

European Youth in Action for Diversity and Tolerance

6-9 November, 2005

The European Conference “Youth in Action for Diversity and Tolerance” took place in Berlin, Germany from 6th to 9th November 2005 with the participation of 141 participants from 41 countries.

I. PREAMBLE

We, the participants of the European Youth in Action for Diversity and Tolerance, representing several youth organizations and networks in Europe,

noting the results of the International Conference “Youth for Tolerance and Democracy” that took place in Berlin, Germany from 20th to 23rd October 2001,

realising that the recommendations developed by the 2001 Conference have not been fully taken into account by the European Union, Council of Europe and its member states,

addressing the constant reality of discrimination that is prevalent in all countries on the European continent,

therefore, acknowledging the role of youth non governmental organizations and in shaping youth policies in Europe, reasserting the prevailing values of Human Rights, diversity and participation,

we insist on the necessity for the European policy makers to re-examine their own actions taking into consideration the following message that we convey today:

commemorating the Reichspogromnacht of 9th November and by adopting this Declaration of the “European Youth in Action for Diversity and Tolerance” on the same date the participants show their awareness of the still existing anti-Semitism, and all other forms of discrimination.

People in Europe are constantly being discriminated on various grounds such as gender, sexual orientation, age, racial/ethnic origin, religion or belief and disability. This persistent reality is not acceptable and thus calls for immediate action to ensure that Europe becomes a continent based on diversity and offering equal opportunities for all. To address these concerns European Institutions and National Governments should not only support measures aimed at fighting discrimination but also refrain from implementing discriminatory policies themselves. It is in the hands of Governments themselves not to violate the principles of Human Rights, participation and diversity; as well as support organisations that are promoting those principles.

In view of the constant reality of discrimination in Europe, we believe that it is not sufficient any more to seek “tolerance”, it is time to address the current fear and ignorance of others by seeking respect for human dignity.

We believe that young people can play a significant part in improving the situation by personally taking an active stand on all levels from local to international, from the decision making to implementation of concrete measures.

Only with the involvement on all levels, constant assessment and evaluation of institutional policies, as well our own actions, can change the painful reality of discrimination and lead to the true respect of diversity and Human Dignity in Europe.

II. OPERATIVE CLAUSES

1. Empowerment of young people

Introductory Note

Through empowerment, young people can be valued as active participants in the society by giving them self-confidence and increasing their belief that change is possible in Europe. The development of diversity inside youth organizations can have a “mirror” effect on the society as a whole.

Political Recommendation

We demand the guarantee of possibilities for youth involvement through laws and structural measures:

- The creation of Local Youth Councils
- Quotas for youth representation in decision making bodies

We propose a continuous distribution of funding for institutions working with youth, according to the following guidelines:

- Empowerment of local NGO’s in order to support young people who want to activate themselves.
- Distribution according to needs, not only according to the number of members.
- Funding for the training of peer leaders and those trained in pedagogy
- Encouraging affirmative action, in order to avoid tokenism

Action Plan

- We strive for the social recognition of non-formal education, such as organisational skills, through information campaigns about NGO’s for young people and their parents, and through NGO activities in educational institutions.
- We commit ourselves as youth workers to interact constantly with young people in their environment, through innovative and creative methods, independent of who they are and where they come from.
- We, as participants of this conference, struggle to raise political awareness on this declaration and to ensure its implementation on a national level. We identify ourselves as multipliers, commit ourselves to be multipliers, and by doing this, we will empower youth.

2. Media

Introductory Note

Media and Culture reach a wide range of young people by different means. Since young people are “factors” of change in the society, the media should offer them better visibility. Young people engage themselves to spread the “youth message” for diversity and respect in Europe in different ways.

Political Recommendations

The media should be used as a method to promote and publicise youth activities against discrimination.

Resources should be invested on a national basis so that projects may be launched. Due to limited funds, programmes should be broadened up and revised so that they will be effective, efficient and viable. These projects should be marketed through culture and the media so as to reach young people on a global scale.

