having different reasons in its foundations. Contemporary processes are too rapid and prompted, while the world itself is too small and interconnected. Thus we can hardly hope for self regulation of cultural processes (among them intercultural dialogue can be listed as well). The main paradigm of our time is intensive relations between various individuals and groups. As professor of Political Sciences Ghasan Salame admits, migrations, tourism, transformed during the past century from an individual adventure into large mass movement, information technologies always take us to face with “the Other”, who “is everywhere and there is no efficient way to avoid him”. And the last but not the least: as a result of globalization the various groups of individuals and ongoing processes in the world have become more and more interrelated. On the other hand, “globalization paradoxically triggers cultural and social disintegration while pushing for deeper and deeper financial and economic integration. People invent new frontiers, new borders, and new distances in order to differentiate, to insulate, and to separate themselves from those who become too close for comfort” (Salame: 2007). Development of the modern world does not leave any space for the closed and self-sustained cultural entities. It requires for dialogue between different cultures and civilizations.

All these processes were accompanied by the significant and fundamental changes in the world politics and on the world political map. The new problems were raised as a result of dissolution of the USSR and the Cold War. First of all these processes were connected with the deepening of the process of political disintegration and with the raise of the new conflicts on the post-soviet space, among them in the region of the Caucasus. In scientific literature these conflicts are evaluated as ethno-conflicts, stressing the importance of religious factor and seeking for historical foundations of the conflicts. The old hurts are often recollected. Breaking of the old
identities was followed by the identity crisis and the process of search for new identities. Quite often the process of search has the shape of attempt to rebuild protective fences around the old collective identities, in spite of the fact that the process is drawn in the fundamentally different circumstances.

The ongoing changes have taken us to the need of their management. In order to manage successfully you have to know what to manage. You should know the substance of the process. In this case, one should be aware of not only with the existing reality, but also with the historical experience. That’s why the dialogue of cultures (and cultural interaction in general) was transformed into the subject of scientific and practical interest not only in the multiethnic societies, but in the wider world as well.

Besides, quite often, nowadays we mention “Culture Matters”, thus we have become more and more aware of the fact, that culture plays a crucial role in functioning of each aspect of the society. The success or failure of particular projects and aims are significantly determined by the culture. Although, it should be noted as well that “culture has become a language in which conflicts, even when caused by non-cultural factors, are now often expressed” (Salame: 2007).

We are trying to perceive intercultural dialogue – the real practical process – theoretically. We try to settle with its rules and norms, to determine its relations with the concepts of identity, conflict, etc. Exactly this is the novelty, and thereby the main hardship and difficulty lies in it.

By means of intercultural dialogue we are trying to find answer to the specific problem: is the renewal of group identity really possible without confrontation with others, when the contact is too close and the process itself is fueled as a result of constant collision with the other?

The several crucial factors should be taken into consideration while dealing with the successful dialogue of cultures. These factors include, but are not restricted to:

Knowing why people from other cultures behave the way they do – and especially knowing that their behavior makes sense to them even if it makes none to you – is the first and most important step in successfully crossing cultures Graig Storti states (Storti: 2001).

As Ahmed Jalili, permanent representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran at UNESCO admits, the question is the basis of dialogue. If we do not accept the priority of question over the answer, the real dialogue, new knowledge, perceptions and understandings will be inaccessible for us. Knowledge is a discussion over the confronted viewpoints. Questions make the whole specter of opportunities apparent, while dominant sense makes dialogue impossible (Джалили 2003: 59).

The dialogue can not start from the problems dividing us. Exactly the substance, which makes us united, serves as a basis for dialogue. As rabbi Arthur Shnaier admitted, God gave us, humans, not only the sense of memory, but the capacity to bury things in oblivion (Шнайер
We should accept the predominance of rationality and scientific method over the emotive one (Dialogue: 2007).

The theme of dialogue should be determined clearly. Dialogue is not about everything. It is desirable dialogue not to be in relation with fundamental convictions of particular cultures, for if we wish to establish common ground for dialogue at the level of basic convictions, somebody’s basic convictions become the measure, taking us to the misunderstanding, serving as a basis for false universalism, which can arise true differences (Appadurai: 2007). Only those topics should be selected, which are really suitable and affordable for the dialogue.

We should not hope for a complex and full understanding; it is an impossible standard because of the culture, language and history that divide individuals and communities. Dialogue is a form of negotiation and negotiation cannot be based on complete understanding or a total consensus across any sort of boundary of difference (Appadurai: 2007). We should remind here the determination of dialogue offered by Martin Buber, referring dialogue as an effective method of communication, rather than as a necessarily purposeful attempt targeted towards particular aim.

Arjun Appadurai offers that to reduce this risk of misunderstanding we have to choose our words carefully, to pay attention to language and translation, and try to imagine the mental assumptions of the other party, in short we try to find the best ways to cross the boundaries between the speaker and listener (Appadurai: 2007).

Nobody of the participants of dialogue is able to pretend to be entitled to speak in the name of the whole culture or nation. Such temptation can be determined by the perception of culture as monolithic and homogeneous unity, existing in a particular geographical area. But it’s an extremely oversimplified scheme for representing complex structure of culture.

In the framework of each culture there do exist various controversial, debatable issues. Dialogue demands for exact calculation of what to bring from the internal debates into dialogue with the other. If you bring in too much internal debate, your position looks weak, if you bring it too little, you look authoritarian and incredible. The risk is that we can make a wrong choice (Appadurai: 2007).

Selecting the participants of the dialogue plays a crucial role as well. We should never try to make involved in dialogue as much people as possible. But rather we should select for the right one for right time.

Let me think, that current meeting brings together such kind of people. The participants of our Round Table can share their experiences, serving as a necessary precondition for successful dialogue. Promotion and advancement can be achieved through dialogue, if you are ready to open your mind and try to know as much as possible about the other. Thus, dialogue is an active learning process. As Dieter Senghaas admits, intercultural dialogue these days requires, above
all, expanding the intellectual horizon regarding history and a globally oriented comparative analysis (Senghaas).

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Caucasus - Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue

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Such topic as “Prospects of Intercultural Dialogue in the Caucasus” may be discussed within the globalization process, from the philosophical, ethical, political point of view, from the position of national priorities of the Caucasian region countries, ideological interpretation of the topics, etc. It should be admitted that each of the above-mentioned approaches has its own system of argumentation and principles, to reject the force of which is impossible and wrong.

Each of the possible interpretations of the topics under discussion is interesting and essential. It should be mentioned that each party (the parties having definite interest) will adhere to the interpretation beneficial just for itself, i.e. the interpretation, which justifies either the activity or the position of this very party. In other words, each will uphold its private position and each will take a “one-sided” view of the object of discussion. Thus we’ll come not to the dialogue with the hope for understanding and agreement, but to the discussion (dispute) with the wish to defend own positions, now with the probability that one conflict may develop into the other one with different essence. Hence, we may miss the happy medium, which satisfy those, who really wish a dialogue.

Proceeding from all said above, I would like to offer to the Round Table participants to develop discussion just around the search for perspectives of the intercultural dialogue in the Caucasus and not to try leading away towards political mongering. Inevitability and even necessity of the dialogue determined by the objective factor independent from us, namely, common borders.

I would like to mention that one of the priorities of a new unit of political system of Azerbaijan is to conduct accentuated-democratic and tolerant policy against the ethnic minorities living in Azerbaijan. It is one of the major and principled tasks for any democratic country with a great amount of ethnic minorities.

The Ministry of culture and tourism of Azerbaijan, along with numerous projects and programs, has elaborated the project “Cultural diversity of Azerbaijan,” which is being implemented within the UNESCO program “Cultural diversity.” I would like to stress that there are more than 20 cultural communities of ethnic minorities registered in Azerbaijan. Among them we can name the following: Russian community, Ukrainian community, Lezgin national centre, German Society, Tatar national centre, Azeri-Israeli community, congress of ethnic minorities of Azerbaijan, etc. Protection of cultural rights of ethnic minorities of Azerbaijan is considered to be the basis of democracy in our country.
The distinctiveness of ethnic cultures and sustained state policy of tolerance found its expression in the art of Azerbaijan, peculiarity of which is enriched with the best achievements of the world culture. It points to loyalty of the Azeri government. Cultural diversity of the country points to the potential predisposition to the intercultural dialogue in Azerbaijan.

But statistical rhetoric may lead us away from the search for ways to form universal mechanisms of intercultural dialogue in the Caucasus.

Searching for the principles of intercultural dialogue one may rely on one of the existing moral systems:

- “I have to behave to others the way they behave to me…”
- “Don’t behave to others the way they don’t behave to you…”
- “Others should behave to me the way I behave to others…”
- “Others should not behave to me the way I don’t behave to others” or “Don’t allow others behave to you the way you don’t behave to them…”

It seems to me, the potential of intercultural dialogue have to be found among the moral-ethical systems listed above.

Necessity of intercultural dialogue is determined also by the processes of globalization, which either absorbs national cultures or forces to conduct permanent dialogue.

The problem of identification and self-identification of ethnic cultures and the issue of intercultural dialogue in the transformational world becomes urgent in the context of globalization.

Globalization is the phenomenon of socio-political character, being a subject of research of many disciplines (philosophy, politology, sociology, culturology, geopolitics, ethnology, etc.). That’s why the problem of intercultural dialogue is directly related with the analysis of processes of geopolitical transformations of modern world. To choose the approach for the analysis of this phenomenon is more the issue of methodological character than of principled-substantial plane.

There exist different interpretations of globalization. Each of these interpretations is not devoid of subjectivity.

Agreeing with the expression that globalization is the process, one should apprehend as a priori that this process is a movement, which like any other movements, has the sources and direction. Just here starts the struggle of interpretations, among which, undoubtedly, culturological, politological and, surely, philosophical interpretations prevail.

Globalization, in culturologists’ point of view, is a variety of the processes of international relations. The actors of this process may have relations of different plane: partnership, allied, relations of competitive character, etc. Thus, globalization is not only an opportunity to impose desirable character of mutual relations, but interests, values, world order as well. To express
figuratively globalization is the key to the internal political system of any state. Intercultural dialogue may mitigate sharp edges of political games.

It should be taken into consideration that globalization is the process of contacts of cultures. The task of intercultural dialogue is to determine optimal forms of these contacts. This stresses great importance of the Round Table, for which I am most grateful to its organizers.

There is also a direct connection between dialogue and democracy. Democracy is a slogan of globalizations. It changes local culture, attaching new coloring to it. Within the present context democracy becomes the subject of culturological research, in which political tonality yields to culturological paradigms.

The task of culturology is rather not in determination of priorities in favour of globalists or anti-globalists but to elaborate universal mechanism for providing intercultural dialogue. The dialogue may allow avoiding sacrifices.
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Caucasian Cultural World: Unity and Diversity

“Pearl” of the Russian crown - the definition given to the Caucasus by a renowned expert and a founder of Caucasian studies N. Y. Marr involves in itself not only material values.

Really, the Caucasus may rightfully boast of not only its grand nature and beauty, which inspired most talented, outstanding masters of Russian world, but also of its rich, multilayer and multiform cultural heritage.

At present scientific circles often apply to the Caucasus as to a zone of numerous conflicts (Karabakh conflict, conflict in Abkhazia, etc.), co-existence of cultures seems to be forgotten, while just this very aspect may allow to elaborate definite approaches to the solution of the problems, which could have been discussed from the viewpoint of historical processes in the countries of this region.

To substantiate the need for a regional approach to the issue, we’ll try consider to make some excursus into the history of intercultural contacts in the region, which may be surely considered to be a contact zone not only of different cultures, but sometimes of different civilizations as well.

In our historical excursus we’ll more then once appeal to the scientific heritage of Marr, as his basic conclusions on this issue, made in the beginning of the last century, sustained harsh academic criticism and are quite vital in a theoretical plane. The works by Marr open for the present-day researchers an opportunity of broader apprehension of numerous facts and cultural layers, being beyond the ethno-cultural and administrative-legal borders, formed later.

Mutual penetration and relation of cultures of the Caucasian peoples and neighboring countries are not limited by geographical environment of the so-called contact zones at all. The Caucasian cultural world sets against the Caucasian mountains only on one side. In the south the space we are interested in bordered age-old Semitic world, it clashed and rivaled with it.

Upholding its peculiar cultural position, the Caucasian cultural world didn’t shut itself off either the East or the West. In the first case it experienced Muslim influence and in the other - Christian. Each of them two laid its way, which is rather interesting from the viewpoint of apprehending mutual influence and mutual penetration of cultures.

The Caucasian world had access to the Muslim culture through Persia or Iran. Cultural influence of Iran on the Caucasian world is age-old and is based not only on the early immigration of Iranians in the Caucasus, but also on the national-psychological similarities. It
was expressed through common religious beliefs, legends, songs, connected with round dances and serving the cult interests. Muslim mass from autochthonic population really served as advocators of local life and religious peculiarities into the common Muslim environment.

Iran’s influence is seen in the ancient legends of the Caucasian world. It should be mentioned that these legends, transformed into the fairy-tales, even now preserve resemblance of plots (Amirani and Artavaz). The ancient local monuments of Christian masters have traces of artistic taste of the Iranian (Sassanid) art. However, according to Marr, “importance of Iranian-Muslim cultural trend in the Caucasus is only provoking and artistic” and it promoted extension of the cultural outlooks of the Caucasian world.

Having inherited from the pagan times a peculiar ethno-cultural disposition, the Caucasian cultural world opened on its own way of access to the Christian fundamentals, protecting itself thus from absorption into different civilizations. After adopting Christianity the spiritual independence of this world was expressed more intensively and was displayed through creating of own written languages (the 5th century), own church, and own art.

Voluntarily or not, becoming a permanent participant and witness of colossal downfalls, the Caucasian cultural world promoted unification of different, but affined national groups, different multi-national states into one complex political unity. The entire process, as well as formation of a state, was accompanied by natural frictions, becoming especially intensive on the basis of clashes between fixed national conceptions and inevitable results of assimilations in favour of culturally more accustomed people or in favour of most armed national collective.

It is interesting that the history of the Caucasus knows no case of forming a state or at least simple national group from the tribes of one ethnic group. Neither Georgia, nor Armenia might be considered as an exception.

