

# Activities Report

UNESCO Chair for Comparative Research on  
Cultural Diversity and Social Justice

2025



**unesco**  
Chair

# About the UNESCO Chair

The UNESCO Chair for Comparative Research on Cultural Diversity and Social Justice (the Chair) is committed to conducting high impact research aligned with UNESCO's core objectives and fostering effective dialogue that acknowledges and respects the value and integrity of all peoples and cultures.

We aim to deliver a proactive research program that functions as a leading 'think and do tank' on all issues pertaining to cultural diversity and social justice. To this end, the Chair acts as a key bridge builder between researchers, civil society organisations and policy makers, locally, nationally, and internationally.

Taking a social justice and human rights-based approach, the Chair's agenda contributes to capacity building in the key areas of governance, education, and the management of cultural diversity both in Australia and internationally. Our team initiates and implements collaborative research programs and capacity-building workshops with youth from diverse communities, focussing on critical questions of empowerment, social inclusion, identity formation, human security, and sustainable development.

## Our team 2021-24



**Chairholder**  
Deakin Distinguished  
Professor Fethi Mansouri



**Associate Researcher**  
Dr Valentina Baú (Western  
Sydney University)



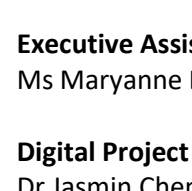
**Research Fellow**  
Dr Amanuel Elias



**Journal Co-Managing  
Editor and Casual Research  
Fellow**  
Dr Paula Muraca



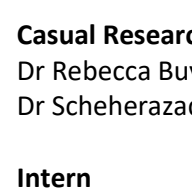
**Research Fellow**  
Dr Taghreed Jamal Al Deen



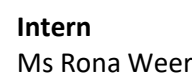
**Executive Assistant to the UNESCO Chair**  
Ms Maryanne Borg



**Research Fellow**  
Dr Enqi Weng



**Casual Research Fellows**  
Dr Rebecca Buys  
Dr Scheherazade Bloul



**Intern**  
Ms Rona Weerasuriya

## Message from the Deakin Vice-Chancellor

Deakin University is proud to host and support this important UNESCO Chair in undertaking comparative, cross-disciplinary research on the critical challenges impacting Cultural Diversity and Social Justice locally and internationally. This Chair is unique in Victoria and Australia, and is proudly located at Deakin under the leadership, expertise, and advocacy of Deakin Distinguished Professor Fethi Mansouri.



The work of Professor Mansouri and the UNESCO Chair team has ensured that Deakin produces the requisite knowledge and plays an important role in mobilizing national and international cooperation to tackle rising levels of inequality, ideological polarization, and threats to social peace. The Chair provides a critical platform that brings together researchers, policy makers and communities to collaborate on research and capacity building activities that make a real difference to the lived experience of individuals and communities in our globally connected world.

Professor Iain Martin  
**Vice-Chancellor**  
Deakin University, Australia

## Introduction from the Chairholder

In my capacity as the Chairholder, it gives me great pleasure to introduce this brochure highlighting some of the activities of our UNESCO Chair for Comparative Research on Cultural Diversity and Social Justice.

UNESCO Chairs aim to advance UNESCO's goals by building research networks and encouraging interuniversity cooperation and knowledge sharing across borders. This Chair, which was established in 2013, acts as a key bridge builder between researchers, civil society organisations and policy makers, both nationally and internationally. The Chair undertakes impactful, collaborative research focussing on critical questions around cultural diversity, social cohesion, intercultural relations, and inequalities.



Recognising the profound social and political transformations the world is experiencing, our UNESCO Chair seeks to contribute to the building of inclusive, just and peaceful societies. We do this through a focus on knowledge construction, capacity building and training practices that strengthen social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. Recognition of diversity and social justice constitute the foundation upon which such goals are conceptualized, pursued, and achieved. The work of this Chair is underpinned by a vision of culture as a genuine pillar for social peace and sustainable development.

