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An intercultural project for all to share

As the process of globalisation advances, cultural diversity has made its presence felt all over the world, although it acquires particular characteristics that are specific to every different place. The consequence of this is obvious: almost everywhere it has become indispensable to manage diversity, both on the local scale and in successively wider spheres – provincial, insular, regional, national, supranational and even worldwide. The present debate in UNESCO about the protection of cultural diversity in the world market is good evidence¹ of the scope of this new universal dimension of multicultural contacts.

Encalador de números
(Number Whitewasher),
Artur Heras (2006)
acrylic on canvas, 150 x 120 cm

With worldwide communication flows—especially with the big media groups, Internet and digital technology— the cultural diversity of all the world is present everywhere but, above all, it is the large-scale movements of population—migration and temporary displacement of professionals, students, tourists, sportspeople, *inter alia*— that have brought about nothing less than an explosion in multilingual communication because they have given rise to frequent and direct occasions of personal interaction.²

This new context obliges us not only to adapt our behaviour and to find the appropriate forms of everyday coexistence, but also to readjust political and administrative activities and—even though we may not be fully aware of them—to redefine our ideas, our principles of social relations and our public discourse about diversity.

In fact, whether we are aware of it or not, we need to construct our own approach to diversity and our own shared language about integration and social cohesion in a multicultural context. This is crucial if we, not to be at the mercy of populist demagoguery, that can so easily manipulate the tensions that logically arise from such swiftly-occurring and pervasive social change. It is not sufficient to respond to immigration in its immediate practical and material aspects but we must also manage interpretations and collective representations of this new reality. There are studies³ that show that problems of coexistence do not arise only as a result of social and political inequalities, but also that the conflicts between immigrant groups and receiver societies tend to be essentially cultural in origin. Besides combating inequalities, the best remedy against demagoguery and social conflicts is broad-based social consensus around the principles of coexistence in diversity.

THINK GLOBAL AND ACT LOCAL?

What might be the reference points for constructing a socially-shared interpretation of our cultural diversity? On the one hand, the universal dimension of multiculturalism permits us to turn to theoretical principles and political experiences that have given the best results in similar cultural contexts. I have always thought that the work of Will Kymlicka has been particularly helpful in this

■ ¹ Two web pages make it possible to follow the controversy: the UNESCO portal—http://portal.unesco.org/culture/es/ev.php-URL_ID=2450&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html— and the Government of Quebec page—<http://www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/international/diversite-culturelle/index.html> (last accessed by the author in June 2005 [and October 2006 by the translator. English version available]).

² According to figures made available by Pere A. Salvà, the population of Catalonia, the Valencia Region and the Balearic Islands on 1 January 2005 was 12.63 million people (28.73% of the total population of Spain) with 6.94 million, 4.67 million and 0.98 million in each territory respectively. The

absolute population growth between 1996 and 2004 was 1.45 million inhabitants, 94.34% of whom are migrants (60% of these from other countries). On 1 January 2005, 1.52 million foreigners were living in these three territories, representing 41.26% of all the foreigners living in Spain.

³ See R. Zapata-Barrero, *Estudi de les polítiques d'integració dels immigrants a partir del disseny dels plans comarcals* (Study of Immigrant Integration Policies on the Basis of the Design of Regional Plans, Pompeu Fabra University, 2003). The study may be consulted on-line at http://www.upf.edu/dcpis/griip/doc/griip_informe_benestar.pdf (last accessed by the author in July 2005 [and by the translator in October 2006. The report is in Catalan]).

sense, and also that of Joseph Carens and Rainer Bäubock, along with the examples of multicultural policies that have been formulated in Australia, Sweden and, in particular, Quebec and Canada.⁴ However we cannot just mechanically adopt or mimic the approaches to, or discourses about, cultural diversity in other countries. Neither can we remain on the fringes of international debates and interpretations of cultural diversity. On the contrary, we must participate actively and make our points of view known. But we shall always have to be critical and selective in adapting to our own reality the approaches and policies that are established for other places. Nobody can spare us our responsibility in constructing a model for interpreting and managing the diversity that we have in our own particular situation. And in the gradual construction of our home-grown approach, we shall need to seek the maximum degree of social involvement and dialogue between

“Nobody can spare us our responsibility in constructing a model for interpreting and managing the diversity”

the different academic, political, media, educational, NGO and other sectors.

