



DialogUE in Action

Citizen-led policy recommendations on ecology,
communication and social policies for Europe

DIALOGUE
Project



Funded by
the European Union

DIALOGUE

Project

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DIALOGUE Project

In an age characterized by rapid advancements in information technology and the profound impacts of globalization, the world faces significant challenges such as disinformation, social inequalities and climate change. Amid ongoing global conflicts and crises, there is growing skepticism about the effectiveness of dialogue and citizen involvement in political processes. Many feel that entrenched power structures overshadow their voices and that meaningful change is elusive.

The DialogUE project emerges from a strong foundation of ethical principles and grounded in reciprocity—treating others as one wishes to be treated. This approach fosters mutual respect and trust, essential for productive dialogue and collaborative efforts. The project stems from the decades-long commitment of New Humanity, the expression of the Focolare Movement, which has significantly advanced good practices of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Through its initiatives, rooted in the spirituality of communion and together with its partners, it has promoted peace and social cohesion among different religious and cultural groups in many countries, demonstrating the power of dialogue in building a harmonious society. This approach fosters mutual respect and trust, essential for productive dialogue and collaborative efforts.

By integrating an institutional vision of dialogue with a commitment to legal and ethical standards, the project ensures that political actions are both principled and practical, addressing the needs of citizens. It reflects a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution, respect for diversity and democratic participation. This vision is also grounded on cutting-edge academic debate and empirical research projects that aim at overcoming perspectives on human action as oriented to self-interest and instrumental rationality; as typically depicted by the figure of the 'homo-economicus'.

Among other concepts, 'social love' is gaining increasing support in the contemporary sociological agenda as a powerful concept to understand social phenomena oriented to gratuitousness, openness to diversity, care for the social and the natural world. It takes on a public dimension, serving as the foundation of solidarity among individuals, groups and entire populations. It encompasses critical actions and social relationships devoid of calculation and expectations of reciprocation. Going beyond primary, familial and intimate bonds, it extends to those who are different from us, such as strangers and foreigners, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable people, the future generations and nature.

Seeking to tackle the most pressing challenges of our time by fostering dialogue across diverse communities, the project focuses on dialogues about:



Communication



Ecology



Social Policies

Promoting active citizenship, involving citizens in societal issues and being willing to listen in order to express their wishes at a higher level, is a goal of New Humanity. The project ultimately aimed to foster the emergence of cross-cutting dimensions of identity that transcend national boundaries, contributing to the building of EU citizenship while ensuring gender balance and an intergenerational dimension. Starting from the grassroots, the DialogUE project engaged diverse categories of citizens, organized into four Bilateral Dialogue Groups participating in international meetings to formulate recommendations for EU decision-makers, which you can now read in this document.

The four Bilateral Dialogue Groups are:



Among Christian citizens

Orthodox, Catholics, Reformed Churches, Pentecostals, and Free Churches



Among Catholic and Muslim citizens



Among Catholic and non-confessional citizens

Atheists and Marxists



Among Western and Eastern European citizens

Activities and Results



Objectives

The project focused on these specific objectives:

Reinforce dialogue skills of citizens: Addressing the context of increased polarization.

Generate awareness about recent strategic EU documents and participation tools: Enhancing understanding and engagement.

Strengthen the networking approach of the consortium and its advocacy capacities: Enhancing collaboration and influence.

The project in numbers

8

lessons on how to dialogue

23

countries of the EU represented

9

international meetings in person

742

citizens directly involved in dialogue meetings in presence

7


international meetings on-line


1067

citizens directly involved in dialogue meetings on-line

Dialogue Groups

The DialogUE project “Diverse Identities Allied Open to Generate a United Europe” is promoted by a consortium of 14 civil society organizations (CSOs) from nine EU Member States.

 Partner

 Participant



Partners

Italy



Germany



Romania



Ireland



Portugal



Slovakia



Hungary



Belgium



Participants coming from:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

All the partners and participants were represented and engaged in dialogue meetings through the bilateral dialogue groups.