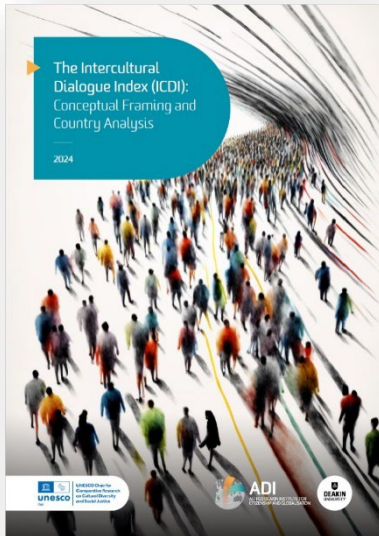
Deakin Distinguished Professor Fethi Mansouri  
**UNESCO Chairholder**  
Comparative Research on Cultural Diversity and Social Justice  
Deakin University, Australia

The UNESCO Chair would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and meet. We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present and Elders from other communities.



# Current Projects and Research Outcomes

## The Intercultural Dialogue Index (ICDI)



The Chair is proud to have developed the first Intercultural Dialogue Index (ICDI), which, for the first time, allows researchers and policy makers to assess cross-cultural relations and intercultural dialogue (ICD) at a national level.

By generating benchmark data on the degree of cultural, social and political interconnectedness in a country, the ICDI provides a holistic and transparent measurement of a country's state of intercultural relations that can be used to assess specific countries on different dimensions related to ICD, providing direction for intercultural improvement at the country level.

The Chair published the key findings of the Intercultural Dialogue Index (ICDI) in the Q1 Journal, Social Indicators Research (2021) and finalized development of an ICDI website and ICDI Final Report, including individual analyses and reports for 52 countries.

The Report was officially launched by Dr. Hass Dellal AO, Executive Director of the Australian Multicultural Foundation, at an event for partners and stakeholders, held on 18 November 2024. Visit the ICD website at <https://icd-index.com>



From left: Dr Amanuel Elias, Professor Fethi Mansouri, Professor Simon Tormey (Deakin University) and Dr Hass Dellal AO (Australian Multicultural Foundation) holding the Intercultural Dialogue Index Report at the launch.

## Mapping Social Service Provision to Multicultural Communities

This highly collaborative partnership project, funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage project (2021-2024), analysed the critical issue of social service provision to migrants and ethnic minorities, with a view to increasing inclusion and fostering greater social cohesion and equity. One highlight of the project was a highly engaging national symposium, which brought together researchers, industry partners and community advocates to discuss the key findings of the report and work towards policies and processes to improve social inclusion for migrant communities through the effective provision of social services. Visit [www.multiculturalsocialservices.com](http://www.multiculturalsocialservices.com) for more information.



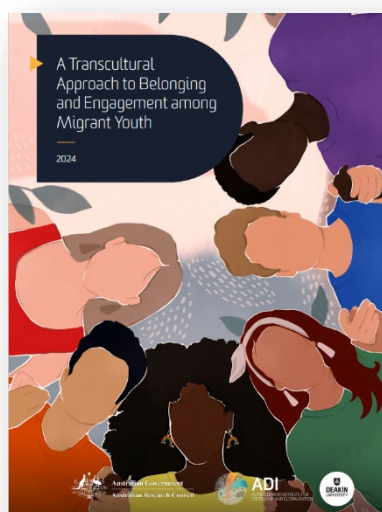
Australian Muslim Women's  
Centre for Human Rights  
*Equality without Exception*



VICTORIAN  
multicultural  
commission  
*strengthening our community*



## A Transcultural Approach to Belonging and Engagement among Migrant Youth



Led by the Chairholder, this Australian Research Council Discovery project (2019-2023) worked across three international universities to explore the experiences and practices of young people of migrant background in Melbourne (Australia), Toronto (Canada) and Birmingham (UK). Through a mixed-methods approach, we investigated the skills, knowledge, and networks these young people have gained and developed by balancing, concurrently, the demands of their cultural identities and wider social belongings. In addition, we investigated how this 'transcultural capital' allows them to create, negotiate and maintain positive connections at the local, national, and international level. The project generated important findings about how migrant youth negotiate identity.

Visit [www.transculturalyouth.com](http://www.transculturalyouth.com) for more information.



