

YOUTH COOPERATION FOR PEACE



Building bridges to counter radicalization and extremism

REPORT

Nicosia,
December
2017





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INTRODUCTION

The Youth Board of Cyprus, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture, organized the “Youth Cooperation for Peace: Building bridges to counter radicalization and extremism” Conference, in Nicosia on the 13th and 14th of December 2017.

The aim of the Conference was to bring together young people from the countries of our broader region that have participated at the 2nd Rhodes Conference for Stability and Security which was organized by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs last May, in order to exchange views on ways to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and to dispel misconceptions and false stereotypes.

Following the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 (2015)¹ which recognizes the positive role that young people can play in conflict prevention, the prevention of violent extremism and peace building, we also believe

that the potential of young people to be agents of peace within and among societies should be empowered.

25 participants coming from Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and Slovakia discussed and elaborated on two main themes: (a) the identification of the potential contribution of youth policies in order to prevent extremism and radicalization and (b) the creation of resilient communities and promote the culture of peace. Having heard key note speeches from different actors of various international and national organisations, the young delegates exchanged views and good practices and drew common conclusions by participating actively in formal and non-formal activities and workshops. At the end, the results of the Conference were discussed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Ioannis Kasoulides, the Chairman of the Youth Board of Cyprus, Mr. Panayiotis Sentonas, the Director of the Youth Board of Cyprus, Mr. Menelaos A. Menelaou and Ambassadors from different Embassies in Cyprus.



OPENING ADDRESSES

FIRST DAY

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this plenary. I salute the initiative of the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to co-organize this event. The idea of the Conference was supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture without any hesitation from the first moment of its conception. We believe that bringing together young people from the countries of our region in order to exchange views on ways to promote tolerance, mutual understanding and to dispel misconceptions and false stereotypes is very timely. Young people are the most dynamic part of our societies. We strongly believe in the positive role that young people can have in promoting peace. This view is held by many important international stakeholders including the United Nations who is recognizing the positive role young people can play in conflict prevention, prevention of violent extremism and peace building. We share this opinion and we believe that the potential of young people to be agents of peace within and among societies should be empowered.

The Conference will discuss two main themes:

(a) The potential contribution of youth policies in order to prevent extremism and radicalization and (b) How to build resilient communities and promote the culture of peace. Both of these issues are of great importance for our work at national and international level. At national level our vision is to contribute to the development of active citizens who, apart from possessing knowledge and skills, are characterized by ethos and are able to creatively contribute to the development of democratic and peaceful societies. Of course, in the highly interdependent world we are living, actions to be effective, should have an international dimension as well. The development of a democratic culture in a society, should not be a task of merely national governmental institutions. Our work at national level will be greatly enhanced from transnational cooperation as well as from sub-national cooperation with social partners and civil society organisations. Cyprus has recently had the honour to chair the

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The participants of the Ministerial Conference "Securing democracy through education" held in Cyprus last March, stressed the need of strategic alliances at regional, national, and international level towards promoting education as an inhibitor of violent extremism and radicalization and as an agent of peace. The underlying principle of our efforts is that common problems require common actions.

The rich history of our region has endowed us with the benefit of experiencing glorious civilizations since the ancient times. At the same time, we have had the sad privilege to witness, at several occasions, people fleeing from conflict areas or, even worst, perishing in the effort to move to safer places. We should never be bystanders in such situations. A great deal of people in our regions was affected by armed conflicts, endured the consequences of physical and structural violence. Many young people, despite these circumstances, choose to engage in constructive initiatives and dialogue instead of becoming themselves the multipliers of hatred and rejection which fuel prejudice and the conflict. We should support these young people to become peer leaders and educators and, in turn, sensitize and involve other young people. Our task should be to empower dialogue, mediation, intercultural communication, conflict transformation and peace work projects.

At this point, I would like to thank all those who have worked to make this conference a reality and I express my commitment to support the ideas and initiatives which will come up from the work of the Conference.



Minister of Education and Culture,
Dr. Costas Kadis

Your Excellency Mr Minister,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Matthew Collins, a former member of the British Far Right, (an extreme-right group in the UK), in his book "Hate: My Life in the British Far Right" recalls the Battle of Welling: It came at a library building one summer evening in 1989, when the BNP disrupted a public meeting in Welling, Kent.

He writes: "one man after the other laying into a small group of women, hitting them with chairs and hurling tables at them It was a bloody massacre. People were lying on the floor helpless, being stamped on, kicked and hit with objects picked off the walls and floor. A pregnant woman was locked in the toilet and the BNP were trying to kick their way in to get at her and her unborn baby." "I couldn't see what freedom of speech and fighting for British democracy had to do with stamping on little old ladies' heads," he writes. "It was real hatred. I began to see it was all about destroying people's lives. Violence was the only way they could affect change. I was standing in the library watching people getting their heads kicked in for attending a debate and discussion. I thought: I'm on the wrong side."

In Collins' story lies Hope. Hope that even devoted fascists can change! Hope that reason and tolerance can defeat bullying and violence. I would like to take this opportunity today to challenge our way of thinking and ask how one's reaction to a violent incident, such as this, can transform into acceptance of responsibility and result into prevention. What is that crucial factor that can change this? Primarily us, the young generation! The Youth Board of Cyprus, under the new National Youth Strategy, has taken various steps for engaging young

people in every issue that affects them, by giving them the floor to express themselves and create opportunities for collaboration with other young people from diverse ethnic and religious origins and backgrounds as well as from diverse communities and beliefs. The present Conference materializes our aspiration to gather a wide range of young people's views and suggestions on a national, European and International level.