Among Christians citizens

Orthodox, Catholics, Reformed Churches,
Pentecostals and Free Churches



The platform [Together for Europe](#) brings together Christian Movements and Communities – over 300 in number spread across the Continent – belonging to different Churches. While preserving their independence, collectively they form a network to pursue shared goals, each bringing a contribution specific to their own charism.

Among Catholics and Muslims citizens

The promoted dialogue invited citizens to share their spiritual values with each other based on mutual respect and the desire to grow in effective fraternity. This resonates immediately with persons of various religions and cultures because of the Golden Rule, formulated in many ways, but often stated as: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” By living these words together with persons of other faiths, a very constructive dialogue is established.

Among Catholics and non-confessional citizens

Atheists and Marxists



[DIALOP](#) fosters and supports the dialogue with people of good will, with secular and religious backgrounds, especially between Socialist/Marxists and Christians. In collaboration with universities and other formal or informal educational institutions, DIALOP aims to develop and implement the fields of Social Ethics, applying the principles of the Marxian Social Critique and the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Among Western and Eastern Europe citizens



Moved by the awareness of possible growing diffidence between certain citizens from East and West, two years ago a group of citizens from different countries of Europe have been carrying on a dialogue called ‘Multipolar’ between East and West with various people. It is a bottom-up initiative of European citizens, supported by experts from different disciplines, moved by the awareness of polarization and fragmentation in Europe. It is a laboratory of thought and life, where concrete aspects of dialogical living are explored.



Methodology

The DialogUE project employs a structured and innovative methodology to address critical societal challenges through thematic exchanges and dialogues. At the heart of this approach are four Bilateral Dialogue Groups, each focusing on distinct cross-cultural and cross-religious engagements.

The methodology is implemented in three sequential phases:



LEARN

Stakeholders from each group underwent training sessions to enhance their dialogue skills and deepen their understanding of strategic EU policies. This preparation enabled them to engage in meaningful and informed discussions during the international meetings.



ACT

The groups participated in 12 international meetings where they discussed three main topics: ecology, communication and social policies. Each group independently formulated recommendations based on their unique perspectives. These recommendations were then synthesized into transversal recommendations—principles and proposals agreed upon by all four groups. This collaborative process ensured that the final recommendations were comprehensive, reflecting a diverse range of perspectives and contributing to the project's overarching goal of fostering a united and resilient European identity.



SHARE

The experiences gained were disseminated through a large-scale public event, a visit to Brussels to engage with EU decision-makers, an extensive communication effort including articles on websites, blog posts, social media updates and an online resource center where the project's gathered content is accessible.

Topics Dialogue	Dialogue training	Communication	Ecology	Social Policies	Outups
Among Christians	Training facilitators	International meeting	International meeting	International meeting	▶ Specific recommendations
Among Catholics and Muslims	Training facilitators	International meeting	International meeting	International meeting	▶ Specific recommendations
Among Christians and non-believers	Training facilitators	International meeting	International meeting	International meeting	▶ Specific recommendations
Among Eastern and Western Europe	Training facilitators	International meeting	International meeting	International meeting	▶ Specific recommendations
Outputs	▼ Training modules	▼ Shared recommendations	▼ Shared recommendations	▼ Shared recommendations	▶ Dialogue KIT

Project assessment

The evaluation design took into consideration the type of activity by studying the implementation processes and the resources available to organize the meetings. The evaluation design was organized with an experimental method using a pre and post-meeting measurement. Questionnaires with sensitive indicators were proposed to measure changes due to the comparison during the 12 meetings held. Alongside the quantitative evaluation carried out with the questionnaires, some interviews were carried out to probe in depth some of the topics discussed.