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council



ADI  
ALFRED DEAKIN INSTITUTE FOR  
CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBALISATION



Coventry  
University



uOttawa



## Diaspora Humanitarians Project

This Australian Research Council Linkage project is undertaken in partnership with the Australian National University, the Refugee Council of Australia, IOM, Settlement Services International, the Australian Civil-Military Centre and Australian Red Cross. The Diaspora Humanitarians project aims to map the extensive humanitarian activities and contributions of Australia-based migrants to crises abroad. Australia is home to large diasporas who are connected to communities in many humanitarian crisis hotspots, including the project's focus areas: Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Indonesia, Nepal, Lebanon, and the Pacific Islands. Visit [diasporahumanitarians.com](https://diasporahumanitarians.com) for more information.



Australian Government  
Australian Research Council



Australian  
National  
University



Refugee Council  
of Australia



## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Needs and Gap Analysis

Funded by the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning, this research aims to gain an understanding of the potential barriers and enablers for improving access to road safety information, education, services, and licensing for individuals in Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The final report has been delivered and has become part of an ongoing conversation and possible future relationship with the Department.



Department  
of Transport

## Examining the Perspectives of Australian Multicultural Youth on Social Justice Issues

In response to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020-21, and the impact of these events and social movements on multicultural youth in Australia, the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) commissioned the Chair to undertake research and provide policy directions for non-profit organisations, such as CMY, to effectively represent the diverse voices of their stakeholders and achieve their goals of serving youth from diverse backgrounds. The subsequent research report has formed the basis for important and ongoing discussions and consultation.

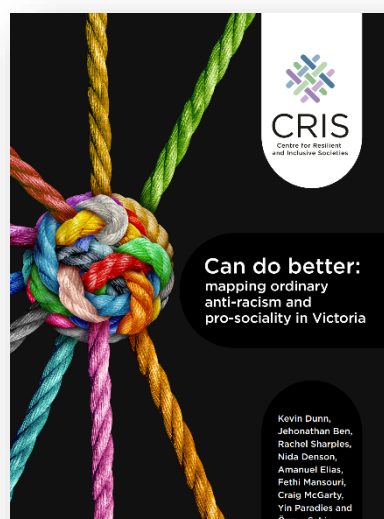


## Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS)

The Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS, 2018-) is a collaborative research consortium, funded by the state government of Victoria, and involving eight academic and non-academic partners, located both nationally and internationally. CRIS aims to examine the twin challenges of fighting violent extremism on one hand while promoting social cohesion and community resilience on the other through a community-led, co-designed approach. The Chair regularly collaborates with the CRIS team on compelling research projects and issues papers.

Find out more about CRIS on their website: [www.crisconsortium.org](http://www.crisconsortium.org)