Films, artists, musical and cultural activities such as drama should be maximised. Music and culture can unite young people who admire the same artists and thus, these artists have a role to play in terms of portraying a positive image of diversity.

We are against stereotyping and scape goating in the media. Public figures, leaders and decision-making bodies and the media must have appropriate use of language when addressing immigration.

Reinforce the freedom of media through financial support.

Action Plan

Working together with the media to promote a positive image of diversity.
Increase the visibility of youth work through the media

3. Fight Against Discriminative Extremism

Introductory Note

Extremist views both among advantaged and disadvantaged youth are found to be very dangerous. These views are both expressed in spontaneous violence but also in sophisticated intelligential propaganda thus defining the strong need to fight against causes of extremism and its appearance, in particular anti-Semitism, anti-Islamism and other forms of discrimination.

Political Recommendations

Think globally in Europe, act locally.

We want to see an elaboration of a European action plan to combat extremism implemented at grassroots and individual level. This could be achieved by regional (not necessarily national) action plans, including the involvement of relevant partners.

There is a need for a European coordination unit, preferably embedded in the Council of Europe, coordinating a process for anti-extremism action. This could include research, development, a launch and implementation at grass roots level of education work, and an evaluation phase to improve future activity and ensure continuity in this area. This unit should encompass a network of national and local NGOs.

We strongly demand European support to this initiative: on technical, moral, organisational, financial levels.

We request cooperation with the European Network Against Racism and the European Union Monitoring Centre in this.

There must be a strong commitment of the member states.

Action Plan

We see the requirement for communicating with other European young people who need to be involved in different methods of education in this area. We should no longer preach to the converted.

4. Anti-Islamism

Introductory Note

The rising of anti-Islamism and all other forms of discrimination in Europe were seen by participants as issues deserving a separate treatment.

Political Recommendation:

More funding to support projects dealing with the issues of discrimination and racism among youth

To promote and commit to the education of the reality of discrimination bases and different religious groups, including the diversities that exist

Encourage intercultural and interfaith dialogues, notably through the promotion of diversity training and exchange in Europe

Action Plan:

Establish a European Newspaper reporting on projects and youth issues:

- establish an email network informing each other about youth issues and articles in the newspaper
- provide long-term investment in sustainable projects to ensure that the media are presented with a positive image of minority ethnic groups
- organise conferences with interreligious participants on an international level, including participation, for example, from the OIC region (Organisation of Islamic Conference) and ECJC (European Council of Jewish Communities)
- organising meeting between young people, governments and institutions on the issues concerned
- target two groups: youth and teachers by creating educational programmes and teachers training programmes that address the issues of the positive aspects of the different religious and ethnic groups
- organise intercultural and interfaith dialogue on a regular basis at the local level

5. New Faces of Fascism

Introductory Note

The rise of fascism in Europe is an important threat to the cohesion of European society. Building upon reflections on the elements characterising the concept of fascism, and in view of its dramatic previous applications on the European continent, participants identified recent political developments, as well as increase of anti-Semitic incidents throughout Europe, that could lead to the rise of new forms of "fascism" and a renewal of a "fascism of state" if kept without control. Youth organisations can play a big role to fight against fascism in Europe if they are given the necessary financial means to fund their projects.

Political Recommendations

- Respect for the rule of law to strike a reasonable balance between Human Rights (privacy in particular) and security measures.
- Increase Council of Europe funding to ensure more rapid decision-making in the European Court of Human Rights, and ensure control of the decisions' realisation at national level.
- Maintain the independence of NGOs through private sector funding.
- Encourage the activity of labour unions and provide them with relevant power in the company's decision making.
- Raise the awareness about the fact that anti-Semitism remains an important problem by organizing conferences and increasing funding of relevant organizations

Action Plan

- Encourage critical thinking through education
- Peer education: conflict management courses provided at schools, leading to a reduction of youth violence.
- Essay competition on several topics such as "Fascism in Europe", "Immigration policies"...
- Advise policy makers on how to promote active citizenship of young people
- Organize activities for underprivileged youth on current events, civic duties and politics
- Translation of information and websites into different languages: including reports and educational material

6. **“Fortress Europe”**

Introductory Note

A conscious debate about the political contradiction between the European Union strict immigration policy and the open willingness to fight against discrimination should be launched at the European level. “Fortress Europe” cannot be developed anymore as it puts the European integration model into danger.