The following indicators were used to design the evaluation tools: an increase in convergence on some points with a view to constructive dialogue, an increase in knowledge of the European Union's commitment to promoting inclusion and dialogue between different groups, the formulation of principles and recommendations for each meeting,

Alongside the quantitative analysis, a qualitative study was carried out involving some participants in the Workshops. Thirteen interviews were conducted with participants in the four types of workshops that were held. These interviews made it possible to collect points of view, opinions, criticisms and suggestions for a greater understanding of the usefulness of these activities. The report dedicates a specific section to this analysis to complete the verification and evaluation of the results achieved.

More information on the results achieved can be found in the evaluation report.



How We Dialogue

Dialogue is not a technique, it's a basic attitude, an existential process. This form of communication is not only an instrument but a constant encounter therefore, a journey of common intellectual and spiritual experience in which the peculiarity of the respective partners does not vanish but becomes clearer; it unfolds and develops. In this sense, opposites become complementary. Recognizing this, does not necessarily lead to trivial pluralism or indifferent tolerance but to treating the position of the other so that polarity occurs without polarization.

The differentiated consensus and the qualified dissent

First, it focuses on defining the question with precision. The search for a common univocal declaration can be initiated from here, reflecting one's own tradition, while being enriched by the other party. In this attentive listening, one can begin to uncover the values each individual, community, or tradition seeks to uphold in communal life. It is through this mutual exchange that foundational values come into clearer focus, rather than being subject to endless debate.

There are going to be various types of differences. If significant differences undermine a coherent fundamental declaration they must be clarified until they can fall into a second category, the legitimate divergent interpretations of the joint declaration. These do not endanger the common core, but rather enrich it. Even these legitimate persistent differences will be formulated and accepted by both parties.

Furthermore, the points on which a differentiated consensus is not possible, will not be hidden. Persistent substantial differences – the third category – must neither be erased nor simply maintained, in the sense of leaving them unaltered. Instead, these fundamental differences will remain open and considered to be valuable.

In the differences just mentioned, we want to come to a qualified disagreement, a qualified dissent. To truly dialogue, one must first know and understand one another knowing his foundations. There can be apparent, superficial, false consensuses, misunderstandings, gaps, etc.. Disagreements must also be qualified, that means, clear, safe, well-founded.

There are many traps into which you can fall. E.g. avoiding saying difficult things. Or using the same terms, which mean very different concepts for each interlocutor. However, there may also be alleged disagreements which, talking about it, disappear immediately. In this case, the apparent disagreement turns into two different approaches or accents which can be easily reconciled.

This means formulating simple, clear, fully shared assertions, but with a space for different foundations, accentuations and traditions, but not contradictory to the main assertion. Thus, it can be a sure foundation for a transversal action for the best of man, society and the planet.





Communication

In recent years, Europe has faced an escalating challenge from disinformation, with false or misleading information spreading rapidly across digital platforms and social media. It fuels polarization, undermines public policy efforts and deepens social tensions across the continent. Addressing this challenge requires more than just individual efforts to discern truth from falsehood; it calls for a collective, dialogic approach that emphasizes listening, understanding and sharing within communities.

EU Actions Against Disinformation

[European Democracy Action Plan](#) was introduced as a comprehensive strategy to protect democratic integrity by enhancing transparency in political advertising, supporting independent media and strengthening fact-checking networks.

[Strengthened Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) introduced more rigorous commitments for online platforms, including enhanced transparency, accountability, and access to data for researchers.

[European Media Freedom Act](#) aims to further safeguard media pluralism and independence, ensuring that European citizens have access to trustworthy and diverse information sources.

Core principles from citizens' dialogues

Dialogue

Promote dialogue as a key method in decision-making, grounded in reciprocal listening and respect for every individual.

Diversity

Foster appreciation of cultural and religious diversity, encouraging dialogue over values, positive impact, conflict and retaliation.

Fraternity

Embrace fraternity in local contexts through positive storytelling and careful, respectful public communication.