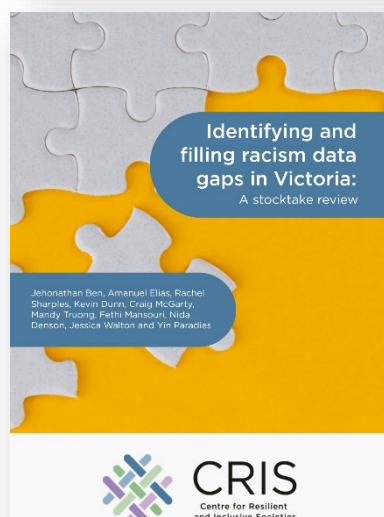
### Recent Publications with CRIS



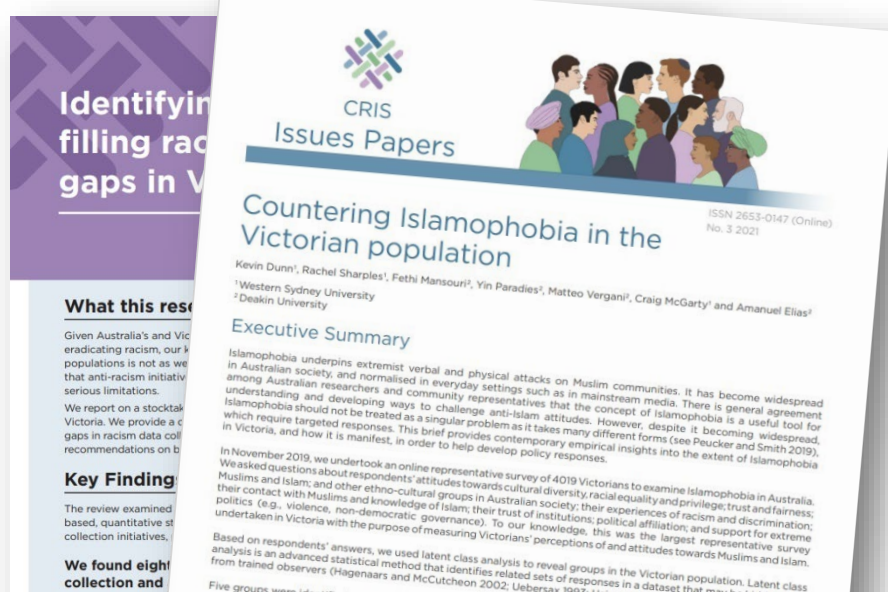
Dunn, K., Ben, J., Sharples, R., Denson, N., Elias, A., Mansouri, F., McGarty, C., Paradies, Y., & Sahin, O., (2024). *Can Do Better: mapping ordinary anti-racism and pro-sociality in Victoria Report*. Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies.

Ben, J., Elias, A., Sharples, R., Dunn, K., McGarty, C., Truong, M., Mansouri, F., Denson, N., Walton, J., & Paradies, Y. (2022) *Identifying and filling racism data gaps in Victoria: A stocktake review (Report)*. Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies, Melbourne.

Dunn, K., Sharples, R., Mansouri, F., Paradies, Y., Vergani, M., McGarty, C., & Elias, A. (2021). *Countering Islamophobia in the Victorian Population*. Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies. <https://doi.org/10.56311/CEMO4002>



Ben, J., Elias, A., Truong, M., Mansouri, F., Denson, N., & Paradies, Y. (2021). *Racism in Australia: filling data gaps*. Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies. <https://doi.org/10.56311/YHLH4042>



# Training and Capacity Building

## Building Capacity for NGOs Working with Disadvantaged Communities in the Context of the Arab Spring

With funding and support from the Council for Australian Arab Relations and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, this project was part of a suite of initiatives drawing on successful partnerships that the Chair has built across government agencies, NGOs, industry and expert consultants, implemented in the Global South and focusing on addressing social inequalities, a key UNESCO and SDG objective. This project was designed to support the important role that non-government organisations (NGOs) have been playing in Tunisia since the Arab Spring.



While the project initially aimed to invite Tunisian NGOs working in advocacy for disadvantaged demographics to Australia for an intensive workshop program, due to travel restrictions enforced by COVID-19, the workshops were reimagined to be held in a virtual environment and were conducted in the first half of 2021. The [workshops](#) and parallel research aimed to increase capacity within the sector to enable greater participation in the political sphere of the nascent democracy.

*(Picture credit: Farouk Photography)*

## National Symposium: 'Appraising Multiculturalism: Politics, Policy and Practice'



In October 2023, the Chair hosted a National Symposium, bringing together key researchers, industry partners, policymakers, community leaders, organisations in the multicultural affairs field and community advocates to discuss new research findings relating to Social Service provision for diverse communities in Victoria, Australia and workshop solutions for policy and practice in creating more inclusive social services for migrant communities. The day, which marked the launch of the executive summary of key findings, was opened by The Hon. Ingrid Stitt MP, Victorian State Minister for Mental Health, Ageing, and Multicultural Affairs.



The Symposium included a panel discussion with representatives from the projects' Partner Organisations and presentations from researchers, bringing many insightful perspectives and conversations on multiculturalism, diversity, and governance in Australia.



# Research supervision, internships and mentoring

Building the capacity of future and early career researchers remains core to the UNESCO Chair's program of activities. Since its foundation, through its internship program, the UNESCO Chair has welcomed interns from New Zealand, Egypt, Tunisia, and Finland to undertake research and develop practical skills and experience in our supportive and thriving research environment. In that time, the Chair has supervised over 20 doctoral candidates, including six completions in the last four years.