Let’s try to follow mutual influence of cultures on the example of Armenian people.

Armenia has always been in the center of world events in the East. Collision of pagan East and Christian West was not only felt in Armenia, but was ongoing with the participation of its inhabitants, devoted fighters for the cross. Well-known “struggle for faith” in Armenia in the 5th-6th centuries is only a link in the chain of continuous clashes of two different social-religious worlds. In religious respect, adoption of Christianity by Armenians is presented as the Caucasian case, uniting Armenians with Georgians and Albanians, even Abkhazs (unification with Armenian king of kings of Abkhazia, Georgia and Alania). The same idea of unification is displayed in the Armenian literature of the period of Armenian national revival. In regard to the culture in general the monuments of the same revival period pursue the same idea of unification in expressing successes of enlightenment in Christian basis.

Within Armenian clergy literary schools of Sirophil and Greekophil, confronted each other, paved the way for national trends, with the deviation from more affined Iranian cultural world
towards Greek enlightenment. Local sects appeared, and one of them under the name of pavlikianism later moved towards the West, acquired new traits and transformed into new forms. One from the universal Christian teachings, Monophysite, complicated by some peculiarities, which related it to the Orthodox Church, became national for Armenians. A whole number of regions with Orthodox Armenian population were separated from Armenians, merging with Greek or Georgian population. As a result, the fight against the Greek-Orthodox faith turns from purely religious to the national ground.

The art of Armenia of the same period developed according to the norms of common Christian world, demonstrating itself in architecture, representing any type of old Christian construction, attaching local peculiarities to it.

After Seljuks destroyed Armenia with its artistically rich capital Ani, the last shelter of national culture on the homeland, it seemed the Armenian state suspended its existence, but the Armenian kingdom revived and flourished in Cilicia. The Cilician Armenian state had great importance for the history of culture. It opened the way to Europe for Armenians, partially promoting their rapprochement to it. Propensity of Armenians to West Europe arose in the result of cultural and political contacts of Cilicia with the European world.

By the moment of fall of Armenian Bagratids’ state the Georgian Kingdom developed and strengthened in the Caucasus. A Georgian branch of Bagratids ruled in it (the Abkhazian Kingdom was also formed by the Bagratid dynasty). Thanks to it the cultural life of Armenia revived.

In the national self-preservation of Armenia was supported by Christianity, educated by literature (verbal, folk, with folk singers — ashughs). However, all this was not sufficient.

The Caucasus turned to the European way of development introduced by Russia. By this time the Caucasian world chose the orientation to the North, though the relation of Russia’s south with the Caucasian cultural world was witnessed still in the iconoclasm epoch. Community of Russian and South-Slavonic art with Armenian and Georgian art, especially in architecture, points to some common cultural trends, relating Russia with the Caucasian world. Such forms of cultural interaction are witnessed by the Caucasian influence in applied art, handicraft in the Crimea. Influence of Armenian masters is seen also on the metal work on silver in the Polish art.

Fundamental reconstruction of the Caucasian world was going on the new non-tribal and non-class basis of economic development. The relations of not only separate national forces, but of separate peoples and tribes, radically changed. The new reality required to review the relations between the old and new national groups of the Caucasus and freedom of their new self-determination.
Opening for Armenians a broad field for economic and cultural development, the Russian state gave their active public forces the basis of national concentration and a source of national self-renewal.

The Armenian national literature revived in the ancient capital of Georgia as well.

Each blow, each fall was always followed by cultural revival and rise of national life, each time there came the epoch of creativity on the basis of universal human culture. It is true that thanks to high cultural traditions, having roots in pre-historic for Europe times, the Armenian people managed to preserve their individuality.

None of the cultures, surely, can be understood without influence of one nation on another. Thus, for example, Armenian influence may be observed in the art of Seljuks of Asia Minor, architecture of Byzantium and Russia. In any case, common elements are inherited from the same pre-historic source. Those were closest contacts with all civilized peoples: Persians, Arabs, Syrians, Georgians, Greeks.

Thanks to Armenian translations from Greek and other languages the significant monuments of classical Christian literature were preserved. The Armenian people saved the monuments literature through its translations from Greek.

The Caucasus and Armenia in particular are acknowledged as a gate and crossroad for different peoples. But the road was too hard and the gates too narrow. On this territory, exactly the same as on the anvil there was shaped one destiny of all the local population. Armenians and Georgians experienced hard blows, first from Assyrians and Babylonians, than Greeks and ancient Persian monarchs, Parthians and Roman commanders, Byzantium and Sassanids, Arabs and Byzantium, Turks, Mongols, Persians, numerous invasions and raids of northern peoples, such as Khazars and later Lezgins.

Now a few words about the Armenian-Georgian cultural mutual influence and penetration.

Armenian-Georgians contacts were expressed in many spheres of material and spiritual life (handicraft methods and artistic ideals, pilgrimage, trade and industrial relations, co-participation in folk games and entertainments, elaboration of Armenian-Georgian architectural style, etc.).

Close relations of Georgians and Armenians were diversified, intensive, versatile and fruitful. The need for joint study of these relations is clear and evident.

On the both sides of the border between Georgia and Armenia there existed similar life conditions rooted in feudalism and Christianity. For study of the feudal order, in Armenia one can easily use rich Georgian documentary materials, while the monuments of Armenian historiography are of great significance for the history of Georgia.

As for Christianity, not only when Georgians and Armenians constituted one church, which continued longer than it is considered to be, but also after they break into two churches and started to live independently, Armenians and Georgians mantained close contacts as Christians.
We may judge how Christianity influenced the particular spheres of cultural life by such concrete events, as secular romantic poetry of Georgians and fairy-tale literature of Armenians. Along with Christianity, the grate ancient cultures influenced the development of the Armenian and Georgian ones, e.g. Iranian mazdeanism, Semitic heathenism and Islam, both Arabian and especially Persian versions.

A well-known statement should be repeated here according to which if the elements are foreign the combination is local, never repeated.

According to N. Marr, real characteristic of any people of the Caucasus depends not only on its national self-evaluation, but on the place it occupies within the space formed the basis of common cultural elements.

Despite different languages these peoples, or their parts, make up one whole world. They are united in life by agreed understanding of Christian teaching, in literature-by the identical wording of Holy Writ, in art-by affined, often same artistic forms.

In the monuments of spiritual culture of each of named peoples this trait is of invaluable dignity, enabling to reconstruct not an episodic role of any national or Christian group, but the whole extinct cultural world.

Within last ten years we were very much infatuated by local problems and rather often common cultural aspects of realities, revealed by us, remain finally unclosed or unconsidered.

In the new times Armenians and Georgians embarked on more independent way of development. A considerable role in it is played by newly born peculiarities of a social structure. The significance of local factors becomes stronger. Local coloring of cultural events becomes more complex and more vivid, but contemporary condition of culture fixes the stage of its transformation from local to international level.

Consequently, the problem of dialogue of cultures, of mutual understanding and mutual penetration of culture is of regional importance. Surely, none of the cultures can be understood without influence of neighboring peoples, which we, unfortunately, do not take into consideration. Efficient intercultural dialogue of ethnic bodies is possible only through substantiated, purpose oriented and co-ordinated activities of the state structures, municipal bodies and national-cultural associations. Conceptual basis of such activities should be major directions of national and regional policy.
Inter-religious dialogue has formed an integral part of the mission of the UNESCO in the course of the latest years, comprising a complex domain of monitoring, research, and social debate. It has been defined as flagship activity in the Programme of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue of the UNESCO for the biennial period 2006-2007. The aim of the present report consists in briefly reviewing its conceptual framework, as well as methodological guidelines.

To start with a definition, citing the aforementioned document, ‘a major aim of inter-religious dialogue, which forms part of the broader intercultural dialogue, is to promote dialogue between individuals and leaders of different religions, faiths and convictions with a view to increasing mutual knowledge about spiritual traditions and their underlying values, thus enhancing the understanding among the wider cultural communities’ (Part IV.2.2 ‘Promoting inter-cultural dialogue’). Studying this statement, we find in its text references to several essential realms of action and discourse.

Primarily, inter-religious dialogue is defined as a complex structure of ‘religions, faiths and convictions’. In this way, both traditional religions, and new religious movements, as well as a wider realm of ideals and convictions, being roughly delineated currently as the domain of spirituality, are regarded as subject to cultural policies of the UNESCO, to the extent they form an integral part of culture in general. These spiritual traditions, as well as underlying convictions and values, are represented by a broad number of persons, delineated as individuals, communities, as well as spiritual and/or religious leaders.

Secondly, inter-religious dialogue is regarded as forming part of a much broader activity, defined as inter-cultural dialogue. This reference brings us back to the notion of cultural diversity, highly essential for the mission of the UNESCO in general. Cultural diversity is regarded in the basic documents of the UNESCO along two principal lines. On the one hand, it is regarded as the major instrument in counteracting strategic risks in present-day cultural dynamics, which are defined as identity-based isolationism, and as cultural standardization. The structure of these risks tends to comprise two kinds of cultural challenges, one of which is formed by the opposition between isolationism and globalization, another one by traditionalism and standardization. In this way, the experts of the UNESCO managed to present the main challenges in the contemporary cultural dynamics in a condensed and constructive form.
On the other hand, promoting cultural diversity is further elaborated in terms of a number of focal points for the cultural policies. At present time, their structure tends to comprise four main domains, delineated as heritage (world, monumental, movable, intangible); living cultures (traditional expressions, crafts, contemporary expressions, languages, copyright); sustainable development (cultural tourism, crafts, indigenous knowledge), and finally, inter-cultural dialogue.

In tracing back actual trends in applying the instruments of the cultural policies to these focal points, balance between tradition and innovation, protection and creativity is highly recommendable. As it was stated in the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, introduced in 2005, ‘Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used’.

As to the aforementioned instruments of the cultural policies, they are regarded in line with the threefold structure, comprising standard setting, capacity building, as well as advocacy, which has proved to be highly effective in the course of the sixty years of global activities of the UNESCO.

It looks like the most constructive way in building the inter-religious dialogue into the framework of the inter-cultural one, consists not in promoting strict differentiation between these two realms, but rather in enhancing and fostering their fruitful exchange, by means of reconstructing an inter-religious aspect in every major direction of the inter-cultural dialogue. Moving in this direction, we find it expedient and constructive to single out poly- and trans-methodological issues. The former consist in joining descriptive procedures and epistemologies of different approaches, in order to reach a constructive description of a multi-faceted, complex phenomenon, avoiding to merge them into a single methodology. The latter, in forming a novel methodology, primarily as a result of a trans-disciplinary merging of methodologies.

To cite a plausible example, we could recur to the somewhat unexpected tendency towards radicalization of religious organizations, which forms a new challenge in the framework of present-day Western cities. On the one hand, this tendency is conditioned by extreme poverty, which is subject to sociological analysis. On the other hand, it is triggered by ethnic inequality, which brings forth ethnological issues, as part of present-day urban studies. Briefly reviewing the roots of the problem, we’ve definitely got to cite spiritual vacuum, produced by the waning of the traditional religions and beliefs in the post-industrial context. As a result, people from middle class tend also to be recruited to radical religious organisations, which brings forth the necessity of the psychological approach. As a result, constructive approach to the challenge of
religious radicalization in urban settings is subject to poly-methodological analysis, which consists in joining research procedures and descriptive techniques of the sociological, ethnological, and psychological approaches.

To shift to another example, we could primarily cite novel approaches to regional issues, elaborated in the framework of the activities of the UNESCO. Special programs were designed, in order to meet challenges conditioned by pre- or post-conflict situations in the Balkans, the Caucasus, in Central Asia, as well as in some dimensions of the Euro-Arab dialogue. In all of these cases, religious tensions seem to have very much taken part in triggering civic or inter-state conflicts, acting in conjunction with social factors, as well as the ethnic ones. Hence the necessity of poly-methodological approach which is being actively applied as part of these programmes and agenda.

In approaching regional issues, an alternative approach would consist in bringing forth the trans-regional agenda. This move consists primarily in linking quite different regions, basing on the ‘good practices’ which occurred at some time in their history, sometimes quite remote. Such programmes as ‘Silk Roads’, ‘Iron Road’, ‘Slave Routes’, elaborated in the framework of the activities of the UNESCO, could be cited in this respect. As a result, novel dimensions of a broad range of present-day challenges were discovered, basing upon the concept of plural identities linked to common heritage, which forms an example of trans-methodological approach. Intercultural dialogue is regarded at present as the most expedient result of implementation of these projects, hence their general definition, ‘Routes of Dialogue’. At the same time, inter-religious dialogue presents an essential aspect of dialogue in every one of the abovementioned cases.

Returning to our analysis of facets of the definition of principal aims of the inter-religious dialogue, we find the ‘enhancing the understanding among the wider cultural communities’ as valuable result of its implementation. This understanding is further defined in official documents of the UNESCO as leading towards social cohesion, as well as societal stability. This stance is highly important: as we have just seen, the UNESCO is by no means determined to patronize either religious organisations, or the society in general, by means of improving religions, or fostering spirituality. Contrary to this, the objectives of this international organization are highly transparent and pragmatic. They consist in helping religious leaders, communities, and individuals to practice their religions and beliefs on their own, contributing to societal peace and security.

An essential notion which has to be mentioned in this context is tolerance. Practicing this orientation belongs to the very core of the mission of the UNESCO. The challenge which is quite actual nowadays, consists in the necessity to combine ‘freedom of expression, information and communication’, including religious one, with principle of ‘equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, including the cultures of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples’ (in
formulating both facets of tolerance, we have recurred to the text of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005, respectively parts I.1, and I.3).

Difficult as it may be, practicing both of the aforementioned principles remains a priority for the UNESCO. To cite an appeal, issued by the UNESCO Director-General Mr.K.Matsuura in 2004, the ‘democratic state, whether neutral, secular, or religious, has as principles, the protection of liberty of conscience, the exercise of faith and pluralism of religions, allowing them to find an appropriate place in society. On the contrary, religion, by its moral and ethical engagement, the values it defends and its cultural expression, should be a full partner of democracy”. This well-balanced position provides a valuable impetus for elaboration of the whole realm of the inter-cultural dialogue.