It is generally acknowledged that the only way to tackle this threat and move forward is united action. All international bodies such as the EU, the Council of Europe, OSCE and the UN work intensively towards this common purpose. In my humble opinion, we need a new holistic approach, a new partnership amongst us, because legal and security are definitely measures very important, but they are not enough. Governments, industries, the civil society and individuals around the world must take a stance of solidarity against radicalization and terrorism. We must stand up for what we believe in. Freedom. Peace. Democracy. Understanding. We need a world in which knowledge, debate and discussion bring people closer together and make them feel a part of something greater than themselves. We need to activate a wide range of partners at local, national and international level, as radicalisation leading to violent extremism is growing. This vicious circle of violence and terrorism will continue unless we decide to collectively design alternative paths, which will strengthen young people's resilience to terrorist propaganda.

Without further due, I would like to thank all of you for being here with us and I'm sure your contribution will be valuable in recommending positive actions to our Governments and International organisations with a

strong and clear key message put forward: that youth cooperation can build bridges to counter radicalisation and extremism and enhance peace and stability, respect, tolerance and acceptance. I strongly believe that young people are the best stakeholders to propose creative solutions using their knowledge and understanding of new Information and Communication Technologies, their keenness to innovation, their high social responsibility and their eagerness to make this world a better place.

My special thanks go to the guest speakers who have accepted our invitation. I would, also, like to express my warm gratitude to your Governments and of course to the Cyprus government and specifically, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education and Culture for their full commitment and support to make this conference a reality. The Minister of Foreign Affairs could not be able to attend the opening ceremony today but he will be here tomorrow, which is extremely important since, along with other stakeholders, he will carefully listen to your proposals and actively contribute to developing a sustainable action plan for implementing your ideas.

Thank you all and I hope you enjoy your stay in Cyprus!

Chairman of the Administrative Board of the Youth Board of Cyprus, Mr. Panayiotis Sentonas



SECOND DAY

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation for your participation in this conference. I would also like to thank the organizers from the Youth Board of Cyprus for making this conference happen. I hope you have had interesting and productive discussions, and I am certain that the ideas and perspectives you will present to us in a few minutes will help decision-makers and stakeholders in our joint efforts to counter radicalization and extremism.

I would like to note that the idea for this conference started last May, at the 2nd Rhodes Conference for Security and Stability organized by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and which seeks to bring countries in our region to work on a “positive agenda” of cooperation.

I personally consider the youth as the main asset of our region. As the most important raw material that will shape the future. I also believe that the youth have the best ideas about the challenges that they and our societies face.

So this was the aim of this conference. To get youth with different backgrounds, different perspectives to talk and share their ideas on a shared challenge. The challenge of countering radicalization and extremism, a challenge that affects our youth both in Europe and the Middle East. Therefore, having young people from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Albania, Italy and Slovakia, who see different aspects of this chal-

lenge, who have different lessons-learned, we felt that it would be a mutually-reinforcing experience. The conference was interactive. There were presentations from our Jordanian, Omani and other friends on their valuable national experiences.

I am also a strong supporter of synergies, therefore I am also glad that the Commonwealth was represented and shared their views, as they have recently created a Counter-Violent Extremism Unit that focuses also on youth. We also had input from the PATRIR institute of Romania and the CAR-DET (Center for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology) which is a Cyprus-based NGO.

Now, we are all keen to hear the views of the participants and their ideas on the way ahead. After the presentation, we will have a short discussion on the way ahead or perhaps some ideas that will help us carry forward this agenda. I would like to thank the Ambassadors and the embassies for being here for this session, and I hope they can contribute in our discussions, as we also intend to carry the issue forward in the context of the next Rhodes conference in May 2018. Thank you.

**Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Mr. Ioannis Kasoulides**



KEY NOTE SPEAKERS CONTRIBUTION

TOPIC 1

“FROM TODDLERS AND TOLERANCE, TO BATTLEFIELDS AND BIGOTRY: HOW AND WHY DO YOUNG PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES ON THE PATH TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM?”

Speaker: Mr. Jasmeet Singh Sahotay, Researcher, EU Policy Advocacy & Programme Coordinator, Violent Extremism and Radicalisation, Department of Peace Operations (DPO) - PATRIR.



The focus of the presentation was to describe the interaction of the socio-historical and socio-political contexts of European Muslims and those of 'indigenous' Europeans in general, and how a perceived contradiction between European and Muslim identity can lead to violent extremism. Young Muslims living in Europe must form their identity in a milieu of sometimes conflicting or paradoxical self-defining characteristics: ethnicity, youth culture, skin colour, cultural heritage, religious heritage, Islamic duty, the practices of their parents etc. They must also process and internalise news, media and public cultures that sometimes demonise them as guests, outsiders, extremists - or at worst - terrorists. They must witness the deaths of other Muslims around the world, sometimes by Western security forces, and suffer persecution domestically by police, prison workers and political rhetoric. The resulting identities are sometimes confused and chaotic - a perfect condition for violent Islamist recruiters to exploit. Those that identify more with being Muslim than European may find themselves attracted to Islamic concepts such as 'the Ummah' (global Islamic community) and Islamic revivalist ideologies.