## Current Doctoral Students

### **Alma Chowdhury**

Identity Negotiation of Australian-Bangladeshi-Muslim-Women in the Social Media Era

### **Uroosa Mushtaq**

Testing Intercultural Dialogue in Fragile Non-Western Context: Case Study of Jammu & Kashmir

### **Jeevika Vivekananthan**

Understanding diaspora humanitarian assistance with crisis-affected homeland communities

### **Angeliki Stefanopoulos**

Transcultural Capital and the Temporalities of Migration: How Migrant Youth Settle Over Time

## PhD completions (2021-25)

### **Scheherazade Bloul (2024)**

Negotiating Digital Publics: Hirak Rif Activist Formations in Post-2011 Morocco

### **Abdul Razak Osman (2022)**

United States Democracy Promotion and the Arab Spring-The Case of Tunisia

### **Galib Bashirov (2022)**

An examination of social and political factors behind the increasing non-religiosity in Tunisia

### **Rebecca Buys (2022)**

Temporal and relational entanglements: Exploring the Royal Commission into Family Violence

### **Sara Cheikh Husain (2021)**

Muslim Community Organisations' Understanding of and Responses to Islamophobia

### **Shaheen Whyte (2021)**

Constructions and Contestations of Islamic Religious Authority in Australia

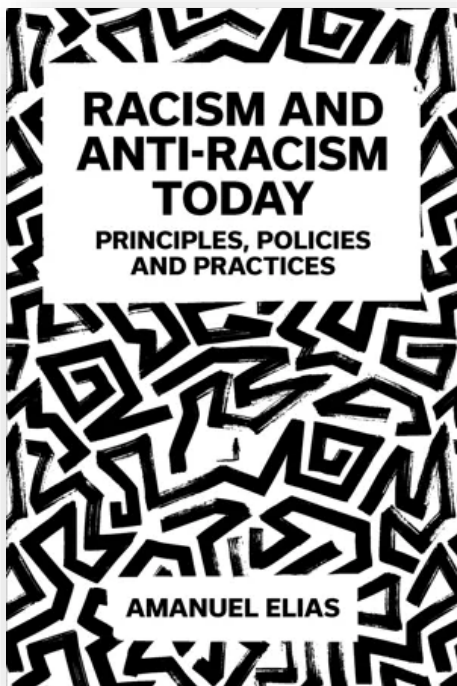


I am writing my PhD thesis on 'Understanding diaspora humanitarian assistance with crisis-affected homeland communities' using Sri Lanka and Tonga as case studies.

The key question I am asking is how do crisis-affected homeland communities mobilise, receive, manage, and perceive diaspora humanitarian assistance?

*Jeevika Vivekananthan is a Doctoral Student with the UNESCO Chair, working on the Diaspora Humanitarians Project*

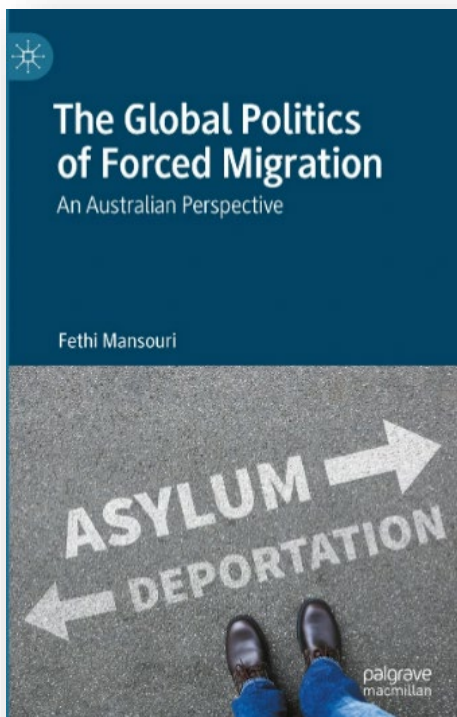
## Books and Publications



**Amanuel Elias (2024), *Racism and Anti-Racism Today: Principles, Policies and Practices*. Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited**

Acknowledging efforts to dismantle racism at multiple levels, *Racism and Anti-Racism Today* examines racism and anti-racism as interconnected rather than isolated issues and proposes a framework for effective anti-racist policy and practice. Providing a unique side-by-side view on current conceptualizations, debates, and policy-praxis, the ten thematic chapters examine the impact of race, racism, and intersecting inequities on contemporary society and provides cutting-edge discussion about the present relevance of prejudice to envision an anti-racist future.