Furthermore, we cannot afford to forget that experience of diversity is no stranger to the history of the Països Catalans (Catalan-speaking territories).

Immigration has been intense in recent periods in Catalonia and we can use this experience, with all its successes and errors, instead of having to start from scratch.

Whatever the case, it is incontrovertible that our multicultural context is specific and that we have to begin by identifying and making explicit the characteristics of our own diversity if we do not wish to interpret it wrongly from the outset.

The first and most important characteristic is that, in our case, two main kinds of diversity come together: the diversity of migration is superimposed on a prior plurinational diversity that has not been fully recognised. Unlike receiver societies that are relatively homogenous in linguistic, cultural and national terms, Catalan society is constituted by a linguistic, cultural and national community that is distinct within the framework of the Spanish state. And this plurinational diversity in our case does not enjoy equitable institutional recognition, as happens in Belgium, Switzerland or Canada, for example. We therefore live in a context of dual diversity — plurinational and migratory— each of which requires its own forms of recognition.

Second, within the migratory diversity, there is great diversity —and the tautology is worth stating. There are some sectors of the population that have come from elsewhere

■ ⁴ I referred to these in my paper *Una política intercultural per a les Balears?* (An Intercultural Policy for the Balearic Islands? Palma, 2002). See also the portal for the Europa Diversa Project – <http://www.europadiversa.org/eng/index.html> [last accessed by the translator in October 2006. The page is in English] —which offers a great deal of information on various issues. The GRIIP project of the Pompeu Fabra University has also produced good work in the field.

See, for example, the study by R. Zapata-Barrero, *La immigració en estats plurinacionals: el cas de Catalunya en perspectiva* (Immigration in Plurinational States: the Case of Catalonia in Perspective, Pompeu Fabra University, March 2005). The study may be consulted on-line at <http://www.upf.edu/dcpis/griip/estudis/triasfargas.html> (last accessed by the author in July 2005 [and by the translator in October 2006. The study is in Catalan]).

in the Spanish State and the European Community —among which we can distinguish between active professionals and, frequently, retired residents— and then there are migrants from the other continents with their different cultures, religions and languages, and we can make even further distinctions with regard to the percentages and characteristics that each of these greater immigrant groups represents in local terms.⁵ One only has to look at the differences in immigration figures between the Ripollès and Alt Empordà areas, or between the islands of Menorca and Formentera, to understand that the quantitative data reveal local demands of rather different intensities. If we compare populations where the foreigners come as agricultural labourers (as in Sa Pobla and Guissona) with towns in which residents or professionals in the service sector predominate (for example Santa Eulàlia des Riu and Altea) we find that the ways of managing cultural diversity have to be specific to each place even though the phenomenon is universal in scope.

In any case, however, the coincidence of migratory diversity and the prior plurinational diversity gives rise to several initial requirements that we should never overlook.

Ricard Zapata-Barrero (2005) states them clearly:

- 1 Immigrants need to know that they are going to join a different society.
- 2 The national project must incorporate the views of immigrants if it is to be transgenerational.
- 3 A common public culture, including multiculturalism, must be shared.
- 4 Federal plurinational states need to adopt a concept of citizenship that is based on belonging and not identity.

We shall return to these principles below after having given an account, too, of precedents from our historic experience of coexistence in diversity that can help us today. As I have noted above, in earlier times and, in particular in Catalonia, some relatively extensive and socially accepted principles of coexistence were established. Let us not forget the slogan that prevailed over the relationship between immigrants from elsewhere in the peninsula and Catalan society at the end of the Franco dictatorship and the democratic transition: *És català (si vol) tot aquell que viu i treballa a Catalunya* (Anyone who lives and works in Catalonia is Catalan [if so desired]).⁶ This statement reflects what we could call the paradigm of coexistence that characterised the transition period: an open idea of citizenship based on an equitable integration of all newcomers, with the same political and social rights as other citizens. Let us also recall the importance that was attributed to the Catalan language in this conception of coexistence in diversity. Learning Catalan and gradually coming to use the language have been visible external signs of the newcomers' identification with the receiver society and their incorporation within the

■ ⁵ In fact, it is also significant that many of them do not regard themselves —and neither are they considered— as immigrants. Everybody aspires to lose the condition, recognition and label of immigrant as soon as possible. This is why it would probably be better to refer to migrants generically as *recently incorporated* citizens or population.