Jasmeet made clear this was one side of the story: that the other side is the growing Islamophobia and European right wing violent extremism specifically targeting

Muslims. To begin he gave a nuanced definition of Islamophobia, beyond the OED's simplistic definition (OED: "intense dislike or fear of Islam, especially as a political force; hostility or prejudice towards Muslims"):

"Islamophobia is a contrived fear or prejudice fomented by the existing Eurocentric and Orientalist global power structure. It is directed at a perceived or real Muslim threat through the maintenance and extension of existing disparities in economic, political, social and cultural relations, while rationalizing the necessity to deploy violence as a tool to achieve 'civilizational rehab' of the target communities (Muslim or otherwise). Islamophobia reintroduces and reaffirms a global racial structure through which resource distribution disparities are maintained and extended" (UC Berkeley)

According to Jasmeet, examples of this Islamophobia include conflicts between Islamic styles of dress and European libertarian values such as the debate over the niqab (face veil) or full-body religious dress being worn in public spaces. To him, this debate seems based on a fear that post-colonial identity is threatened by other cultures into the European space; "an ethnocentric, irrational, undynamic and narrow conception of what national identity should be defined as". He gave a more extreme example of this Islamophobia: the recent Independence Day march in Poland, where the 'All Polish

Youth' formed the centre of what became an anti-Muslim, anti-refugee march involving fascists and Nazi sympathisers.

Jasmeet argues that to some Europeans, Muslims and refugees pose an additional threat to the foundations of what it means to be 'European'; to the core of their very identity. Moreover, for the newer members of the EU who have looked toward the West - at the shift toward multiculturalism, the erosion in national identity and the growing discord between the Muslim diaspora and the authorities - "Many are thinking "not here"". This is especially clear when put in a context of the disdain felt around Europe toward the Brussels 'elite' and EU sovereignty. It helps to build a picture of why one more identity threat is not welcome. In the same way that some Muslims may find themselves attracted toward certain - sometimes unhealthy - versions or elements of Islam, some Europeans who reject or resent Islamic integration may find themselves attracted to hateful or inflammatory ideologies / concepts (e.g. "Deus Vult" - "God Wills It" - a phrase most commonly associated with the Crusades now used at many Far Right Marches).

The contradiction of these two identities may lead to direct, structural and cultural violence between the two communities. Direct violence may be in the form of terrorism, police brutality, racism, racially-mo-

tivated [e.g. acid] attacks, and even war. Structural forms of violence include segregation or isolation, marginalisation of communities to ghettos or the outskirts of cities, unequally applied legislation such as that of religious-wear for Muslims as opposed to Christians in France. Cultural forms of violence include the perception of Muslims being scary, being rapists or sexual predators, being prone to terrorism / violent extremism, or being unable to integrate - perpetuated by media and political rhetoric. Jasmeet gave cited examples of all of these. He finished the presentation with a couple recommendations: for young Muslims to

follow the examples of Muslim role models such as Linda Sarsour, Riz Ahmed, Mohammed Ali, that were or are neither afraid of their Islamic identity and those Muslims that try to exploit that, nor (and more importantly) afraid of the Western communities that try to coerce, persecute or rebuke Muslims into becoming more European, more integrated or emigrating. For young Europeans, Jasmeet recommended that they begin with civic engagement / policy-advocacy to reform education systems on this topic: for students to have frank, real and open discussions about some of the atrocities that the colonial powers committed in the lands

that they subjugated (based on a model similar to that of Germany's Holocaust education). From there, young people need to interact more with communities they otherwise wouldn't (Roma, LGBTQ+, Muslim, Jewish peoples), and build bridges of trust and common identity. Finally, the recommendation for all young people: "Stand up to Islamophobia when you see it. Stand up to violent Islamism when you see it. The fearless unification of the European and Muslim worlds, with a synergetic 21st Century identity of its own, would deflate the identity politics espoused by violent Islamism and European nationalism alike."



TOPIC 2

"YOUTH PEACE AGAINST TERROR"

Speaker: Mr. Omar Mousa Ziedan Al Azzam, Director of Media, Ministry of Youth, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr Omar referred to the significance of youth policies, since -as he mentioned- "the scope and speed of change in our world requires careful analysis, planning and management" as "we are facing a disease that is threatening the entire world. No country is immune from the threat of terrorism".

"The goal of peace - building is to establish public relations among people in the world. We have to increase the concept of world citizenship as a direct result of the contraction of the world into a single neighbourhood. Love of all the world's people does not exclude love of one's country. The advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the advantage of the whole".

"The Amman Message, under the guidance of His Majesty King Abdullah II, aims to declare what Islam is and what it is not, and

what actions represent it and what actions do not. Islam is a religion of tolerance, love, compassion dialogue and resolution of differences away from any form of violence and extremism. It is clear to the whole world that Islam has been committed as a result of the behaviour of some converts to Islam".

"One of Jordan's interest is to provide young people with everything that could develop the personality, and to provide them with the knowledge, experience and basic life skills to enable them to contribute actively interacting with the global issues around them. The Jordanian young people supported by His Majesty the King, participate in all the youth dialogues inside and outside the country with the aim of exchanging experiences and knowledge of visions and ideas that contribute to achieving a dignified life in security, stability, love and peace".

"The Ministry of youth which is the umbrella of youth sector in Jordan plays an important role in the development of strategic plans for young people, including the national youth strategy & holding programs, events, youth camps which aims to emphasize the active participation of young

people and provide them with the expertise, skills and visions that enable them to contribute the world peace and prosperity". "Jordanian Ministry of Youth under the direction of His Majesty King Abdullah II believes that we can achieve the world peace through the realization of rights and freedoms, respect, dialogue and acceptance of differences for both female and male, everywhere in the kingdom and everywhere in the world. For that, the Ministry of Youth holds AL-Hus-

sein Camps annually during the summer, from 51 years ago until now, for both female and male to give them the opportunity to be part in the global issues, to adopt values and respect and for sure to reject violence". "His Royal Highness Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah, Crown Prince of Jordan, has the distinguished role in the role of youth, he carries out a special message on the importance of young people in international forums and the role of youth in conflict areas

and their role in building peace. On April 23, 2015, His Highness the Crown Prince became the youngest person ever to chair a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, the Crown Prince said that "extremism is the greatest challenge to peace and security in the world, and youth are the main victims." His Highness warned that "dark thoughts can reach where the armies cannot reach," which requires the world to empower young people to face this threat".