**Dr Amanuel Elias** is a Research Fellow for the UNESCO Chair, based at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation (Deakin University). His research focuses on racism, ethnic inequality, and intercultural relations.



**Fethi Mansouri (2023), *The Global Politics of Forced Migration: An Australian Perspective*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.**

Focussing on the socio-political problems that emanate from Western states' harsh deterrence policies in their responses to refugee crises, this book draws on research undertaken over the past 10 years, and uses Australia's own refugee and asylum seeker policies as a lens to examine the ways in which isolated and separatist reactions not only deny protection and basic human rights for asylum seekers but also do nothing to address structurally enduring push factors.

**Deakin Distinguished Professor Fethi Mansouri** is the Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair and holds an Alfred Deakin Research Chair in migration and intercultural studies. He is also the founding director of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation.

# Journal of Intercultural Studies



Since 2013, the UNESCO Chair has been proud to be the host and primary support of the prestigious Q1 *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (Taylor & Francis), an international and interdisciplinary scholarly journal that showcases critical scholarship on emerging cultural formations, negotiations and contemporary challenges to cultures and identities. Through this close relationship with the journal, the UNESCO Chair continues to foster and support academic excellence and opportunities for the dissemination of critical research worldwide. In the past four years alone, the journal has published 23 issues including 12 Special issues on topics such as:

- *Covid-19, Migration, and Racism in Australia: Key Challenges and Research Directions* Vol. 45(3), 2024
- *Latin American Migration in Asia-Pacific: Transpacific Connections in the Twenty-First Century* Vol. 44(3), 2023
- *Intercultural mobilities in Central and West Asian Contexts* Vol. 42(6), 2021
- *Learning at Intercultural Intersections: Toward Equity, Inclusion, and Reconciliation* Vol. 42(3). 2021

## Academic Research Articles

Between 2021 – 2024, the Chair has shared research findings by publishing over **40** academic and peer-reviewed articles, across a range of key issues including social cohesion, transcultural practices of migrant youth and racism. The Chair works to ensure that articles are freely available as Open-Source articles. View a full list of journal articles on the Chair website at: [www.unesco-cdsj.com/books-and-journal-articles](http://www.unesco-cdsj.com/books-and-journal-articles) Some examples of recent articles published by the Chair team include:

- Baú, V. (2024). Communicating Social Cohesion in Forced Displacement: A Framework for Protracted Situations of Encampment. *Social Sciences* 13, no. 10: 542.
- Jamal Al-deen, T. & Mansouri, F. (2024). Transcultural practices and inter-generational dynamics among migrant youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1–18.
- Ben, J, Elias, A, Sharples, R, Dunn, K, Truong, M, Mansouri, F, Denson, F, Walton J & Paradies Y (2023). Racism Data in Australia: A Review of Quantitative Studies and Directions for Future Research. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*.



# UNESCO Chair Oration 2024



Founded in 2013, the UNESCO Chair's Oration series, co-hosted with Deakin University, is the Chair's annual public lecture, delivered by a preeminent thinker or practitioner on themes pertaining to social justice, cultural diversity and human rights. After a hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chair was incredibly proud to reinstate this special event, which had not been held since 2019, with a timely oration delivered by Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner Mr. Giridharan Sivaraman on 21 August 2024.



Commissioner Sivaraman's oration was titled 'The Racism of Benign Assimilation', an expression he used to describe the less obvious, structural and socially normalised forms of racism that he explored through compelling examples based both in evidence as well as personal experience.

The Acting Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University Deakin Distinguished Professor Liz Johnson gave an introductory address to the Oration and UNESCO Chairholder Deakin Distinguished Professor Fethi Mansouri facilitated an audience Q and A following the oration.

The event foreshadowed the launch of Australia's first National Anti-racism Framework in December 2024 and is available to watch online on the Chair's website and the Australian Human Rights Commission website.

“

Racism diminishes a person's sense of self and corrodes one's soul. In doing so, it corrodes the soul of our nation. This is a historic moment in the fight against racism. For the first time we have a comprehensive plan for eliminating racism in Australia.