⁶ This can be expanded, if we wish, to fit any other place: *Anyone who lives and works in our society belongs to it (if so desired)*. We can find a representative sample of approaches to, and public speeches concerning immigration during this period in the book *Immigració i reconstrucció nacional a Catalunya* (Immigration and National Reconstruction in Catalonia, Barcelona. 1980).

community, without any pressures of assimilation that might have led them to abandon the use of their own languages. Again, integration was understood in the overall sense. There was no point in thinking about linguistic integration unless simultaneous advances were also being made in political, social and workplace integration.

It is also worth recalling these precedents today, when some people have a unilateral notion of integration (with the idea that the newcomers have to make the effort to integrate themselves, overlooking the fact that this is a process of mutual adaptation), or think about linguistic and cultural integration as a process that is independent from the political, workplace, and social conditions of integration, which are also requisites of equitable participation in the well-being of the receiver society.

We must recognise that, even in Catalonia, where its presence was most notable, the transition paradigm is now in crisis. In part, this is a reflection of a general change in the concepts of integration. All too often the term “integration” is used as a euphemism for a concealed project of assimilation. Moreover, as Ralph Grillo has stressed, the forms of pluralism have changed substantially in today’s post-industrial societies so that, at present, people aspire to maintain their language and culture of origin and they have opportunities to do so that are incomparably superior, and unimaginable vis-à-vis what was possible a hundred years ago in all societies that took in immigrants.

Even at the heart of Catalan nationalism, it might be said that the role of the language as a sign of identification with the country is in crisis. We frequently hear people saying, “You don’t have to know Catalan to be Catalan” or, “We have to move beyond the cultural concept of Catalanism that is focused on language and culture”. There may be many nuances here, naturally, and knowledge of Catalan should never become a prior condition for identifying with our society or the Catalan national project. But full identification with the receiver society cannot overlook the linguistic and cultural elements that have historically contributed so decisively in shaping our collective identity, without running the evident risk of diluting it.

In brief, despite the apparent crisis of what we shall call the transition paradigm, I think it would be an error to discard it and not to bear in mind its positive results in coexistence and cohesion, and in safeguarding the continuity of the linguistic and cultural Catalan identity. Of course, we shall need to update its concepts, and bring them into line with today’s multicultural reality. However, it will always be more advantageous to adopt them as a starting point than to throw them overboard and start again from zero.

SOME PRINCIPLES OF OUR NEW INTERCULTURAL MODEL

In the construction of our new model of coexistence in cultural diversity there are elements of the worldwide debate on these issues that can be useful and illuminating. Let us not forget that a good theoretical approach to the problem takes us well on the way to its solution.

First, we should adopt a standpoint of **interculturality**, because the other ways of understanding multiculturalism, in which it might be interpreted as a simple juxtaposition or indiscriminate fusion (the melting pot), are not all equally desirable. We do not want a mosaic of mutually isolated cultures, or a melting pot that comes

about through heavier assimilation. Let us not forget that the much-vaunted melting pot (which might be valid in some settings such as creation) is a concept that takes us back to colonial societies and that, while it perhaps goes beyond segregation, the price paid is the breakdown of the colonised societies. It is in our interests to adopt a concept of interculturality understood as a commitment to mutual recognition and active and participative relations between the different cultural groups that are present in our society. Only thus can we aspire to jointly constructing a sustainable framework of coexistence and a shared project for the future.

Sustainability is the second basic criterion of our intercultural model. This does not mean thinking about static or ad hoc solutions but shaping a flexible and sustainable intercultural framework in which

the language and culture of the receiver society act as a template.

This is a principle that seems to be taking shape on a worldwide scale as the basis of equitable coexistence between cultural communities. It is necessary to guarantee the continuity of each culture, accepting as an obvious and positive fact that all cultures change with intercultural relations, but without jeopardising their territorial

or trans-generational continuity. The primacy of each culture in its historic space is the condition of equitable diversity. However, this does not simply mean guaranteeing the survival of each cultural “species” (if we wish to stay with the reference to ecological sustainability of languages and cultures) but establishing an even-handed intercultural framework that guarantees its sustainability (a sustainable “ecosystem” for cultural diversity). On the individual scale, as Will Kymlicka has very aptly observed, this primacy of each culture in its own space should never invalidate the free cultural option of each person within it, whether he or she wishes to embrace the majority culture, or prefers to maintain his or her own culture (while assimilationism and the idea of the prison-culture wherein divergent options are stigmatised must be equally rejected).