TOPIC 3

"THE COMMONWEALTH AND BUILDING YOUTH RESILIENCE"

Speaker: Mr. Layne Robinson, Head, Youth Programmes Section, Commonwealths' Economic, Social & Sustainable Development Directorate.

Mr Robinson begun his presentation by underlining how laying the foundations of civil paths lead to peace. By, first of all, understanding the role of economic inequalities, social humiliations and political disenfranchisement in generating disrespect and hostility. Concrete steps for making changes in the way the world is organised, in order to remove the sources of hostility, should be taken. By investigating the linkages between deprivations and the fomentation of disaffection. Civil paths to peace are not confined to governmental activities only; the cultivation of disrespect and hostility can also be resisted by the working of the media, political processes, educational activities and other means of generating mutual understanding. Lastly by making use of dialogue and discussion. Then he elaborated on how youth work can contribute to breaking the cycle of extremism: "Youth workers, worldwide, can be found working in clubs,

community and detached (street based) settings, within social/ welfare services, sports/leisure provision, schools and, over the last decade or so, in museums, arts facilities, libraries, hospitals, leisure and sports centres, children's homes and young offenders' institutions. The central purpose of youth work could be defined as working with young people so that they are able to play an assertive and constructive role in the strengthening and regeneration of their immediate communities and wider society. Youth workers' generate constructive responses to issues of legitimate and perceived social exclusion, ethnic or religious prejudice/tension and concomitant hostility, aggression and violence. They establish within populations the advantages and values associated with the promotion of equity, human rights and good governance. Working with and alongside young people, providing them with opportunities to learn to take responsibility for their behaviour and deal with the consequences of their actions. Central to the youth work response is the acknowledgement of the need for the youth worker to be able to listen to, and be taught, about the wants and needs of young people by young people. This is led by an understanding that the motivations, desires and passions of young



people will likely be the richest seams of their future accomplishments and social contribution. In this approach, young people take the lead in learning. It is the job of the youth worker to respond to this in an appropriate and adequate manner. This stance allows the young person to enable and empower themselves. Such an approach proceeds from the presumption that young people have, in the form of their integrity as human beings, potential, ability, influence, authority and power; it gives them credit as whole (if growing) human beings, rather than being taken to be something less than whole.

TOPIC 4

“YEIP - YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME”

Speaker: Ms. Eliza Patouris, PhD, Project Manager at the Centre for the Advancement of Research and Education in Technology, Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Nicosia.

As Ms Patouris noted: “The Youth Empowerment and Innovation Project (www.yeip.org) is a 3-year Erasmus+ funded programme. It involves 20 partners from seven EU countries (England, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Romania, and Portugal). For Cyprus the Centre for Advancement of Research and Educational Technology (CARDET) and Municipality of Egkomi are the two partners responsible for carrying out YEIP. It aims to design a youth-led, positive policy prevention framework for tackling and preventing the marginalisation and violent radicalisation among young people in Europe. The ultimate objective is to construct and test innovative, policy intervention models founded on the principles of restorative justice, positive psychology and Good Lives Model (GLM). At the core of YEIP lie two core

The youth workers role is to facilitate young people by creating the conditions in which they can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than relying on other people, in particular professionals, to do things for them. They are meant to empowering young people by putting democratic principles into action in the fullest sense, so that young people can play a constructive part/role in decision-making that affects them at different levels of society. They need to confirm young people by operating in accordance with value systems that give a sense of purpose and meaning to how

principles:

Youth-Led research: The youth-led approach dictates that young people must be left to instigate potential solutions to a problem, one that they have indeed identified themselves, and take responsibility for developing and implementing a solution. Consequently, the youth-led method repositions young people as important stakeholders who can make unique decisions which impact on the quality of their lives, rather than simply accepting the position as passive subjects whose lives are guided by decisions made by adult ‘others’. In the YEIP project we give young people an active role in the overall research process thus enhancing co-operation with them towards identifying and countering the issue at hand. **Good Lives Model:** GLM is a strengths-based rehabilitation model that assists in strengthening one’s ability to create goals and plans to get to these points of achievement in the most efficient way. If someone can create goals and set a path to follow, they are more likely to succeed and not slip through the cracks of vulnerability. In this way the GLM focuses on creating a balanced and well dignified life. In order to create a ‘Good Life’ 11 primary goods need to

young people use their skills and knowledge.

In this way, youth workers can address the cycle of extremism at its very source by working with young people to: a. Voice and examine, explain their thoughts and feelings; b. Explore how they might address any issues, looking to themselves, their peer and society as a resource (rather than a source of blame); c. Consider what interests’ particular groups have when looking to place responsibility for personal or social problems on rivals, while directing others to take action against (scapegoat) these people”.

be met: healthy life, knowledge, excellence in play/work/agency, inner peace, relatedness, community, spirituality, pleasure, and creativity. In the context of youth radicalisation, extremists fill in the untouched primary goods of the GLM that the young people do not experience in their daily lives.

Without a sense of empowerment and in today’s challenging society it is easy for young people to slip onto the road of radicalisation. YEIP attempts to change that with its innovative youth-led prevention model”.