Basing on these principles, a new UNITWIN Network of UNESCO chairs, devoted to Inter-religious Dialogue for Inter-Cultural Understanding, was founded in the year 2006, in Paris, at the headquarters of the UNESCO, in presence of the UNESCO Director-General Mr.K.Matsuura. As it was emphasized in the initial Agreement, inter-religious dialogue is regarded as integral part of the inter-cultural one, the implementation of both serving as instrumental in the attaining of ‘mutual understanding, security, and peace’ (Part I. Purpose). Guided by the aforementioned ethical and methodological principles, the newly founded Network is currently being actively involved into monitoring, research, and societal debate of problems and prospects in inter-religious dialogue, forming an integral part of the inter-cultural one.

In summarizing the essence of this report, it would be most plausible and constructive to emphasize that inter-religious dialogue forms an integral part of the inter-cultural one, contributing to promotion of cultural diversity, that basic dimensions of this dialogue may be traced back, providing focal points for detailed and constructive analysis, enhancement, and/or emendation, and that lofty ideas and specific methodologies of the UNESCO form a well-structured conceptual field for formatting and implementing innovative religious policies on national level, as well as in context of the inter-state relations. In this way a realm for debate, research and societal activity has been formed for UNESCO chairs devoted to inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.
Protestantism (Luther’s Church) in Georgia

There are several Protestant churches in Georgia, among them the Lutheran one is the most notorious. It does not have a long history. The Protestant church was established by the end of the 20th century, nevertheless, Lutheranism penetrated in Georgia long before.

First notes about the spread of Lutheranism in Georgia were revealed by Zaqaria Chichinadze. In 1904 he published a special article in Georgian newspaper “Samshoblo” [Motherland] entitled – “The Georgian Adherents of Lutheranism in Georgia”. According to his viewpoint, Lutheranism in Georgia was first spread in Samtsxe-Saatabago region, by the German missionaries. As Chichinadze admits, at that time they [German missionaries] stayed in Georgia for a particular period of time, forming the core of numerous Georgian Lutheran parish.

The abovementioned information was the topic of vivid discussion, as author’s date of German missionaries’ arrival in Georgia – 1510-1513 was considered incorrect. In general, we can speak about Lutheranism since 1517, after Martin Luther published his famous Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences, known as the 95 Theses. It was widely spread after 1555, when “Religious Peace of Augsburg” was concluded. The Western European historical sources and literature point to the fact of Lutherans’ interests towards Georgia. An Englishman S.Ransimen and German V.Benz, in their works devoted to the patriarchate of Constantinople, by citing German scientists and travellers Stephan Gelarx and Martin Crusius, stress the fact of existence of Georgian translations of Lutheran teaching Confesio Augustina. The translation, together with the Greek version, was handed over to Georgians.

Lutherans had particular interests towards the eastern churches, founding themselves in hardship by the end of the 16th century. It is a well-known fact that Greeks and other churches of the East had some controversy with the Catholic church. After the fall of Constantinople, the routes linking the West and the East were blocked and missionaries were facing with serious problems.

The main postulates of Lutheranism were translated into Greek by Pavel Dolciuss and they were published in Bazel, in 1559. In the same year, the translation was sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople – Josep, by the comrade-in-arm of Luther F.Melanxton. Although, the Patriarch of Constantinople refused.
The same edition was sent to the Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremia on September 15, 1574, by the Chancellor and theologian of the Tubingen University Jacob Andreass, professor of Greek and Latin languages at the same university Martin Crussius, the member of diplomatic mission of the German emperor Stephane Gerlax (Benz 1860: 94).

In his Turkish diaries Stephane Gerlax describes the fact in details. Martin Crussius admits in his book that the 6 copies of Greek translation were brought to Constantinople on May 24, 1575. One of them was handed over to Dr. Michael Kantakuzen, being the person in charge of the process of translation into different languages. Later, the work, already translated into Georgian, was sent to Georgia by M.Kantakuzen (D. Michael Cantacuzeno, Qui sibi in vulgarem linguam trasnsferendum curavit, Horum unum postea in Ibericam seu Georgianam linguam conversum, in illam Regionem abiit). (Crusius 1584: 488; Benz 1860: 264).

There can be found an information about the interests of the nobles of Samtskhe in Lutheranism in the materials collected by Professor Ilia Tabagua.

The letter of Venceslav Budovic, dated back to 1580 and preserved in the archive of Propaganda Fide, tells us about the presence of two sons of the governor of Samtskhe in Constantinople, one of them having particular interests towards Lutheran church.

“I was trying my best to do everything. In the words of translation I informed them shortly about the conditions of German church; later I found a book of Confessio Augustina published in Bazel and brought in great amount by Mr. Gerlax. He wanted to translate it in the Iberican language and send it to home”.

These sources serve as a proof of the information, described in the book of Zaqaria Chichinadze concerning the spread of Lutheranism in Georgia in the second half of the 16th century. The fact that Chichinadze erroneously sets date for the spread of Lutheranism in Georgia is mainly caused as a result of his lack of knowledge of the history of Lutheranism.

The western sources are particularly interesting and informative for the future study of the problem. The information about German missionaries from the diary of Ivane Gvaramadze by Zaqaria Chichinadze are the most notorious: “Pastor Jacob, who knew the Georgian language, made Mzechabuk familiar with the Lutheranism. He used to be the doctor of theology, studied Georgian on the basis of Turkish and served as a teacher of Georgian for other pastors.

Andria Pastor, with German origins. He studied Georgian in Istanbul, then arrived in Georgia and lived in Akhaltsikhe. He was striving for the spread of Lutheranism.

Pastor Gelarx, with German origins, was quite influential person, widely known not only in Samtsxe region, but in whole Georgia and Persia.

Pastor Selvecer was a clever priest and good preacher. The map of Georgia was made by him in German. He contributed much to the study of Lutheranism.
Pastor Martin, professor at Tizingen University. He baptized several Georgian nobles from the Jakeli family. Currently there can hardly be found anyone from Jakeli family exercising Lutheranism, therefore there were some Catholics. Later Lutheran Jakeli chose Catholicism as their religion (Chichinadze 1918: 16).

Several persons mentioned in these sources may be identifies by their comparison with the dates and information of the western literature. These persons should be Pastor Martin (Martin Cursius), professor at the university of Tubingen, Pastor Stephan Gerlax, the person who introduced the Greek translation of the Lutheran Confession to Constantinople. The letter of Venceslav Budovich, found in the archive of Propaganda Fide is the testimony of the abovementioned information. At the same time Pastor Jacob may be considered as the Chancellor of Tubingen University, theologian Jacob Andrea, actively participating in the spread of Lutheranism among Christians of the Eastern regions.

Hence, in the second half of the 16th century, nearly at the same time as in the Western countries, there was an attempt to introduce Lutheranism in Georgia. There were favorable conditions in Samtskhe region for spreading Lutheranism. It was the sole chance for the maintenance of Christianity and the links with western Europe, as in Samtsxe region, which was isolated from the rest Georgia, Ottoman were imposing Islam forcibly, thus contributing to the separation of Georgia not only from the Church of Mtskheta, but from the patriarchy of Constantinople as well.

As Shota Lomsadze admits, the orthodox Georgian Christians living in the conquered areas were subjugated to the Armenian-Gregorian church by the Sultan of Ottoman Empire. The Armenian-Gregorian church was formed in Constantinople and its spiritual leader was elected as the second Catholicos-Patriarch of Constantinople. At the same time, the Greek Patriarch was forced to acknowledge the new patriarch of Armenia and new patriarchy as an equal unit.

In 1546 Pope Pavel III appointed Nakhchevan Archbishop, Armenian Catholic Unitor Stephan as his nuncio. The fact made the conditions of Georgian Catholics even worse. Turks severely oppressed Georgians, supporting Armenian Catholicism at the expense of Latin one. Sultan prohibited conversion from Armenian Catholic rite to the Latin one. Armenian Catholic entities of Turkey were allowed to convert Catholic parish, living on the territory into Armenian manner.

Georgian Catholics were in hardships in Georgia. Catholic missionaries from the West ceased to arrive in Georgia, thus mainly Armenian Unitors appeared on the stage.

These factors contributed not only to the religious degradation of Georgians living in Samtskhe, but served as a basis for their national disappearance. Samtskhe nobles were trying their best to preserve Christianity and national identity as well. Lutheran church was not self-
sustained, having one particular person as a governor, thus there was less probability for imposing foreign power’s influence over it. Besides, as different from Catholicism, it was allowed to conduct religious rituals – liturgy and pray on the national language. On the other hand it gave a chance to have direct contacts with the West. Later, with the advancement of Turkish power, it became almost impossible to maintain Lutheranism in Georgia.

By the end of the 19th century, Lutheran church was formed in Georgia. At this time the Lutheran church was established by the German colonists, resettled in Georgia in 1817-1819, by the Tsar of Russia. Initially the following colonies were founded: Marienfeld (near Tbilisi, village Sartichala), the Colony of Tbilisi (at the territory of the present day David Agmashenebeli ave.), Aleqsandrsdorf (Tbilisi, Didube district), Petersdorf (near Sartichala), Elizavetal (village Asureti), Ekaterinenfeld (Borchalo region, near Bolnisi), Anenfeld and Elenenfeld (near Shamqori surroundings). Germans also were settled in the outskirts of Sokhumi in 1894, where they formed two colonies: Naidorf and Gnadenberg. It should be admitted as well that besides Lutherans, there were sectarians among the German colonists.

Among Evangelist-Lutheran churches, constructed by German colonists, the most notorius is the church of Tbilisi colony. It was built in 1820, later, in 1832 the new church was erected at the same place. A new Peter-Pavel Church was built in 1894-1897. Several churches were existed in Elenendorf, Aleqsandrsdorf, Ekaterinenfeld and Elizavetal. They played an important role in the spread of German Protestant culture in Georgia. The secondary schools existed in the framework of these churches, where German and Georgian pupils were studying side by side.

Later, during the Soviet period, under the totalitarian and atheist regime, these churches were abolished and destroyed in particular after the re-settlement of German colonists from Georgia.

Re-emergence of Lutheran-Evangelic Church in Georgia began from the 1990’s, in the independent Georgia. Within the framework of academic partnership between Tbilisi State University and Saarland University, Doctor of theology, Professor Gert Hummel, 61 years after the imprisonment of the last Lutheran pastor Richard Mayer served the first protestant mess in Tbilisi, in 1992. 50 persons were Christianized that day. Gradually Lutheran community was developed in Rustavi, Bolnisi (in former Katarinenfeld), Gardabani and Gori. At the beginning Gert Hummel used to visit Georgia twice a year, later he moved to Georgia together with his wife. With the initiative of Hummel, on 25 September 1995 building of a new Lutheran-Evangelistic Church was begun in Tbilisi. Two years later, on 26 September the first festive mess was held in the new temple. On 28 November in the place where divine service used to be held in private house, a new temple was erected. In Bolnisi and Gardabani the public mess was also held in the houses. In 1999 a Lutheran-Evangelist community developed in Sokhumi by
professor Hummel. In 2002 old Lutheran Church was reconstructed there. Today the bishop of the Lutheran-Evangelist Church of Georgia is Dr. Johannes Launhardt.

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South-East Europe and the Caucasus:
On the project of comparative history of cultural-religious relations
in polyethnic and multiconfessional environment

South-East Europe, recognized more as civilizational than a geographical community, embracing the Balkan and Carpathian-Danube regions (a part of South-East Europe proper in a geographic sense), had much in common in its historical development with the Caucasus region. Similarities are based not only on the comparable geographical-climatic conditions, underestimation of which is absolutely wrong. Highland fragmentation of space caused a whole number of rather close characteristics of historical-cultural processes.

For example, evaluation, given by Dmitry Obolenski to the role of geographical environment in formation of specificities of historical development of the Balkan region, may be quite familiar for the experts in the Caucasian region and quite often with some necessary reservation is in accord. In the very beginning of his analysis in regard to geographical environment, a renowned expert in Byzantine studies distributes accents most expressively: “First impressive trait of the Balkan landscape - mountains. The word “Balkan” is Turkish and means a mountain chain…”

Determining the relation between this characteristic of the Balkan geographical environment and historical processes of the region, D. Obolenski sums up: “These examples are sufficient to illustrate multilateral and vital role of mountains in the medieval history of the Balkans - a shelter for a fugitive, a poor man and an exile; a stronghold of political freedom, ethnic differences, ancient traditions, social individualism and religious dissident state; the region of separated villages, inhabitants of which, being on the curb of written history, remained for centuries unreceptive to more advanced civilization of the plain, often being a barrier blocking expansion of culture, but being economically bound with plain regions, thanks to seasonal migration of nomad shepherds and their flocks; a hearth of barbarians and a source of permanent troubles for ploughmen, fearing for security of their cornfields, cattle and olive gardens; a base for recruitment, often of the best recruits on the entire peninsula… Mountains, discussed from physical and human viewpoint, make permanent and stable aspect of the Balkan history.”
Mountains, largely promoting definite “particularism” of separate regions, were never sufficient barriers on the way of invasions. It should be mentioned that from the geographical viewpoint, both regions are not only divided by the Black Sea water space, but are connected by it as well. Along the coastlines, land and sea ways provided economic and cultural relations, acting dependent on the pulses of historical situations with various levels of intensity.

However, as we have already mentioned, not only similarity of geographical conditions enables to build a comparative analysis on the basis of comparable historical-cultural processes. Both regions are also bound by well-known comparability of civilization contexts. *Orbis Romanis*, let it be with different intensity and scope, in some extent involves both areas. Byzantine continuity intensifies, to a larger extent, general civilizational contextuality, to which Christianity attaches additional parameters and special saturation. The Byzantine period is marked also by intensification of direct mutual penetrations between two regions.

History of relations between the Balkan and Caucasian regions is, surely, an important and interesting topic for research. New investigations in this sphere will be based on the rich historiography tradition. We cite here, as examples, researches of church and cultural activities of Antimoz Iverieli (Antim Iverianul) in Valahia (Fanny Jinjikhashvili) and his disciple Mikheil, son of Stephane in Tbilisi; numerous publications of A.X. Toramanian on the influence of Armenian church architecture on Moldavian (we may point to our publication on this topic, conducted together with E. M. Podgradskaya, in the Historical-philological journal 1 (116), Yerevan, 1987, “On the issue of Armenian-Georgian influence on the medieval Moldova architecture”).