Citizen-led Recommendations

Enhance Media Literacy and Communication Skills Across Diverse Platforms

Build upon existing EU media literacy and communication training programs by introducing advanced, interactive workshops tailored for various age groups and professional sectors. These workshops should focus on critical thinking, digital literacy (including the use of artificial intelligence) and non-violent communication. Integrate these programs into formal and informal education systems, professional development courses, and community outreach initiatives to foster a culture of informed and respectful dialogue.

Ensure Balance and Diversity in Media Representation

Guarantee that European news agencies reflect a balanced and diverse representation of all communities and cultures, including the most overlooked minorities, gender equity and voices from the Global South. This will ensure that a wide range of perspectives are covered and promote more inclusive and equitable public discourse.

Innovative projects

DIGITAL OATH

<https://www.digital-oath.net/>



The Digital Oath project seeks to establish an ethical framework for digital professionals, like the Hippocratic Oath for physicians, by drafting a set of principles that guide responsible and humane digital practices. This initiative aims for widespread adoption of the oath at both national and global levels, promoting a culture of respect and inclusivity within the digital space. Emphasizing collaboration and open dialogue, the Digital Oath encourages diverse stakeholders—engineers, content creators and everyday users—to contribute to creating a digital environment that prioritizes human-centered progress and ensures that technological advancements serve the greater good of society.



DIALOGICAL JOURNALISM

This project emerged from an experiment designed to address the political, social and ideological challenges revealed by the migration phenomenon. It is promoted by [NetOne - Media & Communication for a United World](#) and involves a group of European professionals, along with representatives from other regions, advocating for a “dialogical path” to interpret and narrate events. The initiative seeks to establish a collaborative platform connecting journalists, media professionals, communication experts, politicians, administrators, NGO representatives, academics and social workers. The goal is to better understand the complexities of migration, interpret its elements through an interdisciplinary approach and provide narrative and communication tools that foster dialogue and understanding among diverse citizens.





Ecology

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, with Europe already experiencing more frequent and intense heatwaves, rising sea levels and shifts in weather patterns that disrupt agriculture, biodiversity and human health. These environmental changes have profound socio-economic consequences, from increased migration pressures to disruptions in key industries. To navigate this complex transition, dialogue is crucial—not only to guide the process but also to resolve the inevitable controversies it will generate, ensuring a unified approach in addressing climate change.

EU Actions on Climate Change

[European Green Deal \(2019\)](#) sets an ambitious goal for the EU to become the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, with intermediate targets like reducing emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

[Paris Agreement \(2015\)](#), to which the EU is a major signatory, further commits the region to limiting global warming to well below 2°C, with efforts to keep it to 1.5°C.

[EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 \(2020\)](#) aims to protect and restore ecosystems, recognizing that healthy ecosystems are vital for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Core principles from citizens' dialogues

Interconnectedness

Environmental, social and economic issues are deeply intertwined and must be addressed holistically to achieve sustainable solutions.

Equity

Ensure that ecological actions promote fairness and do not exacerbate existing inequalities, both within and between nations.

Collaboration

Foster solidarity and partnerships across diverse stakeholders to effectively tackle ecological challenges and ensure shared responsibility and action.

Citizen-led Recommendations

Advance Global Impact Assessment and Holistic Metrics

Develop and implement a global environmental and social impact assessment tool for all policies and legislation. This tool should evaluate the international repercussions of national and EU decisions, aiming to prevent global inequalities and foster environmental and social cooperation. Additionally, introduce a “General Progress Index” (GPI) to complement traditional GDP measures. The GPI should include diverse indicators like the Gross Happiness Index, reflecting societal progress, well-being and environmental sustainability.

Establish Multi-Stakeholder Frameworks with Faith-Based Organizations

Utilize Article 17 TFEU to create multi-stakeholder frameworks for dialogue at local, regional and national levels. These frameworks should be supported by research that integrates both profit and non-profit considerations, aiding the development of effective regulatory frameworks and new ESG metrics. Also strengthen the role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) in environmental governance by creating dedicated spaces within European institutions for their input, leveraging their wisdom and social cohesion to drive community-based action and sustainable development.