WORKSHOP AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Young delegates participating at the Conference had the opportunity to take part in a 4-hour workshop, which aimed to provide awareness and enhance skills to empower young people to take action in order to tackle extremism and radicalization. The workshop was based on non-formal education methodology, by promoting inquiry, collaboration and dialogue. Non-formal activities brought opportunities for empowerment and personal development, strengthened the acquisition and construction of new attitudes, skills and knowledge, and created a space for discussing an issue highly challenging for modern societies, while supporting participants in the process to think critically and find new ideas and alternatives, tackling borders by confronting solutions for their individual and collective plans. The fundamental flow of the training allowed for experiencing, reflecting, transferring, sharing, developing skills and competences. Among others, one of the workshop's aim was to create a pool of youngsters, enthusiastic to design and bring positive social changes. This will be eventually accomplished with the implementation of the actions that participants designed according to the needs of their region. Specifically, the main objectives of the workshops were:

- To enable participants to understand that there are multiple perspectives within each and every society, even for a simple issue.
- To increase understanding of the concept of identity and widen self-awareness.
- To enable understanding of how focusing on a single aspect of identity can lead to violence.
- To explore the roots, outcomes, and ongoing causes which contribute to extremist ideologies and behaviours.
- To consider the impact of ongoing poverty, racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, militarism, and the availability of weapons on religious expression, nationalism, and struggles for political power.
- To become aware of structural violence.
- To share best practices used within their communities that promote human rights' respect.
- To develop an activity that will specifically design and apply at their settings.

The first activity required from participants to identify aspects of their identity that they consider important and compare them among group members. Young delegates had the opportunity to discuss how identity is developed, whether specific aspects of the identity are suppressed within a society, while others are promoted, the impact of the aspects of the identity at an individual and collective level, the possibility of individuals remaining with a single aspect of their identity, and how identity is related to extremism, radicalism and restoration to violence.

Young delegates had to tackle a problem, stated as "a growing number of individuals undertake extremist actions". They had to identify the factors that contribute to the problem and think of the consequences of the problem. Participants discussed whether tackling one aspect of the problem can bring change, whether change is indeed possible, and the importance of identifying the root causes of a problem in order to suggest and implement concrete solutions. The outcomes of the group is provided at the session "Causes of extremism as defined by the young delegates". The following activity enabled the participants to identify structural violence within the society and its impact on radicalization and restoration to extremist acts. Through the activity, the young delegates realized the difficulty of initially identifying, and later, tackling structural violence within the society a person lives. Young delegates though, came to understand how structural violence leads individuals to adopt extremist attitudes and as a consequence, to carry out extremist acts. Young delegates had also the opportunity to share good practices/actions/programs related to human rights, implemented in their countries. The practices were divided in 5 different areas: Education, Health, Environment, Active Participation, Security. The practices could be applied by governmental or non-governmental authorities. The practices shared among participants are provided at the session "Good Practices shared by the young delegates".

At last, but not least, participants formed groups according to the region they resign, and once they specified the needs of their region, they discussed and explored activities/actions they will implement with the assistance of the organizations they represent, once they return to their home country. Finally, they also elaborated on possible common recommendations that could be submitted to the Government of the Republic of Cyprus who hosted the Conference and to the rest of the Governments participating at the Rhodes Conference.



CAUSES OF EXTREMISM AS DEFINED BY THE YOUNG DELEGATES

1. STATE

- a. Social welfare (lack of sources);
- b. Different attitude towards various groups of people (discrimination);
- c. Weakness of applying the rules and unequal distribution of punishment. Insufficient exercisability of the anti-extremist law;
- d. Corruption.

2. MEDIA

- a. Social media provide the main tools for communication of young people. Older generation is not equipped with the same communication competences and has difficulties in using the social media to address young audience with positive messages;
- b. False news and lack of media literacy to distinguish between real and false information leads young people to believe in various hoax which very often fuel hatred between religions or ethnicities. Lack of critical thinking which is vital for analyses of the information, opinions, etc. spread by the social media causes uncritical acceptance of false news by young people;
- c. Not filtered info / Open Space / Chaotic - Tool for Recruitment of people and influence people (no control).

3. ECONOMY

Economic Crisis and the consequences: precariousness of the job market/employment and

rise of the stress and anxiety in lower middle class, exposing of the concept of social state (less social benefits - free education, free health care, social insurance etc.), worsened the economic conditions of individuals (economic marginalization and deprivation), lead to high unemployment in youth.

4. POLITICS

- a. New political groups rising extremist ideas - the phenomenon of fascism, right wing extremists form legal political parties and are getting support from the lower class and middle class as they benefit from their frustration, lack of trust to traditional political parties and latent xenophobia, antisemitism, anti-muslimism in society, or even nostalgic interpretation of phenomenon of fascism in Europe. Populist strategies of traditional political parties to accuse socially deprived from being the reason of precarious economic situation, weak economy (e.g. Roma in Central and Eastern Europe); accusing various cultural or ethnical groups from causing value crisis, chaos and endangering safety;
- b. Political issues in areas of conflict.

5. EDUCATION

- a. Formal: exclusion, marginalization of individuals, unequal opportunities, history context, social constructions of identity/division, non-teaching

of religious/cultural sensitivity, misunderstanding of religion and lack of awareness;

- b. Non-formal: i.e. indoctrination in mosques.

6. JUSTICE / LAW

The application of impunity or the discriminatory application of the rule of law either according to the social, national, religious or other group an individual belongs to, can generate feelings of injustice, which can lead to hatred, and in conjunction with other variables to provide individuals with the 'tools' to engage in extremist acts.

7. LACK OF POLITICAL POWER (ESPECIALLY OF MINORITY GROUPS)

Vulnerable groups are not represented in the political scene and do not mold the political agenda. As such, their voices remain marginalized and in some cases the violation of their rights remains hidden within the existing structures of the society. Involvement in groups might be an effort to gain power or as a reaction to the injustice experienced.

