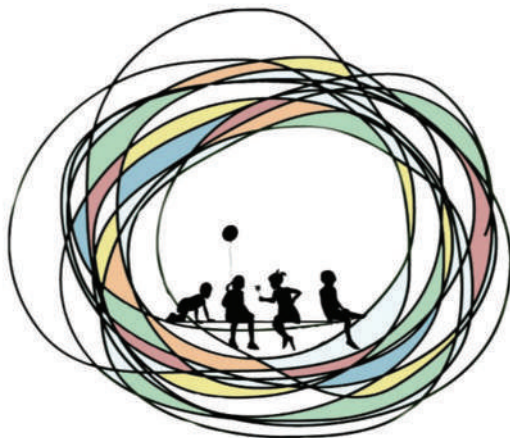




International Youth Exchange 2016



LET'S BUILD A N.E.S.T



NETWORK to ENHANCE
SOLIDARITY and TOLERANCE



Funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Project Summary:

The project “Let’s Build a N.E.S.T. (Network to Enhance Solidarity and Tolerance), addressed the issue of the Refugee Crisis. The refugee crisis is one of the top issues concerning Europe and the world right now. The ongoing discussion on the Refugee Crisis by the mass media, social media, stakeholders and the society in general, creates the need to set this issue as a priority of discussion among young people. This project was based on common concerns of the participating organizations on the Refugee Crisis, set in the framework of a common action plan between the organizations in order to enhance solidarity towards the refugees, as well as to promote tolerance in our societies. The main activity of this project was a Youth Exchange which took place in Larnaka, Cyprus. The exchange was implemented in the context of a 5 month project, which included procedures of preparation, implementation of the activity and dissemination of results.

The participating organizations were from Cyprus, Lebanon, Palestine, Russia, Belgium and Finland, with 50 young people as participants in total. The participating organizations focused on how to build a network to enhance solidarity and tolerance, addressing and raising awareness on the issue of the Refugee Crisis, first beginning from the cooperation between them and forwarding the knowledge gained in their own context, using their own network of national and international contacts.

The young people that have participated in this project have gained knowledge and in a way they have received training through several educational and interactive activities. These activities were based on non-formal education methods, such as, workshops and creative activities, presentations using audio-visual material and discussions, interactive and educational games, simulation activities and role play, cultural activities, experiential learning etc. The activities were inspired by existing educational tools, as well as good practices of the participating organizations and previous exchanges.

Furthermore, this project has provided our organizations the basis for future similar activities. We consider that the learning outcomes and competences gained from this exchange had a great impact on the young participants.

Specifically, the participants have learned to work as active members of their local and global society; that solidarity is a value that holds the people of this world together and creates strong bonds between youth and youth organizations in and outside Europe, by developing mutual support and understating; that tolerance is developed when leaving with young people from other countries even for a few days, as well as by learning the real situation of the people in other countries; that the potentials and knowledge offered by non-formal learning methods can begin from a small island and spread to the rest of the world, by each and every individual; that young people have the power to implement initiatives on social matters; that people can achieve more when working as groups and not only as individuals.

Objectives:

The objectives of the project were:

1. To promote cooperation between the participating youth organizations.
2. To raise awareness, among the participants, on the important aspects of the refugee crisis, in order to enhance international solidarity and tolerance.
3. To give space to refugees, residing in Cyprus, to share their experiences and real situation, as opposed to hearing it by the media.
4. To promote a more welcoming attitude towards refugees.
5. To exchange good practices and experiences between the organizations in order to improve their capacity and to create a Network to Enhance Solidarity and Tolerance on the issue of the Refugee Crisis.
6. To give space to young people to develop competences, express their opinion, work creatively, actively participate, achieve mutual understanding, and promote solidarity and tolerance in their societies, by accepting difference in culture, religion, language etc.

Activities:

Youthpass Certificate: What is it? How will it be used?

Presentation of the Youthpass certificate through the activity “Body of knowledge”^{*1}. Through this activity the certificate was presented not only as a certificate that was given to all the participants at the end of the project, but as a part of the evaluation process and finally as a tool to validate the competences acquired. Specifically, each team made the outline of the body of one of their members. On that outline they should answer some questions deriving from the Youthpass, such as “What do you already know on the theme of the exchange and the objectives?” etc. The team should reflect daily on the body of knowledge after the programme activities.