A third element of our model is an open concept of **citizenship**. The new context of diversity obliges us to modify our ideas about citizenship and identity, to open ourselves up to the idea of an “us” in which there is room for everyone and that will smooth the way to integration and the development of new senses of belonging in the receiver society. Starting from the earliest incorporation into our society, we need to enable a primary identification with the civic rights and duties that are recognised by all the citizens (belonging to a prior, all-embracing “us”). This can give rise to positive identification with the values of the framework of intercultural coexistence (an equitable pluralism that favours everyone). It would be in this context that gradually increasing identification with shared cultural references and symbols, redefined on the basis of one’s own language and culture, could take place. Only in this way will it be possible to take the step from a

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feeling of multiple belonging (that will make the culture of origin compatible with the instrumental adoption of the language and some behavioural patterns of the receiver society) towards a new, freely-accepted identity, now fully in harmony with the country of adoption. Nonetheless, the Spanish concept of citizenship constitutes a major obstacle for this positive evolution of identifications. We live in what Ricard Zapata-Barrero has graphically called “the dogma of the trinity”⁷, which attempts to enforce the view that citizenship means a totalised and uniform cultural and national option. No Belgian, Swiss, Canadian citizen, or any citizen from elsewhere in the European Community, is required to make a single cultural or national choice on the grounds that this is somehow inherent to citizenship. Furthermore, freedom of cultural and national choice is the foundation and the condition for the unity of the citizenry as a whole. If anyone can be labelled as a bad Belgian, Canadian, Swiss or European citizen, it is never the person who defends freedom of cultural and national choices, but rather the person who tries to impose the majority cultural and national choice on all the rest. In plural and democratic Spain, the reverse is true, and maybe it is time for this retrograde concept of citizenship to be challenged, revised and rectified as a notion that is totally antithetical to coexistence in diversity.

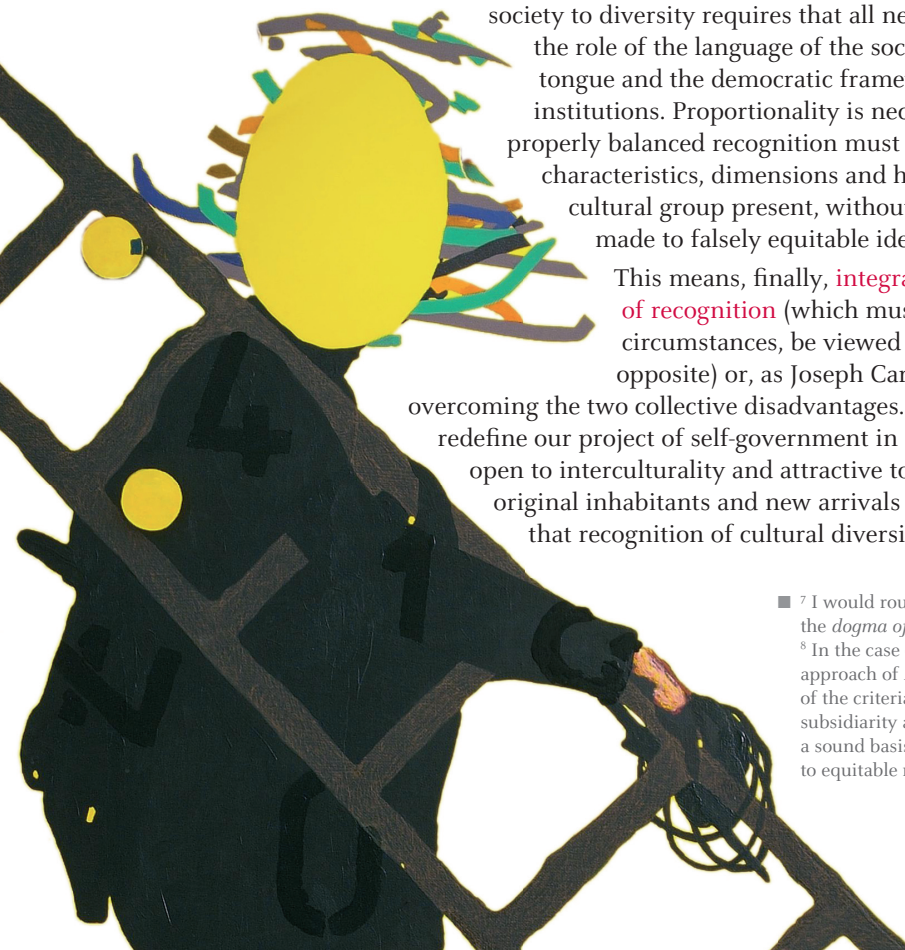
The fourth component of our intercultural proposal is of a more practical order: going ahead with a **reasonable adaptation of our public spaces to diversity** of languages, religions and customs. The experiences of Australia or Canada can illustrate for us the criteria of reciprocity and proportionality we should bear in mind in this process.

