

CONFERENCE NEWSPAPERS

UNITED Conference The Power to Change Action and Awareness-raising Against racism and Discrimination in Europe June 8-12, 2001 in Göteborg (S)

During this conference daily newspapers were published, that reflect the discussions going on during the conference. These newspapers are not official statements or reports, but only meant to give an idea of the discussions.

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THE POWER TO CHANGE - DAILY NEWSPAPER NUMBER 1 - 9 JUNE 2001

Education against prejudice

Skinheads and neo-fascism are appealing to youths in Central Europe. In general people (immigrants included) do not know their rights and if they do they cannot be bothered to stand up for them. History is misrepresented to European students. Tolerance education is lacking almost everywhere.

Not a very happy picture, is it?

Fighting discrimination against minorities

'Minority' means different things in different countries. How can you call almost 50% of the people in Latvia, who are Russians, a minority? In some countries there is a strict difference between ethnic and national minorities, in Yugoslavia for example. Not everyone in a 'minority' feels part of such a group, but they are forced in a group by the other people. The working group did a roleplaying game to explore everyone's own prejudices. Participants hoped to be able to learn more tomorrow!

Asylum and migration policies

Every participant has presented his-her organisation and given some information about the refugee and immigrnt policy in his country. The main points were:

- regularisation of immigrants and 'sans papiers'
- asylum procedures
- integration and issues of work, education, employment
- the right to vote
- the right to free circulation
- family reunification and the family concept in different cultures
- the importance of media in asylum procedures

The expectations of the participants about this conference are: networking, action on a European level, sensibilisation on citizenship matters, definition of 'who is a refugee for the law?', involvement in legislation procedures on a national and European level.

Fighting extreme right ideologies

Right-wing extremism is a phenomenon which is unfortunately widely spread all over Europe It is - one way or the other - a rather painful reality in most countries in and outside of the European Union. In some countries right-wing extremism made its successful come-back only a couple of years ago, in other countries it has never been really absent since the end of world war II.

It is also a reality with many different 'faces' as the far-right label fits the nazi-hooliganesque type of persons as well as the sharply dressed would-be like (high-profile) politicians. Nevertheless the different 'packages', one being more spectacular than the other, have lots of things in common. Similarities are radical nationalism, intolerance, rejecting equality, anti-Semitism and violence towards ethnic minorities, the antifa-antira movement.

Colonialism and slavery: a thing of the past?

Definitions of colonialism: two categories

modern colonialism: involving multi-national corporations creating structural inequality in a country, a peaceful way of exploiting people

old colonialism: colonisation of a country by force, violence used to gain control.

For example Russia, involved in both types of colonisation. Exploited by multinational corporations, involved in colonial style war in Chechnya.

-> There is a need to coordinate action between countries to encourage constitutional reform

-> There are no boundaries in true globalisation

-> The world's media have enormous power

-> We need proposals and strategies to give economic power to ordinary people

THE POWER TO CHANGE - DAILY NEWSPAPER NUMBER 2 - 10 JUNE 2001

Did anyone ever ask you 'when did you feel for the first time that you were a heterosexual?' Why not?

Colonialism and slavery: a thing of the past?

In these sessions we set out to discuss strategies to combat colonialism in both its forms (modern colonialism and violent old-style colonialism) we decided that to challenge colonial powers we would need to:

- collect and promote information about activities of multi-national companies who control economies to raise awareness of the public
- take and encourage direct action against these companies

Both of these points are dependent on each other. Networking with groups throughout Europe is very important for this.

It was also suggested that at future UNITED conferences the products used for the coffee breaks should come from the 'fair trade' organisation.

Fighting discrimination against minorities

4 different levels of positive practice against discrimination against minorities:

1. investigation and monitoring the problem, especially after war times
2. education of people on grassroots level to challenge people about their prejudices (for example the 'brown eyes - blue eyes' training in the video shown during the working group)
3. campaigns directed towards government to call for responsibilities
4. 'adjusting' legislation on discrimination: in Western countries, there is a progress. Especially on a regional level (EU directive on basis of new Article 13). But for Eastern European countries, nothing is really implemented to fight discrimination (i.e. there are laws but not put in practice). The idea is: first resolve economic instability then go a step further towards combating discrimination.

Fighting extreme right ideologies

1. Acting against far-right groups and opinions should not limit itself to focusing on (relatively small) neo-nazi groups only. At least a part of your actions have to be developed in such a way that they affect mainstream political opinion as well.
2. The 'anti-attitude' towards the far-right is essential but not enough in itself. There should be added value, it must be clear what your programme and (positive) alternatives are made known to the public.
3. Good practices have the following elements in common:
 - a good media strategy building a network, providing accurate and detailed information (become a point of reference)
 - the use of positive messages, using methods that keep people away from clichés, prejudices, too easy black and white thinking
 - a belief in your own programme, objectives and pro-active practices (i.e. not establishing a 100% reactive attitude)

Asylum and migration policies

The main points of the discussion based on the issues of asylum and migration policies are the following:

- An ordinary procedure for regularisation should be established on a European level. A procedure that would take place not only in emergency regularisation.