8. SOCIAL ISSUES

- a. Marginalization/Exclusion (economic, historical, social).
- b. Not engaged "free" time.
- c. Cycle of violence/retaliation - Disposition to commit violence or to dominate others.
- d. Vulnerability (family issues, financial, mental issues).



GOOD PRACTICES SHARED BY THE YOUNG DELEGATES

HEALTH

CYPRUS:

- HIV Movement (more visible) Free and Anonymous Testing
- Development of the American Heart Institute
- Free Health Care and Outside medical care

JORDAN:

- Blood Donation at universities every semester
- Free Breast Cancer test for women over 40 years old.

EGYPT:

- Free Virus (treatment/no waiting list)

ROMANIA:

- Comma connecting Health Professionals, Social Workers and Victims of Domestic Violence. Health Professionals are educated to find signs of domestic/gender based violence.

ALBANIA:

- Youth Voice campaign in Albania and Y-Peer are created as an informative way of being informed and aware on the issues of sexual and reproductive

health. Different 'live healthy' sessions were conducted with young people.

SLOVAKIA:

- Nests of Rescue in front of hospitals enabling mothers in bad social and/or economic situation to leave their new-borns in safe environment;
- Street Work by organisations providing health and social intervention - target groups: sex workers, homeless, drug addicts; (most active NGOs in Bratislava: Proti Prúdu, Vagus).

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

ALBANIA:

- "HeForShe" campaign in Football stadia in Albania was focused on raising awareness of men and boys and increasing their engagement on the issues of gender equality and non violence. A mobile application accessible on android mobiles was created called "Tifozi HeForShe", so person have had the opportunity to play the quiz, win a prize and take information on gender equality and non-violence.

ITALY:

- LABSUS - The aim of the Laboratory was to set an example for the future, of active citizenship and a collaboration with the various associations, institutional entities, as well as civic and business subjects interested in achieving cultural and entertainment activities to re-appraise the Temple of Flora and restore its former function of meeting place and cultural exchange.

GREECE:

- Voluntary Groups - Europe Direct Komotini: Volunteering is an integral part of the Europe Direct of Komotini and essentially is the driving force for the realization of most events at local, regional and European level;
- "Youth '17 - '27" Public consultations on the Strategy and Actions Framework for the Empowerment of Young People, by the Secretariat General for Life Long Learning and Youth;
- Regional Youth Meeting of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace: A structured dialogue event that brings together young people from isolated areas and policy





makers to discuss and propose common resolutions on issues that affect them.

CYPRUS:

- National Youth Strategy - Active role of Youth for developing/ drafting the Strategy
- Youth Clubs (rural and non-rural areas)
- Marathons (running) - activating citizens for a common cause

EGYPT:

- World Youth Forum
- Cultural Activities

ITALY:

- Government donates 500 euro to every 18-year-old young person to spend it in cultural activities.
- Non Dalla Guerra: raising awareness activities on the refugees situation made in collaboration with a theatre company with the

method of silent play.

- Meet Me Halfway (MMH): Intercultural Festival that the Human Rights Youth Organization (H.R.Y.O.) implemented in a disadvantaged district of Palermo. It aims to introduce human rights and peace concepts to local citizens and encourage them to participate in the intercultural dialogue. The main goal is to tackle racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance by promoting diversity and forbearance. MMH is also a social tool for giving voice to the cultural minorities living in Palermo and associations working on social inclusion and intercultural dialogue in the city.

QATAR:

- Youth Committee to engage youth with government and hear young peoples' problems.

GREECE:

- V for Veranda: a place for cultural events and actions.

LEBANON:

- Active citizenship program by the British Council. It is a social leadership training programme that promotes intercultural dialogue and community-led social development. Through the programme, people coming from different beliefs and perspectives come together to learn from each other and share with each other. Through the training provided the participants gain skills and knowledge needed to affect social change in their communities. It is implemented in 54 countries, including Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East. In Lebanon the project partner is the Development for People and Nature Association.

SLOVAKIA:

- Student parliaments at elementary schools, high schools and universities – body which is supposed to represent students' needs and interests and should be involved in the decision making. School management is obliged to support students in building this body and involve them into decision making;
- Support and active participation at the Structured Dialogue with the European Union (the coordinator of Structured Dialogue in SK is the Youth Council of Slovak Republic)
- Academies of Democratic School Environment – Training for teachers and school management focused on building their professional competences in supporting democratic school environment. [Slovak National Institute for Education in cooperation with European Wergeland Centre (Norway)].

EDUCATION

ALBANIA

- “No hate speech campaign” in Albania has had the aim to raise awareness of young people to get to know more the differences that exist between people coming from different backgrounds (social, family, cultural etc), and to promote the language of peace and a constructive dialogue.
- “16 days of activism against violence” in Albania is a campaign focused on raising awareness of a large community to the negative effects that violence brings into society, family etc.

QATAR

- “Education above all” to provide education to most vulnerable people in Qatar

Lebanon

- Syrian Refugees Education System, which makes it possible to Syrian refugees to access the public schools in Lebanon in a second shift.

EGYPT

- Entrepreneurship Education

CYPRUS

- No hate speech Campaign
- Recognition of non-formal, informal education

ITALY

- Non Dalla Guerra: Informal education/peer education on the topic of integration.
- Human Library Sicily implemented by the Human Rights Youth Organization (H.R.Y.O.): The main characteristics of the method are to be found in its simplicity and the positive approach. It has been created in 2000 in Denmark, and it is now a Worldwide Movement. The Human Library is a public event, where interested people can come to challenge their prejudices. The idea is to have a conversation with a Human Book: a person who has experienced prejudices due to issues such as sex, age, disability, sexual preference, gender identity, social status, background, religion/belief or lifestyle choices. The reactions and responses of visitors and books themselves are very positive, expressing that the event has a real impact. More information can be found on the official website: www.humanlibrary.org.