As a perspective of further elaboration we may mention the topic of research concerning the group of illustrated Four Gospels, ascending to the Byzantine code of the XI century (*Parisinus graecus* 74). This group, along with the abovementioned Byzantine manuscript, involves: Bulgarian Four Gospels of King Ivan Alexander of 1356 (London, British Museum), four Romanian, including Valash of Alexander Mirci and Moldavian: of Elizavetgrad, Suceviz and Warsaw (the former Lvov) and also three Georgian manuscripts: Gelati, Second Djruchi and Mokvi Four Gospels.

Comprehensive complex research of this group of medieval miniature manuscripts has not been done as of yet, but already at this stage of the problem study, we may definitely conclude that more complete introduction of “Georgian branch” into the mentioned context, intensifying the work conducted in this direction by Zh.-G. Violett, can clarify the relations of early and late manuscripts of the group *Parisinus graecus* 74.

Stressing additional perspectives of researching the history of bilateral, and considering cultural-historical diversity of each region, it seems to be fruitful comparison on the typological
level. In this direction we may outline a whole number of historical paradigms, among which the imperial one occupies special place.

Leaving behind numerous definitions of empires, from ancient to post-modern era and also their characteristics and evaluations, we would like to mention significant, sometimes determining role of “imperial implications” in the history of comparing regions. It should be specially stressed that in both cases there exists a whole range of various level inclusions into imperial systems, from influences of different intensify to full incorporation.

Along with inclusions into the Roman-Byzantine systems, both regions join other imperial structures (gradually pushing out Byzantine): in both cases Ottoman Empire, Iran in Caucasian case (along with the separate Arabian and Mongolian periods), Habsburg Empire in South-East Empire and Russian again in both cases.

It is interesting to compare the results of different type inclusion (influence, vassal dependence, incorporation with different forms of internal autonomy or lack of such) and determination of their influence on the evolution of cultural-confessional processes. Imperial policy in regard to confessional-cultural diversity should be outlined in each case, as well as local (later nationalistic) response to this policy, with construction of “discourse” in regard to ethno-cultural and ethno-confessional reality.

It is also essential to compare imperial rivalry in the regions under research in terms of dynamic of cultural-confessional diversity.

The ethno-cultural-confessional situation, formed during centuries in South-East European and Caucasian regions is very diversified and often contradictory under essential influence of imperial implications. Both regions are considered to be a cradle of ancient and richest cultures and civilizations, the influence of which expands for beyond the borders of fixed areas. Experience of mutual relations and cooperation of different cultures and religions has been accumulated for centuries. This experience, however, is burdened with parallel history of conflicts, which led to accumulation of mutual historical grievances which, despite further mythologizations, even mystifications, would be naïve to ignore at any efforts of harmonization of interethnic and interreligious relations.

Within the present context comparative analysis of the systems of cultural-confessional realities will turn to be especially fruitful not only in the academic framework, but also in practical sphere, solving the most complicated problems faced by which different ethno-cultural and religious-confessional communities of South-East Europe and the Caucasus.
Tolerance in Azerbaijan

The world of the end of the 20th century may be characterised not only by change of political map mostly caused by dissolution of the socialist system, but also by appearance and aggravation of a number of global problems concerning different sides of the social existence. Along with economic, ecological and demographic problems there arose most keenly the spiritual problems, caused by emasculating of moral values. Theory of the clash of civilizations, based on differences among the world religions developed and found its supporters. Some separatist groups use religion as factor for justifying their activities.

In such conditions it is most urgent to establish dialogue between cultures and religions for preserving cultural diversity. There may be used the experience of those countries and regions, in which traditions of tolerance in general and tolerance to other religions are strong. In this respect Azerbaijan is a unique example of peaceful co-existence and cooperation of many peoples and confessions.

The roots of this tradition go deep into the history as the territory of Azerbaijan gave shelter to Jewish migrants who ran away from plundered Judean Kingdom after Jerusalem was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar II (586 B.C.), King of Babel. According to historical data, there were up to 40,000 prisoners in Babel in that period.

In the mid of 1st century A.D. the first followers of Christianity escaped to the territory of Azerbaijan where they laid basis for further formation of Albanian autocephalous church. With appearance of Islam the tradition of religious tolerance on our ancient land had strengthened. The Koran postulate lay in the basis of Muslim tolerance: “There is no compulsion in religion.” According to numerous evidences of historians in the 7th-8th centuries Muslims respected and were tolerant to the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrism.

The factor of common destiny was also important in the formation of stable relations between different ethnic and religious groups, living on the territory of Azerbaijan. During history the peoples of Azerbaijan often fell under the control of powerful states. Common unfavourable conditions forced them to search for rapprochement despite the differences in world view.

Dissolution of the Soviet Union was a real test for tradition of tolerance in the region. The fact is that the peoples of the former Soviet republics, along with the independence acquired real freedom of faith.
Within modern Azerbaijani model of state-religious relations all the confessions got identical status being equal before the law. Along with guaranteeing of Muslims’ rights, representing the majority of the citizens, the state ensures the rights of all traditional religions existing in Azerbaijan.

Thus, in 1991 a church of Saint Wives Peace holders, closed in 1920, was transferred to Russian Orthodox Church. On May 27, 2001 during his visit in Azerbaijan, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Alexei II sanctified the church and awarded it the status of cathedral. Government members, representatives of embassies, spiritual leaders participated in the opening ceremony. In 1999-2001 another orthodox church - cathedral of St. Virgin was reconstructed in the capital of Azerbaijan.

The authorities also take care of Catholic community of the republic, which was registered in 1999, thanks to the efforts of Polish clergyman Ergi Pilus. The first meetings were held in flats of the parish. In 2000 the community bought a house and turned it into a chapel. At present time construction works of a catholic church are ongoing in Baku. The project is agreed with Vatican. By its outward appearance it will remind a catholic cathedral existing earlier in the capital.

Jewish community has century-old traditions in the republic. This careful attitude to Jews is witnessed by the fact that department of Hebrew was opened at Baku State University Chair of Oriental Studies. The Institute of Ethnography of Academy of Science of Azerbaijan in cooperation with the Russian fund for preservation and development of Jewish culture started preparing the book “Jews in Azerbaijan.” In April 2001, Academy of Science of Azerbaijan held the international seminar “Highland Jews of Caucasus. The chairman of the religious community of highland Jews Semen Ihyilov was awarded the Order of Fame.

From 1999 the society of friendship “Azerbaijan-Israel” and “Sohnut” has functioned in the republic. In the period of Jewish holidays the newspapers publish interviews with renowned representatives of the Jewish communities of Azerbaijan. There are memorial plaques on the houses in Baku, where the famous representatives of Jewish nationality lived, e.g, physicist-theoretician, Nobel Prize winner Lev Landaw, honoured physician of the republic Solomon Gusman, hero of the war Albert Agarunov, etc.

Talking on respect attitude towards Jews in Azerbaijan, it should be mentioned the village Krasnaya Sloboda, which is the only place in the post-Soviet space, where Jews are settled compactly (about 4.000). There were 11 synagogues in the village before the Soviet power were established in Azerbaijan. Only one synagogue was functioning in the Soviet period. After 1996 the state returned two synagogues to the community. In October 2001 there were held celebrations in regard to rehabilitation of two-storey six-cupola synagogue. The representatives of Azeri authorities and guests from many countries participated in the ceremony.
Concerning national and religious tolerance in Azerbaijan we may point that more than 15,000 Georgians live in the country and have their church. 30,000 Armenians live in Azerbaijan. This fact is one more evidence of tolerance.

To determine religious situation and level of religious tolerance it is enough to observe the amount of registered religious communities. Nowadays 345 Islamic and 31 communities of other faiths, among them 20 Christian, 7 Jewish, 3 Bahai and 1 Krishna are registered by the State Committee for Work with Religious Formations

Azerbaijan is one of the countries where a mosque, a church and a synagogue are in peaceful co-existence and the representatives of these religions live together without any disagreement.

Unique experience of Azerbaijan in establishing and strengthening of interreligious dialogue and cooperation was highly evaluated and recognized abroad. This is evident from the historical visit to the republic of the pope John-Paul II (May 22-24, 2002). During the visit the pontiff stressed historical traditions of religious tolerance in Azerbaijan as it was here that the first Christians escaping from persecution of Roman authorities found shelter.

On April 16-18, 2003 Azerbaijan was visited by Patriarch of Rome Bartholomew I. The aim of his visit was to reach understanding and agreement on many issues worrying the followers of different confessions, with the purpose of further strengthening of a dialogue among the civilizations. Visiting three Muslim countries before Azerbaijan, head of the East Roman Orthodox church acknowledged that state-confessional relations and the relations between traditional and non-traditional confessions in the republic are excellent. “I am satisfied with the level of tolerance here. In Azerbaijan each may profess religion and perform the ceremony according to wish,” the Patriarch said.

The country authorities often meet with the leaders of religious communities expressing interest in needs and problems of the believers. President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliev regularly congratulates Christian and Juwish communities with main religious holidays. Thus, in the appeal of head of the state to Orthodox community of Azerbaijan in the period of Christmas holidays in January 2006 it is said that tolerance historically formed in the republic has become a tradition characterizing the Azerbaijani society. “This holiday, personifying victory of good over evil and the ideas of freedom, are annually celebrated by all the Christians of the world. Having two hundred years long history, Orthodox community of Azerbaijan, displaying its devotion to its religious values, organizes in the days of Christmas holidays ceremonies increasing sincerity and friendliness among peoples, arranges different measures for a holiday,” the document mentions.

Constructive position of religious leaders is no less important for strengthening the spirit of tolerance in Azerbaijan. A positive step in this direction was the meeting of religious leaders of
the South Caucasian countries and Russia in Moscow on November 26, 2003. In this meeting were adopted the document which mentioned the need “of integrating ethnic minorities into all spheres of social life, providing freedom of religion, giving opportunity to develop their language and culture”, restoring trust between the peoples of the Caucasus.

From the viewpoint of developing interreligious dialogue in Azerbaijan the meeting of the Pope of Rome John Paul II with the delegation of religious representatives of the republic: head of the Caucasian Muslims Sheih-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pashazade, bishop of Baku and Caspian Russian Orthodox Church Alexander Ishein and the chairman of religious community of highland Jews Semen Ishyilov was remarkable event. At the meeting held in Vatican on November 18, 2004 the pontiff highly evaluated the relations among different religious confessions in Azerbaijan expressing regret for violent conflicts in Caucasus. “No one has the right to represent religions or use them as a weapon of intolerance, as an instrument of aggression, violence or death. On the contrary, their friendship and mutual respect make up rich source of real progress and peace,” John Paul II concluded.

State Committee of Azerbaijan for work with Religious Formations largely contributes into preserving traditions of religious tolerance. Heads of this structure regularly arrange meetings and seminars with the participation of religious communities leaders to achieve full mutual understanding and to establish closer relations. Thus, on April 3, 2004 a seminar was held on “Religious stability-an integral part of general stability.” The issues discussed concerned with providing religious tolerance, the role of religious communities in the fight against terrorism; support was expressed to participation of Azerbaijan in the international coalition for fight against this evil. At the same time, it was pointed to wrong identification of terrorism with Islam or any other religion.

NGOs and international structures play an important role in expanding cooperation between the representatives of different confessions. For example, on June 22, 2004, the seminar on “The role of Islam in forming tolerance in the South Caucasus” was held in the international press-centre of the capital. It was organized by Friedrich Neumann Foundation (Germany) in corporation with the independent consulting centre “For civil society” (Azerbaijan), International Centre for Conflicts and Negotiations (Georgia) and Armenian Committee of Jews (the USA). The representatives of different religious confessions, politicians, historians, experts from Azerbaijan, the USA, Germany and Georgia participated in this event.

At the seminar, the Ambassador of Germany Klaus Grevlich mentioned about the importance of unique model of state-religious relations in Azerbaijan, within which the representatives of religious communities not only associate in a neighbourly way but interact as well. “Model of Azerbaijan in mutual relations of state and religion may be exported to other countries. Religious tolerance is your wealth,” the German diplomat stressed.
“We consider that people, despite their belonging to any religion, should respect all other cultures, religions, moral values, should be tolerant to their customs and traditions.
Identity, Similarity and Difference as Factors for Intercultural Dialogue

As well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’

Stuart Hall

In an era of globalization the development of intercultural competences and the promotion of intercultural dialogue are considered as essential. This foremost is caused by the fact that the contact between the representatives of different and distant cultures is becoming more and more inevitable. On the other hand, the intensified interaction in the Caucasus is not the product of Globalization only: contact among “others” is the history of region, which influences contemporary dynamic of intercultural dialogue. The aim of this presentation is to identify similarity and difference as factors for intercultural dialogue in the Caucasus.

Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different cultural backgrounds. As professor of political sciences Ghasan Salame states, in order to engage into a real dialogue with the ‘other’ it is necessary to do three basic recognitions:

1. To recognize the other’s otherness, this means to try to know as much as possible about other culture, to familiarize with his tenets and values.

2. To recognize the other culture’s legitimate assertion of its otherness. Dialogue is possible among individuals and nations only on the basis of equality.

3. For a successful dialogue the most important is a psychological predisposition to consider dialogue ...as a transformative process in which all parties involved take the risk of becoming different, of holding different views or beliefs at the end, of having their very identity altered by the process.

Intercultural dialogue aims to develop a deeper understanding of different world views and practices, to increase participation and to ensure equality. Measures aiming at intercultural dialogue can also be seen as strategic instruments to promote cultural diversity resulting from social interaction which, at the same time, serves the goals of 'social cohesion', on local, national and regional levels. Thus, intercultural dialogue contributes to a number of vital needs of the Caucasus region and above all to peace and stability.

As intercultural dialogue represents a dialogue between individuals having/holding different cultural identities, the perspective of this dialogue is highly dependent on the
participants’ perception of identity, sameness, similarity and difference, otherness. Those, who see others as similar, are attracted to them. It is obvious that cultural distance is related to the probability that others will be perceived as dissimilar. When people perceive each other as similar, contact is rewarding. When contact is rewarding, the number of positive interactions is greater than the number of negative interactions. Rewarding contact leads to more interaction. More interaction makes people more similar and that increases their perceived similarity (Triandis 1994: 237-238).