- The process of regularisation on immigration law should not include criminalisation of any of the parties involved
- The period of process should be linked to the date of registration
- Free circulation should be linked to the understanding of the need of immigration.
- It is essential to change the criteria according to which somebody is called a refugee or not.

Education against prejudice

In educating the masses against prejudice and racism, the two principal instruments to work with must be multiculturalism and the media.. What can we do? Working in schools (formal and informal education systems), working with adults (professionals, parents, trade unions, teachers, etc.), acting/showing our activism in everyday situations.

Media

Issues discussed included:

- Using the media to inform the people (citizens, refugees, migrant workers, etc.) the governments and other NGOs about our work on racism and xenophobia.
- Problems encountered by NGOs and individuals working with NGOs publishing newsletters and newspapers on issues affecting immigrants.
- The internet as a means of getting the message out.
- Building free websites for NGOs.
- Participants laid emphasis on paper publications and one-on-one contact with victims of racial discrimination

Networking

After presenting the networks in which their organisations are members, all the participants recognized the importance of being part of different European networks. But also admitted that most of their contacts are with the 'central' organisation and less with other members of the network. The fundamental idea of the networks is cooperation, the networks must be open to all that want to be part in them. The main objectives: to find new ideas and ways to contribute to the well-functioning of the network.

- every member must understand the mission and the objective of the network and must subscribe to the rules of the network
- all the members must have exact information about the network activities
- members must share common values with other members of the network
- the objective of the network must be redefined periodically and democratically by the members
- it was suggested that each network member organisation has a 'networker', a person who administrated the whole network. Like a fundraiser, a project manager...

The benefits of being in a network is that it gives more visibility to the organisations.

Fundraising

All members of the group were looking for sources of funds, successful methods of approach to funders, forms of funding organisations or projects both short and

long term, without compromising autonomy or ethical considerations. The UNITED info leaflet no 11 'Shake your moneymaker' was seen as an essential guide for fundraising. Additionally:

1. Usual sources of funds were examined . The form of organisations is important.

- the EU requires cross-border partnerships, 50% or more co-financing with funds shared between partners
- national regional or local government can allocate higher funding although their criteria are sometimes changeable
- industries, public enterprises, trade unions, religious institutions and private individuals can contribute in different ways, i.e. rather than direct contributions in cash, they could make donations of required equipment or consumables, donate high value objects that could be auctioned, employ project workers or take over phone charges or rent office space
- membership subscriptions, monthly donations both from members and sympathisers as well as private enterprises could be sought.
- sale of products and services, e.g. t-shirts, CDs, books) could raise funds where legally possible.

2. The presentation would be effective where

- keywords in fashion or easily acceptable are used ('youth', 'citizenship')
- location and partnership are in priority or favoured areas
- benefit to the funder is clearly seen, while objectionable or controversial activities are not highlighted
- a fundraising committee defines a strategy to raise money or cost covering equivalents is consistently pursued.
- an outside professional firm is used to draw up application
- the form of the organisation (i.e. a group, an NGO) had to be selected for best effect with a tax-deductible status

The group would like a network of organisations to be formed that would exchange information and experience on fundraising, identifying new sources or giving useful tips, kitchen recipes on good combinations to use. A proposal is to examine the establishing of a solidarity fund.

THE POWER TO CHANGE - DAILY NEWSPAPER NUMBER 3 - 11 JUNE 2001

Colonialism and slavery: a thing of the past?

We agreed that slavery , colonialism, imperialist globalisation, neo-liberalism are sources of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and other Human Rights violations. It is necessary that UNITED take on imperialist globalisation in our own backyard.

1. *Proposal for Action: Awareness raising*

- that the secretariat of UNITED organises a special conference on colonialism and imperialist globalisation as sources of racism, xenophobia etc. and facilitate a study group on debt cancellation
- that UNITED take a position on the issue of imperialist globalisation
- to prepare an education pack on multi-nationals like Mc Donalds or Nikeäs to inform consumers on the background of these multinationals and help them in making their choices.
- to make use of existing materials like those on debt cancellation of Jubilee 2000

2. *Networking*

- for UNITED as an anti-racist network to link up with organisations from the Third World and other countries
- doing work on anti-imperialist globalisation, gather information on their activities against globalisation and the operations of multinationals in their countries and distribute them through UNITED or bilaterally