SLOVAKIA:

- “Blind trips”: project of Open Society Foundation in Slovakia in cooperation with favourite Slovak youtuber Selassie, to raise awareness and tolerance between teenagers. In the videos, Selassie visited a refugee camp, Roma village, former concentration camp and people from diverse backgrounds were introduced in order to counter the stereotypes. Some videos had more than 140 000 downloads. Project was supported by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute;
- Trainings in Human Rights Education, Prevention of Extremism for youth workers and for teachers – IUVENTA offers free trainings for youth workers which build their professional

competences in the field of human rights;

- No Hate Speech – Bez Nenávisť: Slovakia took part in the international campaign No Hate via multiple media tools approaching various target groups.

GREECE:

- “Something is on Play with Human Rights” an educational programme developed and implemented by Europe Direct Komotini and System&G NGO, which informs and raises awareness to Primary School pupils on Human Rights respect, through non formal education activities.

SECURITY

QATAR

- Interpol 5th Conference in Qatar to tackle human trafficking.

ALBANIA

- Police and community: was a campaign implemented in Albania, by making the figure of police more closely and related to the community. Young people have had the chance to visit the Police Commissariats and to get to know a daily work of the Police officers.

ITALY

- #NON UNA DIMENO - 8 points for the 8th of March. This is a political platform developed by 2000 people who attended a national assembly in Bologna on the 4th and 5th of February: they carried on the work on the Feminist Plan against male violence and they are organizing a Women's Strike on the 8th of March, a strike which involved many countries around the world. These points express the rejection of every form of gender-based violence: oppression, exploitation, sexism, racism, homo and trans-phobia.

SLOVAKIA

- Restatement of the -Crime Law which introduces - Crime of Extremism (applicable since

January 2017). Extremism is defined as the act or demonstration which turns against democratic values and promotes denial of human rights to any person based on his/her gender, ethnical background, nationality, religious or cultural background, sexual orientation etc. One of the most important changes in the restatement is that the person (one who produces, or promotes or keeps extremist material has to prove that s/he did not had aim to promote extremist ideas not vice versa (state is not obliged to prove that the aim of person was to promote extremist ideas);

- Citizens can use the online tool to report the crime of extremism. The tool is being developed and improved by the NGO People in Need in cooperation with the Ministry of Inner Affairs;
- Sociological researches focused on the factors influencing the rise of radical extremism. Iuventa in cooperation with Open Society Foundation realises qualitative research focused

on the causes of extremism of young people and will held a conference in May 2018.

COMPANION APP

LEBANON

- Kicking out ISIS from Lebanon completely, in August 2017.

ENVIRONMENT

JORDAN

- Plant a tree after graduation

GREECE

- Let's do it Greece! Let's clean our city: Let's Do It Greece is the largest simultaneous volunteer action in the country! It is organized exclusively by volunteers - mostly young children - who have loved volunteering through school.

ALBANIA

- Plant trees if you have a vehicle: is a campaign of a Tirana Municipality (capital of Albania) led by the mayor.

Each Tirana citizen that has a vehicle is kindly asked to donate two trees. Municipality has encouraged the public, private and international institutions that every staff of them that has a vehicle should plant two trees, in order to make Tirana greener.

QATAR

- UNECTAD Conference in Doha Qatar 2012 for environmental change
 - Stop trucks to reduce CO2 and decrease the time and provide public transportation to decrease use of cars

CYPRUS

- Creation of parks
 - Recycling: disposition of trash bins in different areas and battery recycling

LEBANON

- Green Ghosta, a small project to encourage school students to sort the trash for recycling. It is funded by the UNESCO and implemented with the support of the British Council in the town of Ghosta in Lebanon.



DEBATE

PRESENTATION OF THE GROUP SUGGESTIONS

After the opening of the session by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the participants presented their results as follows:

ROMANIA, ALBANIA, SLOVAKIA, BULGARIA

Challenge: right-wing extremism and increasing Ethno-nationalism.

ACTION 1: Empower youth to make them feel more confident & courageous to challenge violent extremism when they witness it.

ACTION 2: Increase capacity of youth to address their grievances non-violently & improve capability to advocate for effective policy change.

Activity 1: Non-violent communication training, empathy exercises, confidence building & a series of videos involving former extremist, victims of violent extremism, families of violent extremists on how they were able to/wanted to challenge violent extremism.

Activity 2: Training and workshops on non-violent resistance, campaign-development handbooks, guides and informative videos, resource/case-study, informative Hub online on developing campaigns, network of youth campaigners to effectively create a 'Central Eastern European (CEE) region youth advocacy union' -> online platform for ideas sharing, what has worked and what has not. Needs assessment and research conducted prior -> all activities will then be made /tailored to be country-specific.

EGYPT, JORDAN, LEBANON

1. Education:

Informal education for the regions in need: by providing informal education to people who live in regions that might be subject to radicalism. this education would be about culture, sports, societal integration and more activities and material that would bring back their sense of belonging and prevent them from joining such terrorists and extremists in their groups.