”



**Giridharan Sivaraman**  
Race Discrimination Commissioner



# Public Engagement

In the past four years, the Chair has made an important contribution to many academic and public discussions through national and international conference presentations and keynote addresses. Some highlights include:

- Intercultural Integration of Migrants in and through Higher Education' panel discussion hosted by UNESCO and the UNESCO Chair on Intercultural Competences: More than Welcome: Intercultural Integration of Migrants through Higher Education Report Pre-launch, at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, 6 November 2024.
- Public Lecture given by the Chairholder titled 'Transcultural capital among migrant youth in the West' at the University of Montreal, Canada, 3 October 2023.

## 6th World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue



Professor Fethi Mansouri was honoured to speak at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, held in Baku, Azerbaijan in May 2024. As an invited speaker for the first plenary panel, Professor Mansouri spoke about the role of education and youth engagements in combating xenophobia and discrimination. A recording of the panel is available to watch on UN web TV.





# International Collaborations

## Two-day workshop in South Africa to embed an intercultural approach in the digital sphere



*Professor Mansouri with fellow workshop participants, including the Co-Chairholder and members of the Chair of Intercultural Competencies at Stellenbosch University.*

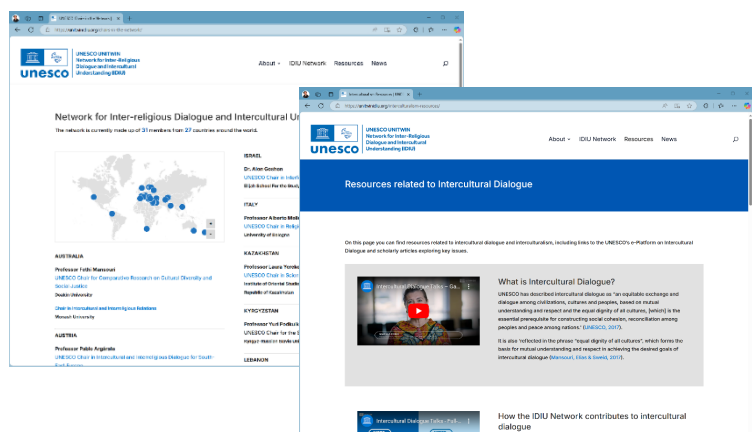
On 7-8 November 2024, Professor Fethi Mansouri joined experts from around the world, including fellow Chairs from the UniTwin IDIU Network, to participate in an important two-day academic workshop: Driving Intercultural Outcomes through Digital Literacy and Competence. The workshop, which was organized by UNESCO and hosted by Stellenbosch University in South Africa, was a highly productive and meaningful discussion, which will directly contribute to the future development of a comprehensive framework to embed an intercultural approach across all areas of digital skills development, including practical recommendations on how to support this at different levels of intervention.

## The UNESCO UniTwin Network for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Intercultural Understanding



First established in 2006, the UNESCO UniTwin Network on Inter-Religious Dialogue and Intercultural Understanding (IDIU) Network aims to promote dialogue among different religious, spiritual and humanistic traditions in a world where conflicts are increasingly associated with religious belonging. In December 2015, the UNESCO Chair was elected Convener of the UNITWIN Network for IDIU. In this key role, Professor Mansouri continues to bring together the expertise of 31 UNESCO Chairs across 27 countries.

The Network is a partnership between international academic centres recognised for their expertise in this field and brings together professors, researchers, and specialists of the history of religions who are personally committed to the achievement of inter-religious dialogue. This network allows students, researchers, and professors to benefit from a broad range of teaching that is at once secular, multi-religious and intercultural.





# Media Engagement

In our increasingly online world, media has become an essential way of connecting with a wide audience and the Chair has had significant impact on public discussion and raised awareness about social cohesion, the value of intercultural dialogue, as well as providing important comment on many emerging issues relating to social justice through over **40** print, radio and television interviews and articles written for online and mainstream media. View a full list of media engagement on the Chair website.



Learn more on our website:  
<https://www.unesco-cdsj.com>

## Contact us

**Email:** [unesco-cdsj@deakin.edu.au](mailto:unesco-cdsj@deakin.edu.au)

UNESCO Chair on Comparative Research on Cultural Diversity and Social justice  
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