Perception of Identity/difference is preconditioned by various factors (history, collective memory, contemporary context...) It is considered that “Identity relies for its existence on something outside itself: namely another identity ... identity is thus marked by difference” (Woodward, 9). The definition of an actor’s identity (“we”) is always in reference to another actor (“them”) and this need for an identity defined in opposition can lead to conflict (Adler and Crawford:2002).

As we know, the Caucasus is represented by various groups maintaining various cultural identities. understanding identity as a result of perceived difference, the perspective of intercultural dialogue might be seen as uncertain. what is more, H. Triandis discusses the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity. As he notes “advantages are suggested by evidence that heterogeneous groups, when compared to homogeneous groups, are more creative and likely to reach higher-quality decisions... Disadvantages are suggested by evidence of reduced cohesion, caused by intercultural conflict. The long record of national, religious, racial, communal and tribal strife in the history of the world leaves little doubt that poorly managed diversity can be disastrous (Triandis 1994: 237).

However, when we deal with groups with long and continuous experience of co-existence, in this case shared identity, a kind of sameness is developed, which is a product of lived experience and the commonalities of day-to-day life shared by groups (Woodward 2002: 9). In our opinion, having Caucasus in mind, it is important to stress the idea of H. Triandis, which is that people differ in their experience with others, who are different from themselves. People in a homogeneous, isolated group have seen few others who are different. Consequently, their level of adaptation, or neutral point, on the ‘similar’ vs. ‘different’ dimension is in the ‘very similar’ region of the dimension; they will only view people who are very much like them as similar. In a multinational environment, people have levels of adaptation that are in the ‘somewhat different’ region of the similar-different dimension and thus are likely to view people who are slightly different from them in language, clothing, or religion as ‘one of us’ (Triandis 1994: 237-238). To recognize someone as similar means to recognize him/her as equal; the recognition of equality is prerequisite for successful dialogue; dialogue is precondition for development of shared regional identity and the latter is a good starting point for achieving regional peace and stability.
“Common identity can ease negotiations and compromises among conflicting interests, provide a basis for shared interests, and thus create a more solid basis for political stability. New social identities are constructed around commonly agreed attributes, norms and principles of legitimate behavior. The identification of shared identities and mutual interests can thus replace threat perceptions (Adler and Crawford 2002). We could have reason to be skeptical about the possibility of transformation of identities resulting in formation of shared regional identity on the background of recent history. However, it is worth considering two very important circumstances: 1) a necessary condition for shared identity to occur is “previous existence of a “life-world” of shared understandings, meanings, and discourses” (Adler and Crawford 2002), what was always actual in the Caucasus and 2) that cultural identity, just like difference, as Stuart Hall remarks, is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark. It is not once-and-for-all. The boundaries of difference are continually repositioned (as well) in relation to different points of reference. At different places, times, in relation to different questions, the boundaries are re-sited (Hall: 2002). We could conclude that we are living in an era and area where a changing perception of identity is being developed, or in other words, we, Caucasians, do need a newer identity relying on historical experience of co-existence.

Bibliography


Searching for Good Practices and Methodologies for Intercultural Dialogue
(The Region of Caucasus)

At the beginning of my presentation I would like to talk about good practices and their relevance to the successful intercultural dialogue.

We should note that the notion of good practice as such is a relatively new one in the humanitarian sphere and it became the key concept highlighting the practical mechanism that contributes to the interaction of individuals and groups of different cultural background.

By stating the novelty of good practice we do not mean the phenomenon of any practice itself, but the attitude and interest that international society and academic society have developed in recent decades for this mechanism. Good practice nowadays does not necessarily represent the theoretical, philosophical concept outlining the ideal ways and forms of interpersonal or intergroup communication and self-conduct. It rather comes from empirical sphere and stresses the “real-life” experiences as tools and approaches for rising behavioral competences. We should also admit the possibility that the good practice may be of extremely specific character and therefore misleading while trying to generalize it as a model for distant and unknown socio-cultural environments.

Hence, there is a need to identify what makes intercultural dialogue a successful and achievable process, but before that, it requires a thorough academic and empirical understanding of what we are really looking for, prior to discussing how things work.

Good practice, as we have mentioned, might imply various traditions, innovations and, simply, managed or spontaneous practices manifested in different spheres of social life. Thus, good practice does not entail the only existence of such, but we understand it as a mechanism for achieving social cohesion and peaceful coexistence of differences or, to be more exact, of diversities. That’s why it is so highlighted in the sphere of cultural policy.

Searching for the tools and methods to identify good practices has not always been the relevant issue in international or national lives. It is important to note that the painful developments of the last decades of terror, war, totalitarianism and ethnic clashes made people realize that there is a need for positive experiences to be bought back in life. In this context, the region of Caucasus is not an exception.

Due to the absence of experience in working and thinking in that direction and, presumably, because of the short history of self-governance and cultural policy in the region, the
process of reflecting upon the local sources for the successful intercultural dialogue turned out to be a complex process. It became obvious that identifying what could and might be perceived as a good practice is just ahead.

We could discuss the issue on the example of Georgia. After the Rose Revolution, the central government tries to appeal and stress the primacy of citizenship equality, regardless of ethnic or religious origin as provided by the constitution. On the way of European integration, Georgia tries to go further and implement the commitments taken before the international community, namely the Council of Europe and United Nations. Ratification of the Framework Convention on the Protection of Ethnic Minorities by the Parliament of Georgia in 2006 is a major signal in this perspective.

However, the current policy (especially in educational system and public administration) is quite ambiguous. It could be stated that Georgia undergoes the state of overcoming the Soviet “national policy” traditions. It is obvious that the government of Georgia is aware that the perspective of successful development of multicultural society depends on complex and well-planned policy. It is especially important to study all the factors that might influence (positively or negatively) the process. This, on its part, would guarantee the sensible and successful character of policy. But, on the other hand, it is apparent that the official policy and even thorough and accurate, sensible management of intercultural interaction is impossible without resources from different sectors of society. In this regards, academic-scientific initiatives and research activities, giving further explanation to the process and to the perspectives, should be especially impelled.

Here we should stress the significance of the UNESCO project “Caucasus”, which, as a follow-up to the recommendation adopted by the Inter-Regional Round Table, held in Vilnius, in 2003, during the intercultural week “Dialogue among Civilizations, Caucasus”, implies the realization of country-based surveys: the first is a preparation of the database of specialists and organizations working in the field of culture - actors involved in facilitating intercultural dialogue at various levels. The second project within the same Caucasus framework entails an initiative of conducting case studies, the aim of which is to identify and to analyze good practices that facilitate and contribute to the intercultural dialogue and learning in Georgia. Thus, the aim of the Project is to conduct two case studies related to the Azeri and Armenian ethnic groups with different level of civic/cultural integration (Tbilisi and Kvemo Kartli). The study would reveal similar and diverse aspects of the problems concerning these communities, which should be considered for a problem of intercultural dialogue.

As a result, UNESCO chair in intercultural dialogue at Tbilisi State University started up the project - case study of Facilitation Intercultural dialogue and learning (tools, methods and approaches) in Georgia and has outlined a plan of action and a schedule which should result in
the two 5-page case studies with multimedia support. The chair has already prepared the methodology and the questionnaires for the project.

The questionnaires are bilingual (Georgian and Russian) and cover the following topics: attitude toward state and relevant symbols, local, ethnic traditions and their sustainability, how everyday situations or special occasions (even taken place within the ethnic or religious group) involve intercultural interaction. Special interest is devoted to the mixed marriages, - here it is interesting not only the statistical data, but the attitudes and perception of “crossing ethnocultural boundaries”. We are also interested in revealing the feelings, opinions of the representatives of the ethnic minorities related to the issues of language, education and history. In regard to civil integration, it is also interesting to disclose the real level of relevance of nationwide or regional broadcasting or printed media in their lives.

The mentioned project is underway, the fieldwork has not yet been initiated. Therefore, it is difficult to draw specific conclusions. Nevertheless, we shall try to discuss the general approaches and consideration regarding intercultural dialogue.

In the search of good practices and tools for intercultural dialogue, it’s always important to understand what are the motivational, contextual factors, which lead to a successful dialogue. Therefore, it is essential to outline methodological approaches and develop them in order to explore the possibility of imitating a certain practice in a different context.

Tools and methodologies to acquire intercultural competency may differ from region to region, but generally it has common traits. It is interesting to identify the “most successful” sphere of public life where people from different ethnic or religious groups find easier and more enthusiastic to interact. Among them we could name joint professional projects, youth camps and artistic festivals. Cross-cultural communication primarily deals with the problem of language barrier, which we can not neglect as a serious setback. On the other hand, we could state again that the creative and even competitive environment, such as folk festivals, professional exchange programs in different crafts and local occupancies, does not make the language problem drastic. Sometimes, in case of youth camps, theatrical expressions, art events like inter-communal urban graffiti actions addressing different social and political themes, sensitively worked out approach can even make it an object of fun and enjoyment, while building intercultural competences effectively.

The other question is how much can or should it impact on policy for cultural pluralism and how far should our aims go, - is it enough to promote building of intercultural competence to raise awareness that different is not necessarily dangerous (at least) or all the initiatives may be destined to be a part of accurately planned strategy for the civil integration, even with the cost of assimilation of minorities as a final result? We could suppose that the policy that stresses the
diversity and cultural pluralism as an inalienable heritage would be more or less adequate approach.

The process of intercultural dialogue should embrace the field of politics, economics and culture and its scope should widen to bring together all sectors with connection to the subject of dialogue. Dialogue must be held among (a) political organisations and political decision makers, (b) religious figures, (c) cultural elites and artists, (d) media elites and representatives of civil society: unions, youth organizations and research centres.

Despite the fact that mentioned project is not yet finished, we could suppose that projects and activities in the sphere of language education could be decisive for the preparation of suitable grounds for the successful intercultural dialogue. A special interest should be devoted to the bilingual teaching that effectively raises the confidence of the representatives of ethnic minorities and dominant group.

It is trivial but often neglected reality that the dialogue cannot be unilateral, one-sided act or process, neither it can be successful when confined strictly to the geographical area of the living space of ethno-cultural minorities. Different initiatives, be it short-term student exchange programs or nation-wide mobile ethnic festivals, should enhance and stress the benefit and possibility of mobility.

The collapse of Soviet system extremely kindled the question of identity and loyalty in the regions of Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia. The re-organization of political structure in the mentioned areas brought about the phenomenon, which we would call cross-border identities. This issue is directly related to the problem of civil integration. Ethnic/cultural minorities, compactly inhabiting on the both site of the state borders, are experiencing certain crisis in political and cultural identity, not to mention citizenship problems, which, on the legal level, was more problematic in case of the Baltic States. In case of Caucasus, minorities having obtained the status of citizens, generally continued to live in isolation, - that is the case of Armenians and Azeris of Georgia, Lezgins and Talish people in Azerbaijan. The contacts of minorities with historical homeland can be regulated by intergovernmental agreements, - it was quite realistic and successful approach applied by Eastern European countries, envisaged by the European Charters. On the other hand, as it regards the question of state building and civil integration, whatever the intensity of contacts with historical homeland are and despite the language and cultural rights, there still remains the issue of sharing common identity (ideally) by all citizens within the state as a shared homeland. The notion of homeland is definitely connected and depended on the character of secondary education system. Homeland is what we get to know in family and through school curricula. Consequently, some speculate that the value of homeland could be effectively developed via revised history of the relevant state, rejecting thus purely so called “ethnic history”, which could be the case of Caucasus. Understanding that your ancestors
and forefathers made substantial contribution to an entity that now represents your state is a first step to understanding what you belong to and why you should be loyal to it.

Thus, as we can see, the process of searching the good practices of intercultural dialogue in the Caucasus region is a complex process as at first there is a need to define and develop the proper methodological approach of the research.
On behalf of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia and the Minister Mrs. Asmik Poghosian, I would like to congratulate all the participants with remarkable event and express my deep gratitude to the initiators and organizers of these arrangements. Let me tell you that we are sincerely thankful for given opportunity to familiarize you with the experience of our activities and our work with ethnic minorities of Armenia.

I have brought a short documentary on exhibition of art and decorative-applied art of ethnic minorities of Armenia – “Rainbow of Friendship” (2006), which we will see after the report. Now I will try to tell in brief about our work in the country.

Nowadays the tendency becomes more apparent of a new understanding of culture – as a basis of statehood, resource of social stability, economic growth and national security.

Relation of culture with social and economic processes, acquiring new quality, provides uninterrupted progress, being in contact with all sides of human activities. Modern understanding of the role and place of culture in the development of state and society dictates the most important aims of cultural policy: security of the citizens’ right for participation in cultural life and freedom of creative self-expression, formation of optimum terms for expanding the availability of cultural values and increase of quality in cultural services.

The very topic of the conference “Caucasus – Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue” echoes with the policy, conducted by the Ministry of Culture of Armenia.

It should be mentioned that in Armenia, as well as in many other countries, only laws are not enough guarantees for rights and freedoms of citizens’. They should be filled with meaning and should be realized in everyday life considering special circumstances, in which they are used in each concrete case. To provide real respect to fundamental rights and freedoms it is important to secure adherence to dialogue and tolerance, to which we are striving with our concrete activities. Mutual respect of people independent of their race, sex, language, religion, personal and social conditions naturally comes from the principle of equality. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is a major tools to provide this mutual respect and, accordingly, a guarantee of peace and social justice. Main directions may be considered as following:

- Development of intercultural and interreligious dialogue;
- Protection and development of human rights and fundamental freedoms;
Strengthening of cooperation with the international organizations.

So, what did we start our work with?

When in 2002 I started work in the Ministry of Culture of Armenia as a curator in ethnic minorities’ issues, I had no clear idea about the ethnic minorities living on the territory of Armenia. I started to think how to organize my work? The minister gave me advice and I invited renowned heads of public organizations for a talk. I found out that about 40 Different nations live in Armenia and 11 ethnic communities are organized (Assyrian, Yezid, Kurd, Greek, Russian, Jewish, Georgian, German, Belorussian, Ukrainian, Polish).