Political Recommendation

The respect for diversity is a value that must be upheld. To achieve this there must be a common European Union (and other European countries) Strategy on immigration. We support a more consistent European policy towards the outside world in addressing the problems that cause forced migration. A management system of immigration that does not violate Human Rights must be developed.

We protest against the existence of immigrant detention centres, particularly those for asylum-seekers and recommend their immediate closure.

There must be a more consistent European policy towards non-European countries that aims to end the problems that cause forced migration.

The right of establishment (understood as right of entry and settlement) must be a basic right everyone is entitled to. Certain conditions for granting any individual with the right to establish in Europe must be guaranteed.

The concerns of human rights NGOs, regarding the maltreatment and death of immigrants into “Fortress Europe” should be taken seriously and incorporated into any immigration strategy.

Action Plan

Make a clear distinction between refugees and asylum-seekers.

Lobbying:

For closure of detention centres designed for asylum seekers.

For governmental campaigns to treat immigrants with respect and dignity-

For each government to ratify the “UN Convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families”

Activities & events:

Organising workshops during the Council of Europe’s All Different, All Equal campaign about the issues of migration.

Memorial plates in the cities with names and information about death cases

Demonstrations

Commemorate the 18th of December (International Migrants Day), and the 20th of June International Refugee Day.

Local Community Action

Bringing the local population and immigrants closer by visiting detention centres

Schools and youth groups to visit asylum-seekers homes

Empowerment of Asylum-seekers and immigrants

Informing asylum-seekers of their rights and empowering them to take action to defend them;

Produce a book with personal stories of Unaccompanied Minors.

Information

Keep organisations up to date in any development in law and policy about immigration in other European countries

Creating databases with documentation of Human Rights violations at immigration procedures, and make them available internationally.

Carry out and publish research into the causes of forced migration, following this process all possible actions to end forced migration must be taken.

7. Networking

Introductory Note

There is a big number of NGOs and institutions working for diversity and respect in Europe, organising many good initiatives. However, they could be even more effective by increasing communication and finding a “common language”. Today, the different actors do not know enough about each others` roles and actions, or how to find possible project partners. Therefore, we need better cooperation and more regular networking. There must be more interaction both between and within NGOs, as well as between NGOs and official institutions (national and international). This includes the exchange of ideas and good practice projects, in order not to re-invent the wheel.

The main actors are NGOs, international institutions (EU Commission, EU Parliament, Council of Europe/European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe), national and local governments

Political Recommendations

EU Commission and/or the Council of Europe, in cooperation with national governments should fund and organise a Europe-wide conference for all diversity actors every second year. The years in-between, fund and organise a big international “diversity fair”.

- target groups: same for conference and fair
- participants: mix of young people (50%) and experienced NGO members, (high-level) politicians, civil servants, minority representatives (in total 50%).
- format: all participants involved in the working groups on an equal level; combined with cultural activities. The fair should be comparable to the “Grüne Woche” in Germany, or to “Maailma Kylässä” in Finland, and focus on the issues of diversity and respect.
- organizers: at least half of the preparatory committee must be youth

The EU Commission / the Council of Europe should fund the setting up/continuation and active maintenance of a permanent “networking homepage“ for NGOs for diversity and respect. This homepage must be linked to the conference and fair activities. Such a homepage shall provide project ideas and increase the possibility to find project partners.

We encourage NGOs to foster/join existing Europe-wide networks of NGOs for diversity and respect. Consider initiating a Europe-wide network of religious diversity organisations.

Action Plan

If the institutions provide funding, the participants of this Youth conference will happily contribute to the designing and setting-up of the bi-annual fair and the bi-annual conferences for all NGOs and institutions working for diversity and respect in Europe.

We will foster interaction between our organisations and other organisations for diversity (gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation) at our (local) level, thus to ensure networking and joint action first at national and then at international level.