3. *Campaigns*

- Support the campaign for equal rights of citizens within the European Union including equal political, civil, social, economic and cultural rights initiated by Asyl in Not in Vienna.
 - Support the campaign to support victims of the war in Chechnya
 - Support the campaign for regularisation of undocumented workers and repeal of national laws which are anti-migrant and anti-people
 - Support the campaign against the Fortress Europe and for Open Borders
- Concrete idea that came up during the discussion in plenary:*
- information leaflet on globalisation and its link with racism: to be written by one of the working group participants, including links or resource list linking with initiatives such as Jubilee 2000s education pack
 - that the issue will be put on the agenda in future meetings or conferences to be worked out

Fighting discrimination against minorities

The group discussed some possible solutions/actions on 2 subjects, mainly:

1. *discrimination in education*

- training to teachers on tolerance
- lobby a law against discrimination in schools
- NGO intervention: writing a report together with different NGOs, getting it published in the media
- organise a meeting with the pupils, parents to set up a hotline or an office against discrimination
- request a quota of minority teachers and assistants in schools

2. *Racist speech in the streets*

- a communication campaign against everyday racism

On the level of NGOs

- training also to elderly people (who sometimes are intolerant)
- laws against hate speech
- a hotline to complain about discrimination
- campaign to make political parties sign a charter not to use racist speech
- use the media and make posters to put in bus stops and other public places to stop discriminations, e.g. remind them of the article of law that forbids discrimination.

An information network on fighting discrimination against minorities, this means exchange with whoever organisation wants to work on positive experiences, to support each others petitions, exchange info on legislative developments both bad and good

One person or organisation will coordinate to collect all the info that will be sent every month in a newsletter.

In a second stage to organise a conference on youth or women within ethnic minorities. Help could be possible through the website of the Danish organisation www.ms.dk.

Fighting extreme right ideologies

Subject: antifascist work, presence of rightwing extremism in the countryside, Roma issue (forgotten minority), institutionalised racism, influence of mainstream politics on right-wing extremist argumentation and vice versa

Tools: mainly communication, campaign with celebrities in sports field, using internet, magazine/books, infopacks, multicultural events and festivals, educational packs and training modules, promoting traveling and exchanges to experience other cultures

Target groups: press, mainstream politics, victims or potential victims, grassroots groups and local groups, rural areas and 'monoethnic' groups, religious institutions and people, focus on youngsters and kids, official institutions

Asylum and migration policies

The group on asylum and migration prepared a full and complete text to be discussed. In this newspaper we only print that a need was felt to coordinate more the discussion on migration and asylum issues in Europe. One way would be to put forward such a discussion paper as was prepared during the workshops. A concrete idea was to focus the European-wide Action Week Against Racism in 2002 on migration and asylum developments. 2002 will be an important year for these issues.

The two most important issues from the paper: regularisation and enforcing of the definition of refugee in the Geneva Convention.

Education against prejudice

Concrete projects that could be developed were discussed. The group has come up with two project-proposals. The first is to organise a Summer Camp in 2002 for youth 'Good Will Summer' on the issue of history for students (16-19) as target group. The plan is to propose the project to funders such as the Council of Europe and the Soros Foundation for possible funding. It was agreed that a sort of organising board would be used for preparations in the respective countries and for advice and other resources. The idea is to promote anti-discriminatory views in education, with particular attention to history and its hugely different interpretations.

The second project would be 'anti-discrimination educational day' within the European-wide Action Week against Racism 2002. The organisations would locally prepare street actions, visits to school authorities, school classes, tribunals and debates for professionals from different spheres, press releases, TV and radio appearances and statements on the topic.

Lobbying

Lobbying and its limitations were defined. Necessary preparatory steps were discussed and listed, including the importance of a strong position paper and recommendations, solid statistical and other support, the need for expert assistance wherever necessary, the establishment of partnerships and targeting

the lobbying activity. The stages of lobbying activity were also discussed and defined, including dividing up tasks between members of the lobbying group, creating strategies and tactics for each task, making approaches, establishing commitments, keeping track of activity, maintaining communication, splitting issues to diversify approaches, creating positive 'domino effects', and using 'soft manipulation'. Issues of media and public mobilisation were also explored. The importance of follow-up was stressed, including obtaining feedback, ensuring that commitments are implemented, the need for courage and perseverance, and mid- to long-term follow-up issues. Evaluation and documentation at all stages of the lobbying process was also highlighted. Conclusion: You have the power to change!

Law resource

At the UNITED conference 'The power to change' a start was made to form a network to pool information, documentation and case studies relating to law and its application with special reference to minorities and foreigners. The themes of interest are: treatment of entrants, marriage, family reunification. To get connected, contact: Mariana Stoyanova tosch-mariana@yahoo.com, Astrid Willer office@frsh.de, Alexandra Reith ibisev.ol@t-online.de or Juno Varkki junov@firemail.de.

UNITED for Intercultural Action European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees

Postbus 413, NL-1000 AK Amsterdam, Netherlands
phone +31-20-6834778, fax +31-20-6834582
info@unitedagainstracism.org, www.unitedagainstracism.org