Each of the ethnic communities units inhabitants, living in different regions of Armenia. Thus, we have an information bank with data, collected not only on the amount and place of living of ethnic minorities, but on their activities as well. In addition to above-said, we obtained data on historical monuments of different peoples: Turkmen, Mongolian, Persian vaults, Russian churches and castles, Assyrian and Greek churches, the biggest in the South Caucasus Persian mosque, Arabian, Jewish, Azerbaijani, Kurd, Yezid graves and cemeteries.

Thus, the Ministry of Culture of Armenia adopted a decision to conduct work on ethnic minorities in two directions:

Organization of work with displaying peoples’ art in Armenia.

Organization of work with displaying art and decorative-applied art of each ethnic group.

Till 2005 all the festivals and exhibitions were organizes in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. We decided to expand the circle of spectators and started to organize musical festivals and exhibitions in the regions of Armenia, especially in those where great amount of ethnic minorities lived.

To organize a festival and an exhibition all the organizations of ethnic minorities submit applications (the sample of which has been worked out by us) on the amount and nominations of their appearances.

It should be mentioned that the festivals are organized both for children and adults.

According to the applications a scenario is worked out and preliminary work is conducted in the city and theatre, where festival will be held.

The advertisement, posters, transport, meals, souvenirs, diplomas are organized by the Ministry of Culture.

Last festivals were organized in Giumri and Vanadzor. We selected them not only because of numerous representatives of ethnic minorities living there, but wishing to improve the mood of population, which experienced the tragedy of earthquake.

Till 2003 musical festivals were organized with the public organizations of ethnic minorities under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture of Armenia. But if earlier they were partially financed by the state, starting from 2003, taking into the consideration their importance
and originality, these events became annual and were introduced into the state program of cultural arrangements of the Ministry of Culture, the budget of which kept increasing yearly.

The government, on recommendation of the Coordination Council of the President of Armenia, annually allots 10 million drams for preservation and development of cultures of ethnic minorities, which is equivalent to 25,000 dollars. With such support the results were, naturally, more visible.

This year the government additionally allocated by 1 million drams for Assyrian and Yezid communities (as those having no statehood of their own) to develop their cultures. Recently (May 2, 2007) in the centre of Yerevan there opened Cultural centre for ethnic minorities with the area of 800 square metres for concerts, meetings, book and new organization presentations, etc.

Intensive work is ongoing with the children of ethnic minorities. Annually with the state support schools, clubs of different cities and villages organize various arrangements, promoting preservation of their native language and original culture, text-books in native languages are published for Assyrians, Kurds and Yezids. Great attention is also attached to children’s fine art and photography. I would like to mention about one of the exhibitions on the topic “Armenia is my home,” which was great success last year. Many works by children pleased with its fantasy, compositional decisions and inner apprehension of the home country. The very participation in such exhibitions and festivals has become for children a stimulus for development: many of them later became laureates of international contests, continued their education in leading higher institutions of Armenia, had solo appearances in prestigious concert halls of Armenia and abroad.

In addition to state support, each of the ethnic communities receives assistance from their states. For example, Ukrainian community receives annually free of charge accommodations for summer rest of children in “Artek.” It has possibility to send children free of charge to prestigious high schools of Ukraine. The Greek community more than once participated in the festivals in Ukraine. The Jewish community had a concert tour in Georgia. The Russian community is financially supported best of all, this enables it to conduct wide scale events for rest, education and development of native culture.

This year public organizations of Armenia intensified interest in ethnic minorities. “Gayanna” (in Vanadzor) received Soros grant and, based on our experience, conducted 3 concerts. Due of it was in the form of festival (May 20, 2007) and was conducted simultaneously in Giumri. Now we are working on the arrangement of a documentary on the festival topic.

I would like to stress that Armenia promotes and asserts not only preservation, but also development of peculiar cultures of ethnic communities. This is proved by the titles of laureates and high prizes, received at grand stages of different countries.
Generalizing the said above, I will mention that our main mission is, friendship of children not only in the country, but between the countries as well. This friendship, surely, will strengthen within the years and promote development of cultures of world peoples, if based on the best experience, interesting plans and acting programs.
If we follow the conclusion that the Caucasus region, bridging Europe and Asia at the cross-roads of many civilizations and cultures, is an example of a culturally diversified area, characterized by a variety of historical roots, traditions and religions, one may plausibly imagine Georgian culture as well as the others in the symbolic form of a cosmic metaphor of a tree. This tree of life and of wisdom has established its roots in the metaphysical soil of any given national culture, which solely for this reason gains and retains its absolute self-identity and authenticity. The trunk of the tree, however, serves as a unifying world axis between the subterraneous roots and the treetop, which is striving for the heavens. Precisely the might and strength of the trunk, together with its capability for transparency, for allowing the passage of light and of its vital sap, is the guarantee to same extent that any given culture is able to overcome its own inherent, traditional, native provincialism, which is more or less immanent in every culture and belongs to its essence. This specific trunk leads to the top of that tree, whose pinnacle soars to the idea of a transnational-transcultural society and exactly in this manner elevates the native, traditional national provincialism to a pronounced universality of outlook. Right at this point one finds the specific beginnings of Europe and Asia growing together, for Georgia, as a country of the center, as a land of cultural mediation between East and West, has in its own way experienced the universal unity between a spacial perception of the world and knowledge of God. This globalized conception of the world has formed that tradition of absolute cultural-religious tolerance, which in his day Goethe expressed with the verse taken from the Koran: "And Allah’s is the West and the East" (2. Sure) in his "West-östlichen Divan": ("God’s is the Orient! God’s is the Occident! Northern and southern lands / Rest in the peacefulness of his hands") (Goethe 1977: 344) and imparted to the verse from the Koran the particular ethos of enlightened universalism, which in a certain sense is to be regarded as a beginning of the idea of globalization or most likely of the idea of the global moral and the main pathos of tolerance. This pathos of the globalized conception of the world is doubtlessly shared and masterfully developed today by the most famous modern Turkish author, winner of Nobel-prize, Orhan Pamuk, who used this verse from the Koran as the essential motto for his work “My Name is Red”.

As a typical country situated in proximity to Asia, as a typical country of Asia Minor (Kleinasien or Vorderasien, l’Asie Mineure or Proche-Orient) Georgia has always turned
towards Europe and, according to a pronouncement of Hegel, "This country has never kept to itself what is exceptional in it, but has sent it to Europe. It represents the beginning of all religious and all state principles, but their development only took place in Europe" (Hegel 1995: 132).

Considered from this point of view, the tree of Georgian culture appears to face serious problems in its search for a new ideal trunk. Russian culture, once the unifying trunk uniting the traditional Georgian roots with world culture, a kind of world axis or transmission channel, is fortunately or even unfortunately losing its actual mediating function. To refrain from a value judgment, one may probably claim that this original approach to mediation, if no longer abhorred by the youngest generation for understandable reasons (for this period in the recent history of Georgia is joyfully already past), is nevertheless ignored with an attitude of estrangement and rejection. However, the roots of this tree also absolutely require a strong and mighty trunk that has grown together with them organically and inseparably. Otherwise the roots will wither or even worse a pathologically degenerate growth will result as an ugly, eclectic mixture of all kinds of cultural plants. And precisely this possibility represents the greatest danger threatening the culture of a small country. Thus Georgia is once again seeking a new middle, a new center, a new gateway to the big world which is no longer to be sought or found exclusively in Moscow.

In this respect Georgia does not constitute any exception, for the process of globalization presupposes exactly this agonizing search for the place and position of a country’s native culture within the framework of the globalized world. This unusual opportunity for a special change of the country’s central focus and point of reference required not only investigations into new centralizing and orientation possibilities, but also into a fulfilment of the centuries-long yearning dream of admittance into the European Community. This sensational experience and consciousness of legitimizing the fateful prospect of belonging to Europe nourishes in this age-old Christian land the hope of finally overcoming, of getting over the polite, friendly indifference of the elegant, refined world public. One of the reasons for this friendly indifference of the world public could be that the temporal development of this country, one of the oldest members of the Eastern Christian Church, is to say, of the history of its spatial development. And thus, the country’s geography became its destiny. Precisely this destiny predestined an unequivocally "localized" Georgian form of existence. By that is meant an absolute, complete connection of the biography to the landscape, a condition, which is difficult to reconcile with the ‘open’ forms of life and thinking.

For exactly this reason, in the global era the transition of this form of existence from the first modernity to the second is difficult and hampered, since it means changing all forms of Georgian life and thought from the state of localization to the state of openness. In other words, it makes considerably more difficult the globalization of the biography and its preparation for a
transnational existence, the meaning of which can be expressed by the universal formula of social proximity, despite geographic distance or social distance, despite geographic proximity. If one considers from this perspective, from this point of view, the reasons for the reserved, jovial, charmingly indifferent attitude of the Western world toward martyred Georgia, which has suffered many amputations without anesthetic, then one can see through the well-polished surface of the impersonal, neutral friendliness and the patronizing good will to the absolute, doubled pathos of distance, which from the two-fold perspective of estrangement knows no experience either of social or of geographical proximity. This fact is also valid apart from the fact that over time the ever more intensive equipping of this geographically distanced area is taking place with that kind of indispensable decoration, which creates an illusion of overcoming the above-mentioned social distance. Consequently, this area is richly overloaded with the accessories considered indispensable for the global cultural scene, beginning with McDonalds and ranging up to commercials for Marlboro and Snickers or Blue Jeans and Coca-Cola. Despite this reality of global cultural design, however, the fact remains self-evident that this abundance of what the international community regards as daily necessities scarcely brings the Georgian people any closer either geographically or socially to that part of the global society which is not bound to its own location, but inhabits the entire world. This fact takes on special importance within the political, cultural and academic sphere, where the importance and function of biographies of translation, that is, of the universality of these biographies, presumes the constant necessity of translating between one’s own and foreign cultures. Precisely in this activity exists the necessary prerequisite for the globalizing of biography in a general sense and all the more for cultural and academic biography in a narrower sense. Precisely that is for instance the clear goal and purpose of reforming the education and university system in Georgia.

Only by the productive adoption of true values, which are supernational, can it be possible for a small country like Georgia to escape that threatening danger, which means for the country and its culture the loss of its own uniqueness. And if I may refer you back to my earlier remarks on this subject I would like to remind you of the metaphor of the tree I introduced at the beginning. On the one hand, as we said, this tree has established its roots in the metaphysical soil of Georgian national culture, which solely for this reason gains and retains its absolute self-identity and authenticity, but on the other hand at the same time it causes deep-rooted reasons and motives for the danger of traditional, native provincialism, which is more or less immanent in every culture and belongs to the essence of the aggressive traditionalism. The inherent logic of this kind of traditionalism manifests itself through an integral schema of the radical polarity of either or. This contradicitious presupposition becomes apparent through absolute and total contraposition of native, traditional local cultures to the Globalization “challenges” as fatal consequences of the era of the second modernity. Therefore the Globalization will be
misapprehended as most baneful and disastrous danger to national culture. This misinterpretation of the Globalization “challenges” makes basically impossible the perspective of a constructive intercultural dialogue. As an opposition to this deep-rooted aggressive traditionalism the treetop appears, whose pinnacle soars to the idea of a transnational-transcultural society and exactly in this manner elevates the native, traditional national provincialism to a pronounced universality of cosmopolitanism with its inherent logic of as well as. Precisely this point of view is the guarantee to certain extent that any given culture is able to overcome the narrow borders of its own provincialism and at the same time to be protected from deracinated unification or even rejection of the importance of cultural originality and identity. This is the rightful way to achieve the goals of cosmopolitanism that means the constant need of exchange of cultural values and concepts in the framework of intensive inter-regional, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. Cosmopolitanism means a particular ethos and pathos of pronounced universality of outlook. In this context it seems very symbolic, that the European anthem is based on the final movement of Beethoven's 9th Symphony composed in 1823, which contains a modified version of the lyrics of the classics of cosmopolitanism and tolerance of Friedrich Schiller's ode, An die Freude (German for Ode To Joy) written in 1785. This famous poem expresses Schiller's idealistic vision of the citizenship of the world (Weltbürgerturn) and of the human race becoming brothers — a vision Beethoven shared:

Seid umschlungen, Millionen!
Diesen Küß der ganzen Welt!
Brüder - über'm Sternenzelt
Muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Be embraced, you millions!
This kiss for the whole world!
Brothers, beyond the star-canopy
Must a loving Father dwell.

In 1985, Ode to Joy was adopted by EU heads of state and government as the official anthem of the then European Community — since 1993 the European Union. It is not intended to replace the national anthems of the Member States but rather to celebrate the values they all share and their unity in diversity. It expresses the ideals of a united Europe: freedom, peace, and solidarity. An EU motto, In varietate concordia English - United in diversity, German - In Vielfalt geeint, French - Unis dans la diversité, Russian - Единство в разнообразии - expresses the essential idea of harmonious interaction among different cultures and the faculty of going deeply in the dialectic causation between uniqueness and diversity and also of willingness to live together.
United Europe as a postmodern Empire with his particular institutional design seems to be an extraordinaire specific modus of the integration through law because as Duverger said: “Les grands ensembles politique résultent rarement d’associations volontaires. En général, ils se constituent par le fer et par le feu. Ils naissent d’une supériorité militaire”(Duverger 1980: 20). But the integration of the European Empire is based not on military superiority or on fire and sword, but on the consensus or on the power of pen and ink. The hardest punishment for not EU member European States is not military conquest but political refusal of entry into European Union. Edgar Grande describes this unusual situation as “paradox of weakness” and later Ulrich Beck characterized it as “politics of golden handcuffs” (Beck 2004: 128).

In the context of these developments and tendencies, Georgia tries to create within the world society, which is stratified and polarized in a new way, a specific illusion of its belonging to the globalizing processes not only by adopting the indispensable everyday requisites, but also by the country’s serious effort to make real reforms in the area of politics, culture and education and especially of the university system in order to take a worthy place within the budding and forming a new kind of socio-cultural hierarchy of worldwide validity.