The participants of the Youth Conference 2005 commit themselves to make the conference webpage an active place of networking, aiming to contribute with the gained experience to a permanent “networking homepage“ for NGOs for diversity and respect.

8. Diversity in Education

Introductory Note

Respect for diversity must be included as a high priority issue in education at all levels (formal, non formal, informal). There is a growing need to include non formal education tools into formal education systems. The European Union, the Council of Europe and National Governments should create a good climate for partnership between formal and non-formal systems.

Political Recommendations

The European Union, the Council of Europe and National Governments should admit the need for incorporation and mainstreaming of Diversity in educational systems at all levels; in doing this, they should create a climate of partnership between formal and non-formal systems and providers of education.

They should support programmes directed at building capacity and delivering joint arrangements to provide the best results in embedding/mainstreaming diversity and tolerance elements to education and learning. In this regard, international formal learning (SOCRATES programme) and non-formal learning programmes (such as the YOUTH programme of the European Commission) should be built upon to develop the youth work for diversity and respect. This will help to overcome prejudices and stereotypes, which cause discrimination.

Projects aiming to promote diversity in schools and in other forms of education should be firstly developed in consultation and partnership; secondly they should particularly dedicate resources to the participation of young people with fewer opportunities and thirdly they should ensure participation of all stakeholders – including the young people involved, their parents, education authorities and NGOs.

The designing of the “Youth in Action” Programme currently undertaken at the European Union level should give very high priority to our concerns.

The establishment of a code of conduct: using non-racist terminology in education, and supporting campaigns on the topic of terminology will help to promote objectivity and diversity. This campaign should be run as part of short- and long-term diversity projects that create closer communication between education partners and NGO’s.

Non-formal education must be further developed, encouraged and promoted. It is a unique method that is efficient and incisive. In this context, it is essential to further develop the EU YOUTH portal in order to collect, analyse and disseminate exchange of good practices, therefore increasing youth work’s effectiveness.

It is necessary to develop more research capacity, feed the results into policy and make its results available to a larger public. An important element is the training of teachers, trainers and the involvement of youth workers. To promote exchange of experiences to enable young people to face diversity, through which mutual respect can be achieved.

We must address directly, youngsters not having opportunity to travel abroad, study and speak languages, those who are not organised, are disabled, less advantaged, and early school-leavers. It is important to raise awareness of young people who are ignorant towards diversity and tolerance.

Action Plan

Research, collect data, and publish good practise from existing educational diversity projects

Prioritise the possibility of cooperation between formal and non-formal European education programmes

Highlight the topic and look for opportunities to incorporate it into the “Theme Years” of the Council of Europe, European Union.

Provide a space to collect and share good practise, tools and methods - on the subject of co-operation between Formal and Non-formal education systems, and on the encouragement of young people’s participation in this process.

NGOs equipped (training, manpower, skills development) to work in partnership in this field, and supported in building the capacity to do so.

Using schools as a platform for discussions on diversity, racism and discrimination and have families involved in the process.

Establish joint training programmes, maximise existing facilities (SALTO, European Youth Centres), adopt current structures (where these support joint working) and identify new creative approaches.

Strengthen relationships between EU institutions and international NGOs.

The idea of subsidiary (bottom-up approach) should be supported and encouraged.

NGOs will strive to strengthen cooperation with the formal learning sector at all levels from primary schools to higher education.

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of on-going YOUTH programme activity

To develop new programmes, which are directly designed for young people not having opportunity (who haven’t travelled abroad, don’t speak languages, who are not organised, disabled, less advantaged, and early school-leavers).

To launch and run a campaign in order to reach all young people, called “YOURope”. For more effectiveness, this Campaign could be linked and complement other European institutional initiatives such as the European Union Campaign “For diversity – Against discrimination” and the Council of Europe Campaign “All different – All equal”

Giving support to young people who haven’t travelled abroad before on levels such as financial, administrative and technical (visa) support

Encourage and support new projects, which bring other cultures and diversity to youngsters (cultural festivals, internet forum)

Harness the experience of the participants of the YOUTH programme as multipliers for the benefit of future participants