

The Dialogue Tour – A media campaign with strong participation of Austrian youth

Gerd Gensbichler

To mark the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008 (EYID 2008), the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Culture and the Arts (BMUKK) and the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) launched the Dialogue Tour: from 4 April to 6 May 2008 the "Dialogue Tour convoy" stopped for a day in every Austrian provincial capital, where local, regional and national initiatives on intercultural dialogue presented their work on a stage and in various marquees to the public and the Austrian media. All the provincial radio and television stations broadcasted reports of the event, and the ORF's nationwide radio and television shows also reported on the Dialogue Tour.



The "Crazy Steppers" on stage in Vienna
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The Dialogue Tour convoy was on the road for more than a month. The stage acts were mainly young people offering music and dance presentations and spreading their joy of life. The kick-off event of the Dialogue Tour took place at the main square in Graz on April 4, 2008 with sunshine and enthusiastic performers. The motivating spirit of the many younger participants endured for the entire Dialogue Tour and contributed to the success of

the nationwide road show. Dimitré Dinev, the Austrian-Bulgarian writer and ambassador of the EYID 2008, the Minister of Education, Culture and the Arts Claudia Schmied, the Styrian State Governor Franz Voves and the Director of the Styrian Broadcasting Corporation Gerhard Draxler inaugurated the Dialogue Tour in Graz. In her opening speech, Minister Claudia Schmied pinpointed the aim of the Dialogue Tour: it should help to increase public awareness for the necessity of intercultural dialogue and improve the coexistence between the different cultural groups in Austria and in Europe.



"Zeit!Raum Wild Stars" on stage in
Vienna © Gerd Gensbichler

The Dialogue Tour should especially attract the young, offering them a forum to get to know different cultures and to experience cultural diversity in Austria and in Europe as an enrichment of society.

During the Dialogue Tour, more than 180 local and regional initiatives that have already been engaged in intercultural dialogue for years presented their work. About 1000 performers and presenters appeared on stage at all nine stops of the Dialogue Tour convoy. Many of them had been preparing themselves for months in the facilities of their schools and organisations for

the show on stage: there were language quizzes, African drum performances, presentations of international kindergarten projects, musicals for children, introductions in Austrian and international sign languages, contemporary music in a philharmonic setting, Forum theater presentations, interviews with Austrian athletes with multicultural biographies and consulting services on jobs for young people with intercultural backgrounds.



Alexander Wrabetz, Director of the
Austrian Broadcasting Corporation,
Michael Häupl, Mayor of Vienna,
Minister of Education Claudia Schmied
and Ján Figel, EU Commissioner

The final event of the Dialogue Tour took place in the main courtyard of the "Museums Quartier", the home of the Viennese Museums of Contemporary and Modern Arts. This last stop of the Dialogue Tour convoy was opened by European Commissioner Ján Figel, Education Minister Claudia Schmied, Mayor Michael Häupl and the Director of the ORF Alexander Wrabetz. The "Long" – a dancing Chinese dragon – of the young artists of "Zeit!Raum Wild Stars" was an emblematic act at this last stop in Vienna: in Chinese Mythology, the dragon ceremony is a colourful symbol for the search for good luck and happiness; somehow the Long's dance at the Dialogue Tour day in Vienna became a shining symbol for today's

young people who are interested in dialogue with the different cultural groups in Austria and in Europe.

Austrian EYID 2008 team:
Ms. Monika Goodenough-Hofmann
(*Head of the team*), Ms. Catherine
Danielopol-Hofer, *both Austrian*
Federal Ministry of Education, Culture
and the Arts; Mr. Gerd Gensbichler

EYID 2008 Office at KulturKontakt
Austria.

Contact and more information:
www.interkultureller-dialog-2008.at