Viewed from this perspective, the situation of Georgia is made more difficult in two respects. This nation, which played the most important role of mediation within the post-Soviet sphere of influence, has not yet definitively overcome its bilingualism. Most information comes from the shadowy realm of that duality of language, with Russian designated as the language of officialdom and of the state. This past is kept alive in the public’s memory primarily through television commercials and TV soap operas. That situation serves as a model example of the language vacuum. Because the current dynamics of informational era in broader international life means the constant need of intercultural dialogue on different scales, but the dialogue is not possible without a common language. The main characteristic of this phenomenon of the language vacuum is that all the English-language texts are first disseminated in Russian translations; only much later do they reach the public in bad Georgian translations. Precisely in this distorted act of translation and communication lies the danger of transforming the entire culture into a pathetic surrogate, making the whole country into a third or fourth rate copy, which in addition through badly functioning copiers is created without any quality. As a result, it is not the modest attraction of globalization that is frightening, but its surrogate substitute.

And possibly in this difficult, transitional, fateful situation one might speak of a very special unique role of intercultural dialogue to surmount obstacles of discrepancy and conflict between aggressive traditionalism and cynical pseudoliberalism. I have the honour to represent the Faculty of Languages of the Ilia Chavchavadze University, where in the meantime almost forgotten Russian is rather successfully taught along with English, German, French, Swedish, Dutch and Polish, Turkish, Armenian, Persian, Hebrew thanks to the support of various
international institutions. The attempt is being made to better know and understand our native culture, our native tradition in a dialogue with other cultures. For only in the dialogue of cultures is an illuminating light cast upon one’s own culture. But as we said every dialogue presumes the knowledge of a language and especially of the authentic language of the culture, that protects from the danger of being lost in translation. As a mediator of languages of different cultures, our university not only attempts to foster old partnerships, but also invites new friends and new partners to a broader stimulating dialogue.

Bibliography
Intercultural Dialogue in Cultural Policy of Government of Armenia

Intercultural dialogue is one of the priorities of cultural policy of the Armenian government, which attaches great importance to preservation and development of cultures of different peoples living in Armenia. The government’s position, based on the principles of social justice, tolerance and democracy, mutual respect of people and cultures, is expressed in the programs implemented at the local, national and international levels.

All the activities of national authorities engaged in the issues of cultural diversity and cultural dialogue, in any way, are coordinated by the presidential Coordinative Council, governmental service for religion and ethnic minorities, relevant bodies (or officials) of local self-governance. Strategic tasks of the Armenian government in culture specially stresses shift of measures of intercultural dialogue to the local (native) level, namely, to the regions (mazzzs).


Intercultural dialogue is expressed also in the international cultural policy of Armenia, being implemented in compliance and on the basis of signed and ratified conventions, interstate, intergovernmental and interdepartmental agreements, protocols, communiqués and exchange programs. The documents mentioned above involve cooperation in protection of cultural heritage, exchange of information on illegal import and export of cultural values, organization of tours, festivals, concerts and exhibitions in the sphere of theatre, cinema, art, music and dance, conducting Days and Years of culture, also exchange of art delegations, collectives, individual performers, establishment of direct relations and conducting exchanges between museums and libraries, etc.

In compliance with the principles and norms of the international law, Republic of Armenia promotes development of cultural life, preservation of historical and cultural values of peoples living in Republic of Armenia and preservation of Armenian cultural and historical values on the territory of other states (in addition to the conventions mentioned above, there also acts the law of Republic of Armenia “On Protection and Use of Historical Environment and Immovable Monuments of History and Culture of Armenia”).

By the will of fate during the centuries Armenian people created and constructed not only in the homeland but also far beyond its borders, in different cultural environments it is vividly expressed in multinobered Armenian Diaspora. Numerous Armenian monuments are scattered all over the world: Georgia, Iran, Israel, Turkey, Italy, Greece, Syria, Austria, India, Russia, etc.

However, cultural diversity, polycultural environment of Armenia are caused by demographic picture of Armenia in the 20th century as well. In result of repatriation Armenians of Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Iran, Georgia, Azerbaijan and other countries returned to Armenia bringing culture, language and traditions of those countries and peoples. Thus, proceeding from the historical realities, Armenia and Armenian people always were in intercultural dialogue with the countries listed above, tried to respect their cultural traditions.

Government of the Republic of Armenia, the state safeguards and protects all the historical, architectural, cultural monuments and cultural constructions independent of their ethnic and religious belonging. The state promotes in every way observance and execution articles of Armenian Constitution prohibiting “political, ideological, religious, racial and national discrimination.” It should be stated that there have never been fixed in Armenia any facts of expressed intolerance.

In 2002 the Republic of Armenia adopted the law “On Fundamentals of Cultural Legislation” thus consolidating the aims and tasks of state cultural policy, among which there is to provide and protect the constitutional rights of citizens of the Republic of Armenia (among them of ethnic minorities) for participation in cultural life and creativity. Citizens of Armenia,
belonging to ethnic minorities, have a constitutional right to preserve and develop their own traditions, language and culture, the right of religious freedoms.

In 2004, the law of Armenia “On Human Rights Protection” was in effect. Republic of Armenia also joined the circular convention of “The Rights of Ethnic Minorities” and European Charter of “Regional Languages or Languages of Ethnic Minorities.” With the participation of the representatives of ethnic minorities, the draft law has been worked out “On Ethnic Minorities.” On the decision of the government of Armenia as of 2004 the territories are allocated for ethnic minorities to found a cultural centre of ethnic minorities. Over 10 ethnic communities function in Armenia, in particular: Russian, Assyrian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Georgian, German, Kurdish, etc. Ethnic minorities are represented in the government and other state structures of Armenia. To promote cultural-educational activities of ethnic minorities, government of Armenia planned the financial resources in the state budget, which were equally divided among the communities. Periodically, at the expense of financial resources, allocated by the state budget, the library funds of Armenia are filled up, so one can find literature and periodical publications of ethnic minorities in Armenia. Important role is played in preservation and development of ethnic cultures by annual festivals and exhibitions of decorative and applied art, representing ethnic rituals, customs, traditions, ceremonies.

The law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” acting in Armenia gives an opportunity to all religious communities and persons to profess religious teaching they have chosen. 62 religious organizations are registered in Armenia, among them the religious communities of ethnic minorities. In compliance with the acting law, the religious communities may function without registration (registration is considered to be not an obligation, but the right of religious communities).

Intercultural dialogue is also conducted through educational system (secondary and higher educational institutions), Informal Education (conception of “Informal Education of the Republic of Armenia” was approved by the government of the Republic of Armenia in 2006). In 2007 it is foreseen to elaborate the program of “Development of Informal Education for 2008-2013” and “The Strategy of State Youth Policy of the Republic of Armenia for 2008-2010.” Within the formal education in school curricula there was introduced the discipline “Civil Education” (from 1998 as elective and from 2000 as obligatory). From 2001 the discipline “linguistics and intercultural dialogue” is introduced into the list of educational disciplines in higher education institutions.

This is the state policy of Armenia in the issues of support and preservation of cultural diversity, in which UNESCO and other international organizations and structures intensively participate. In this connection let me express my deep gratitude to them and assure them that by joint efforts we can work out approaches to conflict management through intercultural dialogue.
State Policy of Georgia for Promotion of Intercultural Dialogue

On the decision of European parliament and Council of Europe the year of 2008 was declared as “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.” The aim of this decision is to concentrate attention of European peoples on the significance of dialogue.

The problem of intercultural dialogue is urgent for Georgia as for a polyethnic, multiconfessional and polycultural country located at the crossroads of cultures and civilizations and having claims to be a part of Europe.

Intercultural dialogue is a process of exchange of opinions between individuals and groups differing from one another by culture.

Intercultural dialogue gives an opportunity of mutual enrichment. It is an instrument of co-existence and rapprochement through mutual familiarization, excluding oppression and domination, with the guarantee of equal rights for all the dialogue participants.

The purpose of intercultural dialogue is to integrate the minorities and migrants with the majority in order to include them into the process of multilateral communication.

Intercultural dialogue takes place both between different countries and societies and between cultures, existing within one state. Our report concerns dialogue inside the country, dialogue between ethnic groups and cultures in Georgia.

Georgia historically is distinguished for ethnical, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. It was caused by location at the crossroads of cultures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Presidential Republic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (2002 Census)</td>
<td>4 602 thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>66 / km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Language</td>
<td>Georgian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Orthodox Christianity (dominant), Muslims, Christian Monophysites, Judaism, Roman Catholic, Baptists, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>Abkhazians, Azeris, Ossetians, Russians, Armenians, Jewish, Greeks,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the centuries, ethnic composition of population changed in result of political and economic processes of the region and migration policy of neighbouring imperial states. For example, in the 18th-19th centuries considerable changes were caused by migration of Russians, Armenians, Greeks, Germans and others. After establishing of the Soviet power there also took place more or less important changes in result of social, economic and political developments in the Soviet Union.

In the post-Soviet period changes in the ethnic composition of the country were caused by conflicts and migration processes which followed by worsening of socio-economic situations. These processes concerned both Georgians and the representatives of other ethnic groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic composition of the population (After Census)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abkhazians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossetians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijanis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, ethnic picture was changed within the period of time, though this was expressed not by disappearance of existing ethnic groups or appearance of new ones but by changes in quantity composition and relations among the groups. Recently the wave of globalization was followed by appearance of new ethnic groups in Georgia (Turks, Chinese, groups from south-east Asia and Africa).
The abovementioned proves the importance of intercultural dialogue in Georgia as a polyethnic country.*

What is state policy for promoting intercultural dialogue?

First of all we should point to the legislation in the sphere of protecting ethnic minorities. Article 14 of the Constitution of Georgia recognizes equal rights of ethnic minorities and their rights.

In all basic laws and codes of Georgia the rights and freedoms of ethnic minorities are determined.

Legislation in the sphere of protection of minorities:

- Constitution of Georgia.
- Penal Code.
- Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens.
- General Administrative Code of Georgia.
- Law of Georgia on Gatherings and Manifestations.
- Law of Georgia on Broadcasting.
- Law of Georgia on General Education.
- Law of Georgia on High Education.
- Law of Georgia on Health Care.
- Criminal code of Georgia.
- Law on Culture.

**One of the factors promoting intercultural dialogue is civil integration.** On October 13, 2005 the Parliament of Georgia ratified European Frame Convention in the sphere of protection of ethnic minorities.

**State organizations and institutes work on the issues of civil integration:**

**Staff of the State Minister in Civil Integration.** The staff of the State Minister formed by resolution #135, December 31, 2004, provides state strategy of civil integration. One of the major directions is establishment of close contacts with public associations and representatives of ethnic minorities.

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* We should explain what we mean in the concept of minotory. The resolution of the Parliament of Georgia (2005) suggests the following definition of the ethnic minority: they are groups which: 1) are citizens of Georgia; 2) differ from the basic population by linguistic, cultural and ethnic identity; 3) live on the territory of Georgia within a long period of time and 4) live on the territory of the country compactly.
Parliament of Georgia. In 1995 there was founded the Committee for Human Rights Protection. In 2004 the area of committee activities expanded, involving the sphere of civil integration. The committee actively cooperates with the representatives of ethnic minorities. The committee prepared “The Project on Conception of Ethnic Minorities’ Integration Policy in Georgia,” in elaboration of which intensively participated the representatives of organizations engaged in the issues of ethnic minorities.

**Ombudsman.** The Ombudsman staff involves Councils on Religions and Ethnic Minorities. The representatives of ethnic groups united in these Councils regularly meet, visit regions of minorities’ compact settlement.

The **Council of Patriarchate** involves the representatives of various religious groups: Orthodox, Catholic, Holy-Apostolic, Armenian, Evangelic-Lutheran and Evangelic-Baptist Churches, the representatives of Judean and Muslim clergy.

**Council at Public Television.** The department of information at public TV prepares information programs of “Moambe” in five languages: Abkhazian, Ossetian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Russian. Information programs in these languages are broadcasted once a week. On Saturdays a talk-show “Italian Yard” is on, which aims at promoting civil integration of ethnic and religious minorities living in Georgia. The representatives of minorities themselves participate in the discussions.

In addition to central TV channels in the regions of compact settlements of Armenian and Azerbaijani population local TV channels broadcast programs, the area they cover is limited with these regions. “TV 12” and “Farvana TV” broadcast in Armenian-populated Javakheti. LLC “TV Imperia” also work there and everyday at 23:00 they broadcast Armenian translation of the informational program “Courier” of one of the leading Georgian TV channels “Rustavi 2.” “Marneuli TV” and bilingual Georgian-Azerbaijani “Kvemo Kartli TV Company” broadcast in Azerbaijani. From 2005 for the residents of Tskhinvali region there broadcasts its programs Russian-language TV channel “Alania TV” with the assistance and support of the Georgian government.


One of the interesting recent events was the festival of ethnic minorities organized in old Tbilisi. Ethnic minorities presented their folklore, cuisine, art and handicraft. The festival was a symbol of peaceful co-existence, tolerance and equal rights of different cultures in Georgia.

The problem of communication language is one more central issue as well.
Ethnic minorities in Georgia had and have a possibility to be educated in their native language. At the present there function in Georgia Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, Ukrainian, Ossetian state schools. The representatives of ethnic minorities have the right to found courses for language study. The activity of NGO “Caucasian House” is of special mention. It gives an opportunity to interested persons to study the languages of Caucasian peoples, their history and culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjara</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guria</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imereti</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakheti</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mtskheta-Mtianeti</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samtskhe-Javakheti</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kvemo Kartli</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shida Kartli</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>409</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Soviet period the language of communication was Russian. After dissolution of Soviet Union some problems arose. Interest in the Russian language reduced. Majority of young generation cannot speak Russian even at the level of simple communication and is oriented at the European languages. On the other part, a great number of the population in the regions of ethnic minorities’ compact settlement cannot speak Georgian. Obviously, this causes serious problems.

The government of Georgia, the Ministry of Education take real measures for solving this problem. The textbook of the Georgian language for non-Georgian population was prepared and published.