Reciprocity is required because the adjustment of the receiver society to diversity requires that all newcomers accept the role of the language of the society as a common tongue and the democratic framework of the territory’s institutions. Proportionality is necessary because properly balanced recognition must be given to the characteristics, dimensions and historicity of each cultural group present, without concessions being made to falsely equitable identical symmetries.⁸

This means, finally, **integrating two processes of recognition** (which must not, under any circumstances, be viewed as divergent or opposite) or, as Joseph Carens says, jointly overcoming the two collective disadvantages. This obliges us to redefine our project of self-government in such a way that is open to interculturality and attractive to the newcomers. Both original inhabitants and new arrivals need to understand that recognition of cultural diversity and sovereignty are

■ ⁷ I would round this out by calling it the *dogma of the utterly false trinity*.

⁸ In the case of the linguistic dimension, the approach of Albert Bastardas —a combination of the criteria of territoriality, personality, subsidiarity and functionality— constitutes a sound basis for a worldwide approach to equitable multilingualism.



processes that can be mutually reinforced. This is particularly the case when, as Will Kymlicka remarks, wide-ranging jurisdiction in self-government permits more effective reception policies and avoids outbreaks of xenophobia (arising from a sense of threat within the receiver group).

THE FIRST SHARED PROJECT

With all the foregoing observations, it is clear that there are possibilities —although putting them into practice will not be a simple matter— for finding shared goals between the receiver society and the newcomers, and these may constitute the starting point for constructing a project that can be widely shared.

The most evident point of departure is, without doubt, a joint claim for the political and financial conditions that would permit the creation of a good intercultural policy —of immigration, reception and coexistence— and proper management of diversity.

This is even more evident in the case of the Balearic Islands, which is the autonomously-governed community with the highest figures for foreign residents in all of Spain. And we should not forget that, as I have said, Catalonia, the Valencia Region and the Balearic Islands account for 41.26% of foreign population in Spain as a whole.

Thus, if the celebrated inter-territorial solidarity is something more than lip service in the interests of ultra-conservative demagoguery, it should be recognised that the immigration statistics give us quite reasonable grounds for claiming financial resources and political jurisdiction so as to be able to manage immigration, reception and interculturality.

The coincidence in timing of today's immigration and the reform of the statutes of autonomy constitutes quite an interesting historical opportunity, which we should let pass. It would be lamentable, for example, if we were to agree to a temporary financial injection to help with immigrant reception without achieving a satisfactory jurisdictional framework.

A good model, and one that is worthy of consideration, is the agreement over shared powers in this field between the federal Canadian Government and the Government of Quebec,⁹ which recognises that linguistic integration of immigrants is the condition for the continuity of the French culture and language of Quebec and, as a result, grants the Quebec Government wide-ranging powers for establishing quotas, screening of places of origin and policies of immigrant reception. The achievement of such a framework is doubtless a first objective that can be shared by both receiver society and newcomers as the starting point for a more thoroughgoing common project aiming at major agreement on intercultural coexistence.

AN EXPLICIT INTERCULTURAL COMMITMENT

In all the countries with a relatively successful policy on diversity —one usually thinks of Canada, Australia and Sweden— the basis of intercultural coexistence has been making explicit the reciprocal commitment involved for both receiver society and newcomers,

■ ⁹ This can be consulted on-line at http://www.mrci.gouv.qc.ca/publications/pdf/accord_canada_quebec_immigration_francais.pdf (last accessed by the author in July 2005 [and by the translator in October 2006. The Agreement is in French]).

this being accompanied —and it is worth stressing this— by political agreement between government and opposition forces in the understanding that this is a matter of general interest in which irresponsible party-based demagoguery has no part.