2. Environment:

-Planting Trees: Many of the areas infested with terrorism are located in desert areas. So, we suggest we can start integrating them into the economic system of the country and give them the sense of economic belonging by reclaiming the desert land and make it cultivatable and then start some agriculture there for them to start having a business for themselves and at the same time contribute to the country's economy.
-Recycling: In the same way this project aims at encouraging youth, mainly the school students to get used to sorting trash from the source directly from their classes and homes. In that way they will affect their close environment and mainly their parents which will adopt this green solution for the trash problem. Moreover, students will be able to discover what happens with the sorted trash when it goes to the recycling plant and get manufactured as new product and will get a new life. In this cycle, the students will learn how the trash can be transformed from normal polluted trash to a new source after reusing and recycling it and then gets a new life. That's how they will learn how a small step at home or in class at school, can contribute in supporting a green environment and reducing the pollution

3. Empowerment:

Empowerment of young people via true integration (according to the above mentioned recommendations) in order to fight extremism.





GREECE, CYPRUS, ITALY

1. Tackle youth unemployment.

High unemployment rates lead youngsters into seeking solutions in radical ideas. The quality of public services needs to be advanced in order to tackle youth unemployment. A reconstruction of the public sector by introducing minimum quotes to employ young civil servants would minimize the number of young unemployed, and at the same time it would advance the quantity and quality of public administration services.

2. Trust the state:

Young people feel disconnected from the state, ineffective and unnecessary bureaucracy results to the loss of youngsters' trust towards the institutions. We are the generation of speed and the state should also be the same. The goal is to create a state trusted by its young citizens, being 24/7 at their disposal. What would contribute to that is the digitalisation of public administration. An accessible state enjoys the participation & trust of its citizens. It leads to mutual respect between ruling & ruled.

3. Critical thinking:

Include in the education system lessons and learning methods that motivate/teach learners how to think in a critical way (evaluate and filter the knowledge and information received).

4. Media literacy

Organize campaigns and seminars for young people (and citizens in general)
-out and in of the education system - regarding media literacy, proper use of social media, understand fake news, cross checking information

sources who might be receiving funds.

5. Cross-sectoral cooperation

Cross-sectoral cooperation among ministries/ authorities to promote 'respect'. 'active participation', 'transparency', be more open and transparent in different procedures to the citizens.

6. Prevention activities for the target group 10-16 years old:

- courses of civic education,
- participation in public life (active citizenship),
- through non-formal education.

7. National Youth Assembly

Establish a National Youth Assembly composed by young people from 18 to 30 years old to share different realities and situations/problems faced in their own local communities, presenting good practices and possible solutions to be followed on a general level with the same goals.

QATAR

Proposes other countries to follow its example by establishing the following:

1. Social Incubation Centre

This idea is to create an atmosphere for different social talents and entrepreneurs aged 18-35, to help them shape new ideas in to reality. They work with distinguished mentors and well established youth teams to educate them and to provide them with space to develop their project.

2. AKhalaquna

The idea is to celebrate the best human values in



the society and to highlight those people who are setting the role model example; Al Shaikha Moza bint Nasser announced this idea in May, 2017.

3. Youth Committee

The Youth Committee is made up by Qatari youth under the age of 39. It represents the youth views and opinions to the Minister of Culture and Sport. In addition, the Youth Committee works as consultants to the Ministry on youth topics and youth issues.

After the end of the presentations, the Minister congratulated everyone for the inspired suggestions and for sharing the team work with the rest of the participants.

During the discussion the young delegates had the opportunity to exchange views with Minister on the applicability of such recommendations in the national realm(s). Dominant ideologies and national structures were equally discussed as potential opportunities and obstacles at the same time. Even delegates underlined the sociopolitical peculiarities derived from such diverse national contexts, by interacting with the Minister they conceived and identified also commonalities. Thus, despite the socio-cultural diversity, young participants started finding space for common action on the matters discussed. The Minister encouraged the participants to reach common conclusions and submit commonly applicable recommendations as the main outcome of the Conference. Stressing how crucial all these suggestions are for the national governments Minister asked the participants whether the "Youth Cooperation for Peace Conference" could be institutionalized as an annual event, and especially as an

established permanent forum for empowerment of the youth's participation, and as a formal institution where, the voice of youth would be essentially heard.

The young delegates welcomed the Minister's proposals/contribution and endorsed them/it enthusiastically. Considering Cyprus as the crossroad between European and Arabic world, the vast majority of the participants suggested Cyprus -in their eyes- could reinforce also symbolically the goal of this conference functioning as a bridge between Europe and Arab world.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The young delegates, having heard the Minister as well, formed the following common recommendations:

1 Formalisation of the group of young delegates participating at the #YouCooP Conference as the youth policy advocacy platform of the Rhodes Conference, to ensure further youth engagement and sustainability.

2 **Annual realisation of the #YouCooP Conference** in order to assure there is follow - up of the recommendations of the young people and the actions agreed at the Rhodes Conference (on national and international level) and establish future cooperation amongst them. An online platform can facilitate the work in progress throughout each year.

3 To prevent radicalisation, governments should **empower young people** through the:

- a. Development of specialised national youth empowerment institutions;
- b. Promotion of critical thinking, civic education, and media literacy via formal and non-formal learning processes;
- c. Elimination of social and economic inequalities like unemployment and poverty;
- d. Restoration of the relation between the citizens and the state.



CONCLUSION

The Conference: "Youth Cooperation for Peace: Building bridges to counter radicalization and extremism" was successfully completed since it had brought

together - for the first time - young people from European and Arabic countries, to discuss and come up with innovative ideas and solutions to tackle one of the most important issues of our time. The #YouCooP Conference aspires to bridge the gap between young people and policymakers in an attempt to achieve a positive change in the whole

region. The adoption of the above mentioned suggestions by the Republic of Cyprus and their promotion to the rest of the governments participating at the Rhodes Conference by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, will enable young people to become actors of positive change and to participate actively in the shaping of world wide peace.







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