We can say in conclusion that Georgia has potentials and resources for successful development of intercultural dialogue, in particular, historical experience, readiness of the society and efforts of the state.
Scientific Dialogue and Co-operation

International cultural co-operation may be organized in different fields, including the field of science. Cultural and scientific workers are really important at establishing strong, long-lasting contacts between multinational population of the region.

During various historical epochs different nations of the Caucasus have had common cultural environment, there have been processes of cultural interaction. All these factors have been reflected in the monuments of material culture. Contacts between Armenia and Georgia, which used to be uninterrupted during the Middle Ages, are especially significant, because these countries used to be a part of East-Christian world and also had distinctive and common lines of local development.

Scientific and educational centers of these countries, as well as corresponding organizations and individuals may lay down a foundation for a new phase of scientific cooperation that was interrupted by the collapse of the USSR.

Basing on the available experience of scientific contacts, UNESCO Chair of Armenian Art History may propose probable projects of international dialogue:

- Organizing exchange of specialists of history, art history and language by the assistance of UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue at Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and UNESCO Chair of Armenian Art History of the Yerevan State University.
- Arranging summer schools for the students of both Universities, including lectures, visiting and studying various monuments.
- Organizing a web-site to exchange scientific materials, setting an open forum, sharing virtual publications.
- Publishing joint edition of scientific researches once a year in these Universities (by regular succession).
- Organizing joint conferences on Armenian and Georgian arts in Yerevan and in Tbilisi.
- Exchanging scientific literature for the libraries of these Universities, which is very important for overcoming the gap of the last 15 years.

All mention projects may be broadened, UNESCO Chairs of other countries may also participate.
Aitzan Nurmanova  
Senior Researcher, Institute of Oriental Studies, Ministry of Education and Science,  
Republic of Kazakhstan.

Intercultural Dialogue: Central Asian Perspective

Specific mutual relations of nomadic and farming cultures characterized intercultural relations in the Central Asia. This peculiarity of the region led to different forms of relations and had a broad spectrum – from mutual alienation to mutual rapprochement of cultures. This caused specificity of political, economic, religious development, expressed in the history of region rich in events. Despite existing diversity of cultures and sub-regions, the Central Asian region, on the whole, continued and continues to be a bearer of the single civilized origin, allowing to talk on indissolubility of historical experience in development of the region peoples, their interdependence and mutual complementarily.

The present factor is a key for understanding complex contemporary political processes, ongoing in the region. Despite different level and different speed rates of the Central Asian countries development, specific development of religion, collective identity of the region peoples, ethnic diversity and difference of economic indicators, still single civilized constituent should inevitable become the foundation, on the basis of which future relations in the region should be built and formed. It becomes far more important in the epoch of the so-called post-industrial development, characterized by interdependence and inter-relation of countries differing from one another and also by washing away of personal identity under the press of mass culture.

The process of dialogue of civilizations and cultures in the period of globalisation becomes a specially complex problem, which in the contemporary conditions penetrates all the spheres of life. They justly talk now with alarm for the future about the urgent need for establishing the terms and principles of dialogue of civilizations, ethnic groups, nations, confessions, states; people and power; modernism and traditions in development of society; philosophy and science; science and religion; dialogue of traditional and non-traditional religious doctrines; interconfessional and intraconfessional dialogue.

Kazakhstan has historically become a place of mutual enrichment of civilizations, interpenetration of cultural models, formation of the community of different peoples. It represents a polyethnic state and its development will in any case connected with this fact. The efforts to develop only on the basis of ethno-oriented model of state involve jeopardy of society splitting and ruin of the state itself. We see this on the examples of interethnic conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union. The reason is just that very wrongly
understood nationalism, which leads to refuting the need for dialogue with other cultures and closing the potentials for introducing the system of world civilizations into the processes of globalization.

Kazakhstan, having a polycultural population, implements the course on strengthening independent statehood, based on the idea of co-citizenship and equal terms for developing all the cultures and ethnic groups, existing on its territory. This, surely, is a guarantee for stability of society, security and civil accord.

Civilization expands its limits and this is a natural process, coming from century into century, but now the need arose to expand the limits through familiarization, strengthening of interdependence in the world, combining the efforts of Western and Islamic civilizations, rapprochement of cultures, leading not to unification, but to enrichment of colours of the world at the same time preserving peculiarities.

At present there grows recognition of the need for using intercultural and interreligious dialogue as a factor, promoting social integration and strengthening of stability all over the world. Religious authorities are suggested to intensify dialogue between the representatives of different communities to promote understanding of basic ethnic values.

It is necessary to intensify practical and real activity in this sphere to eradicate stereotypes and to encourage intercultural mutual understanding, universally acknowledged values, human rights, balanced and equal relations between the sexes. These aims should be achieved through the promotion of the network of UNESCO chairs in intercultural and interreligious dialogue, NGOs, local and regional interreligious associations and also in cooperation with all the program sectors.

Present terms of Kazakhstan development, as of polyethnic state, lead to intensification of the processes of national consciousness formation and development of national cultures. Now the problem of international communication, collaboration within multinational states and regions, have become one of the essential problems of intercultural and inteconfessional dialogue in Kazakhstan. General well-being, stable world in the present and past of the republic largely depend on successful solution of these problems.

Sovereignization of the independent states of the region aggravated the split of single cultural-historical space, which led to mystification and ethnization of cultural-historical heritage, exaggeration of peculiarity and exclusiveness regardless of historical facts and objective reality. It is necessary to reveal those points of contiguity between peoples and cultures, those moments of their relations, which could lead to rapprochement of different groups of mankind, to generalization of diverse and often contradictory experience.
In search for the ways of rapprochement of Central Asian states, scientific, intellectual community should play an important role along with politicians. Aspiration to apprehend ongoing changes in their wholeness and to promote peaceful solution of arising problems assists the researches in wider use of such concepts as “dialogue,” “culture,” “civilization.”

Thus, dialogue becomes the need for world development in the new century. Only by uniting their efforts, the states will get an opportunity to implement technological and intellectual achievements to reach sustainable development. This requires political compromises, tolerance, which means formation of balance between religious interests and the interests of individual states.

In solution of the problems mentioned above belongs to education of tolerance, culture of international communication, which should be started from the rising generation may play an important role in solution of the problems mentioned above. The programs of schools and higher institutions should contain materials on history and culture of peoples living in the region, representing common roots and traditional interrelations.

In this regard science and education face the task of elaborating the new approaches to solution of the problems on further strengthening of interethnic and interconfessional accord in the society, of generalizing and analysing the experience, accumulated in the period of independent development.

At present the problems of international relations, in the terms of multinational states have become most urgent. As one of the efficient measures for solving the present problem Institute for Oriented Studies has elaborated an educational program directed at developing the culture of living together. The aim of this program is to give children deep and comprehensive knowledge of history and culture of their countries; to teach them how to understand historical events; to develop respect to other peoples, apprehension of unity of the entire society in achieving progress.

A fine opportunity for fulfilment of one of the most important aims of the project is to expand spiritual education through science. It is of no less importance to put scientific knowledge and categories into the research and understanding of spiritual sphere. In broader sense Chair’s long-term aim is the forming more educated, spiritually more developed, less inclined to conflicts. This may become a basis for reducing social tension in the society and formation of the culture of tolerance and good-neighbourly relation in it.
CAUCASUS PROJECT – UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs

Final Communiqué

Round Table
«Caucasus – Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue»
21-22 June, 2007, Tbilisi, Georgia

Introduction
An international Round Table “Caucasus – Perspective of Intercultural Dialogue” took place at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia, on 21-22 June, 2007. The Round Table was organized by UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue (Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University), in co-operation with the Georgian National Commission for UNESCO in the framework of UNESCO’s “Caucasus Project”.

As the region of comparatively small size and extremely diverse population of its countries, the Caucasus especially needs to identify and develop tools and methods, regarding intercultural competences to facilitate intercultural dialogue. The region is facing challenge of globalization, therefore it is important to have a balance between tradition and modernity.

Content of the debates
The Round Table centred on three sessions, each devoted to specific themes:

1. Regional approach: the Caucasus example.
   The concept of “Unity in Diversity” is often applied to the Caucasus, a region known for its multiethnic and multicultural character, but rarely for celebrating this unity – this space became an object of public and academic interest due to the conflicts of recent years. Consequently, co-existence of cultures is mostly discussed in negative aspect while positive experience of dialogue remains neglected. Understanding the role of cultural factors, such as ethnicity, religion, language, would serve as a good basis for understanding the processes of regional (dis)integration and (re)shaping identities.

2. Good practices and methodologies in the promotion of intercultural dialogue.
   This session was designed at contributing to UNESCO’s efforts to identify and develop tools and methods, regarding intercultural competences to facilitate intercultural dialogue, to identify and list the actors and facilitators of this process.
3. The network of UNESCO Chairs – perspective for a common programme and potential co-operation.

Since its foundation in 2006, the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural Dialogue at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, has developed contacts with analogous UNESCO Chairs of different regions. This session explored how the experience of these contacts could serve as a starting point for the further mutual cooperation in specific academic and research spheres.

In these sessions, the participants from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian Federation and Moldova presented and discussed the ideas and experiences in the sphere of intercultural dialogue. Taking into account that, since the region represents the area of historical, cultural and scientific ties, bridging different civilizations of eastern and western subcontinents and belonging to the association of Mediterranean states as well as to the Caspian basin, it is crucial to implement the main strategies outlined in the “Caucasus” Project and continue the efforts to promote cooperation at the regional and interregional level, in the various fields of competence of UNESCO, as foreseen in the recommendations of the Round Table held in Vilnius, in June 2004, in the framework of the Caucasus Project.

Special attention was devoted to the new strategic approaches and orientations for the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme proposed by the Director-General of the UNESCO in 2007 (doc. 176 EX/10), implying the intensification of links among the UNESCO Chairs mainly with the network of UNESCO of “Interreligious dialogue for intercultural understanding” and other institutions working in similar fields and disciplines, creating thus the regional as well as interregional ground for academic and research cooperation. The Round Table, accordingly, proved to be an important initial prerequisite for the development of communication and information exchange, leading to the realization of common strategies and joint interdisciplinary research programmes; raising the mobility of academics, researchers and students.

**Recommendations:**

The participants,
Recognizing the constructiveness of the UNESCO framework for cooperation in the multiethnic and multicultural regions like the Caucasus;
Acknowledging that the Caucasus is a region with diversity of historical roots, national traditions, which historically has been a crossroad of many civilizations and cultures;

Considering that due to its geographical situation the Caucasus naturally integrates into an association of Mediterranean countries as well as those neighbouring Black and Caspian Seas bridging the boundary between the North and the South, the East and the West;

Realizing the necessity to promote respect for cultural diversity and to endorse intercultural dialogue including interreligious dialogue with a view to contribute to the sustainable development in order to be more aware of the different cultures and religions that co-exist in the Caucasus;

Recalling that the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity affirms that “in our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together” (Article 2), recognizing that respect for the diversity of cultures, intercultural dialogue and cooperation are among the best guarantees of peaceful co-existence, the Round Table is considered as important event maintaining intercultural dialogue and finding the points of interaction on the regional, inter-regional and international levels;

Decided, within the framework of the project “Caucasus” and of the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs network, to cooperate the following way:

- Actively collect and disseminate information on good practices, develop basic principles and methodological tools and/or teaching materials such as those presented in the Round Table. Broaden the scope of the good practices shared during the meeting to be taken into consideration when formulating and implementing cultural policies and make the information about them more easily accessible;

- Encourage interaction between promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural/interfaith dialogue with a view to promote development;

- Produce database of good practices on intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding established and expanded;
- Strengthen dialogue among the experts and culture professionals and encourage interaction and exchanges of knowledge, cultural competence and performance, skills and good practices among members of civil society, in particular people involved in cultural activities;

- Implement activities that would lead to the respect of cultural diversity and the promotion of intercultural dialogue such as art festivals, publications, translations, exhibitions, raising awareness in intercultural nature of local traditions;

- Encourage and strengthen existing networks (women networks, youth networks, UNESCO Chairs network, UNESCO Clubs and Centres), to work together for common goals designed at promoting intercultural dialogue in all its dimensions, respect of cultural diversity and sustainable development;

- Stimulate partnership of the existing UNESCO Chairs in training for intercultural dialogue and promoting academic cooperation;

- Develop partnerships with special attention to mass media and NGOs including youth organizations;

- Promote the elaboration of the Culture of Peace; Stimulate partnership encouraging academic research and exchange among governmental, non-governmental, religious and spiritual leaders;

- Establish/consolidate links between UNESCO Chairs at the regional (Caucasus) and inter-regional levels. Strengthen links with the UNESCO/UNITWIN Networks “Interreligious Dialogue for Intercultural Understanding”, and other relevant networks, by further activating the links with UNESCO Chairs in the Caucasus and encourage them to work together. In this context and due to its geographical position at the crossroads, the Caucasus may take part in the project “East-West: methodological approaches to intercultural and interreligous dialogue” by implementing broad programs responding to its realities.

With a view to reach the above listed objectives, the participants outlined concrete spheres of future cooperation (see annex 1).
Annex 1

Concrete Spheres of Future Partnership

1. Theory

Comparative Studies

- Specify the spheres of comparison
- Specify the object of study, method and methodology
- Define two directions of studies:
  - Comparative historical
  - Comparative typological
- Trace back the regional experience and good practices of regional intercultural dialogue
- Application of non-traditional paradigms (imperial paradigm, big narrative, etc.) in Caucasian studies

2. Means for Possible Future Cooperation in Practical Sphere

- Training programs for students and experts developing skills and methods for intercultural dialogue, conflict resolution and conflict prevention
- Audio/Visual Technologies in Support of intercultural dialogue (internet site, virtual library, CD/DVD)
- Joint editions (International board including representatives of UNESCO Chairs)
  - Electronic (“Intercultural Studies”)
  - Hard copy (“Civilization Researches”, “Pontes”, etc.)
- Peer reviewing;
- Lecturing (Joint academic programs on BA/MA levels, short courses (e.g. promoting the knowledge of cultural policy and strategies of the UNESCO)
- Exchange programs (students, staff mobility, summer school)

3. Advanced Projects:

- Anthology of Caucasian poetry of XIX century – in three languages
- Urban Subcultures: cities as focal points for intercultural dialogue
- Urban spirituality.