^{*1}. Activity inspired by “Compasito”
(<http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito/pdf/Compasito%20EN.pdf>)



Solidarity Banner

The participant worked as a group, discussed and created their own solidarity banner, which they hang at the refugee reception centre.

Workshop: Solidarity expressed!

Creative time for the participants to make handcrafts, write letters, and posters which was offered to refugees residing at the reception centre in Cyprus.



Traditional games.

The participants were divided in multicultural groups and with the guidance of one of the leaders they have discussed and planed traditional games (each team from different country), which they have carried out in team spirit at their visit in the afternoon, for the children-refugees at the reception centre.



Solidarity Festival-visit at the refugee reception centre in Cyprus.

The participants visited the reception centre for refugees in Cyprus.



Listening to their voices!

The participants had the role of journalist. In groups the participants have interviewed refugees at the reception centre, in order to listen and write their experiences. After the interviews the groups presented the interviews outcomes in plenary session.



The participants had the opportunity to see the condition in which the refugees are leaving, as well as express solidarity by offering their creations and involve the children refugees in the activities they had prepared for them.

Presentation by social stake holders in Cyprus

Stake holders in Cyprus were invited to share their experiences relating to the refugees in Cyprus. The participants had the opportunity to listen to the point of view of stake holders who are involved in the reception centre in Cyprus and understand the challenges that the refugees are facing in the reception counties, such as bureaucratic procedures, discriminations etc. Questions and discussion followed by the participants, on how to promote a more welcoming attitude towards refugees in their own countries, on how to enhance tolerance in our society.

Presentation by the Asylum Service in Cyprus.

Presentation by the Peace Council of Cyprus and their interactive event against war. The Cyprus Peace Council after explaining the reasons for making such events, has actively involved participants in this cause by asking them to prepare red paper boats, which were placed in the sea during the event, as a symbolism for the tragic situation of the refugees.





Get away!

The participants were divided in groups and they had to get pass several stages related to the reasons that people decide to leave their country and the process they go through after deciding to do so. (For this activity educational material from the UNHCR was used)



Workshop: a taste of culture!

This workshop is a good practice from a previous exchange, and it was a great success. That is why we wanted to repeat it once again. Specifically, all the participants were divided into multicultural groups and with the guidance of the leaders from each country they had to prepare a simple traditional food of each country.



Being a refugee!

The participants had to get through all the stages that a refugee faces, when forced to leave his/her country to the point of reaching the reception countries. Inspired by the game "Passages" of UNHCR *2.

*2.<http://www.unhcr.org/publications/books/473dc1772/passages.html>



Conclusion:

Through this project we have achieved the active participation of all the organizations and all the young participants in order to meet our original objectives. All of the organizations contributed in order to implement a successful project on a subject of interest to all of them. Consequently, through common international activities such as this, the cooperation between the participating youth organizations is promoted.

Furthermore the participants and the participating organizations have gain enough competences to channel all the knowledge and experience gathered to their own local communities, and even at national and international level, using their own network of national and international contacts.

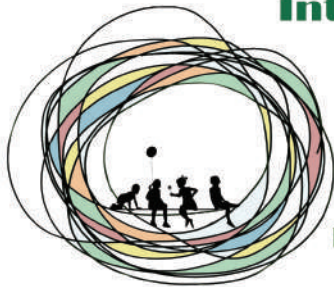
Additionally, the presentations by stakeholders in Cyprus, involved in the refugee issue, the use of existing learning tools and materials on the subject, listening the stories of refugees by giving space to refugees residing in Cyprus, to share their experiences and real situation and sharing with all the participants the way that the refugee crisis has affected their countries and societies.

All of these have given the opportunity to all the participants to get familiar and raise their awareness on the important aspects of the refugee crisis, in order to enhance international solidarity and tolerance, as well as to promote a more welcoming attitude towards refugees.

This project has also given space to young people to develop competences, express their opinion, work creatively and in team spirit, actively participate, achieve mutual understanding, and promote solidarity and tolerance in their societies, by accepting difference in culture, religion, language etc.



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