In the case of Catalonia, voices are starting to be heard calling for a pact on rights and duties (though it might be better to talk about shared responsibilities) in the new multicultural context.

In my opinion, the terms of this reciprocal commitment might be summarised as follows:

- A** The receiver society will proceed with its adaptation to diversity by means of specific activities. For example:
 - a** Offering equitable political, workplace and social conditions to the newcomers.
 - b** Giving their languages public recognition appropriate to the characteristics and historicity of each group (as has been done with the Spanish language in Catalonia).
 - c** Achieving further reasonable accommodation to diversity in public spaces —while favouring the private sphere.
 - d** Promoting intercultural programmes in the sectors that are most conducive to the process of recognition —education, leisure, the different areas of communication, culture...
- B** The newcomers will reciprocally accept an explicit commitment to the society that receives them and to the democratic goals that have been jointly fixed:
 - a** Loyally recognising the institutions and democratic organisation of self-government.
 - b** Gradually progressing in knowledge of the language and culture of the receiver society so that they can become, at least instrumentally, shared elements of understanding and coexistence.
 - c** Accepting the aim of making Catalan the common language of communication in the public sphere, while respecting the private use of all languages.

SOME FINAL WORDS ON LINGUISTIC INTEGRATION

In a context of having two official languages, as we do, I think it is essential to clarify some points of the linguistic dimension of integration, an aspect that is inseparable, as I have already stated, from the process of integration as a whole. It is worth bearing particularly in mind the fact that, in our society, there can be no authentic linguistic integration if new citizens do not acquire the ability to use both official languages indiscriminately, in any form of communication in the public sphere.¹⁰ Moreover, in our case, we can state from experience that the only guarantee of achieving a satisfactory command of both official languages is through identification with, and prior learning of Catalan.

■ ¹⁰ A similar definition of linguistic integration is offered in the work of Nicole Vincent, *L'intégration linguistique au Québec. Recension des écrits*, Quebec, Conseil Superior de la Langue Française, 2004.

¹¹ In Denmark, significantly, it is the companies

themselves that have called for training in Danish to be carried out in the workplace itself because it has been shown that this is a guarantee of good training that is immediately applicable to the product or service.

I believe that it is very important to note that the success of linguistic integration resides in a sound initial approach in the linguistic strategies for the reception period. Though it may be elementary and commonsensical, we should recall that the ideal time and place for linguistic reception are the ordinary moments and places of the initial reception. It makes no sense for the Catalan language to be absent from the places and times of initial reception —at state or local level— or that the newcomers should be sent off to another place and another time where and when it is supposed that they can embark upon their linguistic reception in some kind of superimposed fashion.

Since there can be no reception without a language, it is essential that the official language of the county should be present to some extent from the moment that the reception process begins, and that the newcomers should not be taken into a different and dissociated system of linguistic reception. In our circumstances, we can no longer allow or consent to reception systems that lack a well-established linguistic strategy, at least in all reception points that are funded by public money. A reception policy that overlooks the public objective of promoting Catalan as a common language can only work against its own mission and generate linguistic, cultural and social segregation. The keys to sound linguistic integration —and the future cohesion of our society— are evident enough:

- 1 Achieving powers and resources for creating our own policy of immigration, reception and interculturality.
- 2 Offering a proper linguistic reception from the start.
- 3 Involving the whole educational community and its milieu in a project of intercultural education.
- 4 Extending to the entire receiver society responsibility for intercultural coexistence, by means of conversation pairs, educational plans dealing with the immigrants' new surroundings, intercultural leisure programmes, intercultural spaces in the mass media...
- 5 Giving a paramount role to workplace settings in the adoption of the country's language and a respectful intercultural relationship. The FORCEM (Foundation for In-Company Continuing Education) funds should permit occupational training in Catalan, both before and after a job is found.¹¹

These, I believe, would be the foundations that would enable the construction of a future intercultural project that could be widely shared by everyone —newcomers and receiver society— one that has a clear commitment to the future of our linguistic community and that respects the freedoms recognised in the framework of a liberal, democratic world ■