Innovative projects

ECOLOGICAL FAITH PLANS

<https://www.faithplans.org/>

The Ecological Faith Plans represent a groundbreaking initiative where religious communities globally commit to environmental stewardship and sustainable development. This ambitious framework sees faith groups, including Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Daoist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Shinto and Sikh traditions, along with interfaith organizations like Religions for Peace, harnessing their assets, investments and influence to address climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainable development. Over the next seven to ten years, these Faith Plans will drive practical actions across seven key areas—ranging from the management of buildings and lands to investment strategies and community outreach. By integrating their spiritual wisdom and resources, these faith communities aim to foster a more sustainable and equitable world, addressing both environmental challenges and the exacerbated social inequalities highlighted by recent global crises.



SCHOOL GARDENS

<https://www.bag-schulgarten.de/>

School Gardens is a project focused on promoting sustainable development by integrating garden-based learning into education. By turning gardens into dynamic classrooms, the project enhances subjects like science, social studies and nutrition in primary schools, while serving as practical labs for environmental science and horticulture in secondary schools. This hands-on approach helps students understand ecological processes, fosters healthier food choices and encourages a connection with nature. Through collaborations across Europe, School Gardens unites national networks, sharing best practices and inspiring educators. The project also advocates for integrating gardening into school infrastructure, teacher training and curricula, ensuring students gain valuable skills for a sustainable future.





Social Policies

In Europe, advancing social rights in welfare, health, education and labor is essential to building inclusive and equitable societies where all individuals can thrive. While progress has been made, challenges like social exclusion, inequality and discrimination persist. Addressing these issues requires not only robust social policies but also a shared approach to social research and European legislation that can influence the unique norms of different states. This necessitates a process of interiorization of values, of negotiation that begins at the local level and gradually involves European institutions, ensuring that cohesive frameworks are developed to guarantee social justice, protect vulnerable populations and uphold human dignity across the continent.

EU Actions on Social Policies

[Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union \(2000\)](#) serves as a cornerstone, enshrining key rights and freedoms, including dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice, thereby providing a robust framework for safeguarding individual rights across the EU.

[European Pillar of Social Rights \(2017\)](#) outlines essential principles and rights aimed at improving social protection and employment conditions. It addresses issues such as fair wages, social protection and access to quality education and training, thus reinforcing the EU's commitment to social justice and human rights for all its citizens.

Core principles from citizens' dialogues

Inclusion

Prioritize equal dignity and active participation for everyone in society.

Community

Foster a sense of shared responsibility and mutual support within local and global communities.

Ethic

Promote ethical governance that prioritizes collective well-being and universal human rights.

Citizen-led Recommendations

Develop a Unified EU Framework for Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement

Establish a cross-border EU framework to promote civic service, volunteer work and community services that enhance social cohesion, inclusivity and dignity for all, including migrants, people with disabilities and the Roma population. This framework should support initiatives that foster intergenerational and multicultural interaction, ensuring that social rights and integration are upheld across all member states.

Strengthen Support Systems for Migrants and Vulnerable Populations

Implement EU-wide policies to create dedicated centers and programs that streamline asylum processing, provide social and legal support and facilitate the integration of migrants into the community. These centers should also contribute to policy development through research and collaboration, ensuring the protection of human rights and promoting educational and vocational opportunities for all vulnerable groups.

Innovative Projects

1TOIT2AGES

<https://www.1toit2ages.be/>



1Toit2Ages brings generations together through intergenerational housing, building on the tradition of grandparents hosting young students. Launched in Brussels in 2009 and expanding to Wallonia, the initiative fosters mutual support by pairing elderly individuals with students. The project addresses two key challenges: reducing loneliness among seniors and providing affordable housing for students. With a team of professionals from various fields, 1Toit2Ages actively creates opportunities for interaction and connection, organizing intergenerational dinners, games afternoons and visits. Their vision is a society where generations collaborate and enrich one another and they work tirelessly to make that dream a reality.

BORDERS

<https://www.ascs.it/borders/>

The Borders project focuses on supporting migrants along Europe's key migration routes. It monitors the conditions of people in transit, exposing the violence and injustices they often endure. The project is an initiative of ASCS (Agenzia Scalabriniana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo) and collaborates with local organizations to provide shelter and assistance to migrants, while also ensuring a steady presence of volunteers in critical border areas. Additionally, Borders works to raise awareness among the public, especially young people, about the impact of the EU's border externalization policies. Two significant operational missions at the moment are the shelter homes in Calais and Ceuta.



Credit: Francesco Cibati, Subotica

Sunshine Game



Dialogue doesn't always have to be difficult—it can also be fun. Games bring people together, spark creativity, and provide a hands-on way to explore complex issues. Recognizing the challenges of discussing difficult subjects, there was a clear need to create an experience that allows for easier and more enjoyable dialogue. During the journey of the DialogUE project, the dialogue meetings led the project to new places, opening doors to new partnerships. That's how the “Sunshine” game was born.

Sunshine is a role-playing game designed to foster systems thinking in urban renewal. Acquiring systems thinking in the complex processes of urban renewal is a crucial sustainability skill. However, it is challenging to develop because we often overlook the bigger picture and fail to consider various stakeholders. This game aims to help players recognize and apply this competence.

The game is used as a possible application of a decision-making-process in dialogue. The game facilitates dialogue among participants in different roles and is intended for be used in real urban regeneration contexts, involving five stakeholder groups: residents, government, civil society organizations, companies and the financial sector.

Participants are divided into these five groups and are presented with a problem. They must formulate actions to address their concerns, ensuring these actions align with sustainability frameworks. The aim is to foster a collaborative environment where all stakeholders actively contribute to developing a shared solution. The emphasis is therefore on how every stakeholder can be part of a co-creative process with in the end a solution that leads to actionable steps everybody is committed to.

The game is based on the simulation game APTech that was developed at KU Leuven, CEDON with “Building Physics and Sustainable Design” group in complementary to: the DialogUE-project, the European Turnaround Money project and the Flemish VLAIO-funded impaC3t-project.



Conclusion And Acknowledgments

The founders of the European Community demonstrated a visionary leadership grounded in ethical rigor, aiming to overcome the profound historical and economic divides of their time. Today, European politics must continue to reflect these values, with leaders committed to addressing contemporary challenges through a framework of justice, equity and mutual respect.

Through our journey, we have learned that engaging in dialogue necessitates a commitment to continuous reflection and improvement. This dialogue is enriched by diverse perspectives, including those from religious communities and people of faith. Their involvement is crucial because it reflects the democratic diversity of our society, provides direct insight into the lived experiences of citizens and contributes to a broader understanding of the world through existential and spiritual viewpoints. Engaging with these communities allows us to connect more deeply with the realities faced by ordinary people and fosters an actionable approach to policymaking.

In European politics, it is essential that policies are crafted to empower all citizens and address the needs of those most in need of support, ensuring that every individual has a voice and a stake in the political process. This pragmatic approach, combined with visionary ideas, sets a strong foundation for addressing climate change and social issues in a holistic and effective manner.

We extend our gratitude to all those who have contributed to this project. A special thank you goes to the dialogue groups and everyone who worked directly on this initiative, whose dedication and hard work have been invaluable. We are deeply appreciative of all the participants and citizens who had the courage to engage in dialogue events, sharing their perspectives and enriching our discussions. We also acknowledge the crucial support of the CERV program, whose funding and guidance made this endeavor possible. Your collective efforts have been instrumental in advancing our shared goals and fostering a more cohesive society through meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding.





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