

## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

### **UNITED Conference**

### **The Power to Change**

### **Action and awareness-raising against racism and discrimination in Europe**

**8-12 June 2001 Göteborg (Sweden)**

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#### 1 INTRODUCTION: CAMPAIGNING AND AWARENESS-RAISING

During the first evening it became clear that this was a conference at which the majority was in the minority. More than three quarters of the participants felt that they were part of a minority. A majority of the participants was female. The aim of the conference was to bring together activists from different countries and different working fields to speak about the possibilities of changing our world. The conference serves as a basis of the future campaigns of the UNITED network. Participants discussed about the themes and methods of such campaigns against discrimination.

UNITED for Intercultural Action brought together 65 participants representing 73 organisations from 30 countries in Göteborg to speak about ways to resist violence against minorities.

During 5 days participants at the conference exchanged experience and knowledge on methods to resist discrimination and intolerance, including education, campaigning and awareness-raising. They worked out ideas in the fields of working against discrimination of minorities, education against prejudice, combating extreme-right ideologies, asylum and migration policies in Europe and exchanged views on 'colonialism and slavery: a thing of the past'. The conference also included five workshops on methods: lobbying, fundraising, Internet, networking and media.

At the end of our five-day event we have been able to set up lasting links between organisations and individuals that will result in concrete co-operation in the future. Not in the least within the UNITED network, for example exchanging information on the links between neo-colonialism and racism, working on a discussion paper on migration and asylum policies or developing ideas for a summer camp on history and intolerance.

The main results of the conference include the following conclusions:

As **colonialism and slavery are at the heart and roots of racism**, they should be discussed within the UNITED network. New forms of colonialism are different from these old evils, but the inequality that **neo-colonialism** promotes is just as serious. More discussion needs to take place about this. There were several ideas to promote such discussion, including the publication of an info leaflet on the subject. A special place at one of the future conferences was also suggested. As several international networks already work on related issues, it was felt to be important to set up working relationships with those, for example with the campaign to eradicate Third World Debts.

The year 2002 will be very important for asylum and migration issues. The attitude towards these issues and the occurrence of racism have often been closely linked. Now after years of struggle there finally seems to be a shift in attitudes towards migration: it is now more and more recognised that Europe needs migration. However, it will be important that NGOs follow such new developments and influence them so that people will never again be viewed only as economical commodities. The working group prepared a discussion paper that should be published and further debated in the network and with policy-makers all over Europe. It includes the basic requirement that **European migration policy should include the possibility for continuous 'regularisation'** of so-called 'illegals'. If at all possible UNITED should seek to connect to initiatives that work on a different interpretation of the idea of citizenship and non-citizenship. Concretely the working group has suggested putting extra emphasis on asylum and migration during the upcoming Action Week Against Racism in 2002.

The working group on education has developed into a loose grouping of organisations that want to continue working together. One of the ideas was extremely concrete: the group wants to organise a summer camp for young people about **'history' and the way this relates to prejudice, racism and discrimination**. This working group also suggests designating one day in the Action Week Against Racism as 'education day' with activities in schools.

## **2 FIVE MAIN WORKING GROUPS**

UNITED for Intercultural Action is a network of over 500 organisations. These organisations co-operate each year, a.o. in common campaigns. The campaigns are prepared during the conferences that are organised several times each year. The International Preparatory Group had decided to create a program centring around five main working groups. The participants would stay in these groups for a large part of the conference. The five thematical working groups went through different phases. Participants went in three days from information exchange to concrete ideas for action. The topics were: 'Discrimination of minorities', 'Asylum and migration policies', 'Colonialism and slavery: a thing of the past?', 'Fighting extreme-right ideologies', and 'Education against prejudice'.

### **Part 1: the experience of participants in their respective countries**

In this phase participants were asked to give an idea to the others of the main problems in their country and their experience of discrimination. They were asked to tell something about other discriminated groups, and about what they know of multiple discrimination in their countries.

### **Part 2: ways of taking action against racism**

In part 2 the different ways of campaigning and awareness-raising were discussed. Participants explained what action their organisation is taking against racism and intolerance. They discussed what is common in these actions in the

different countries and what is different. The participants gave examples of very good actions and disastrous ones and spoke about why these actions either failed or succeeded.

### **Part 3: actual political developments**

In each of the thematical fields that were discussed in the working groups, there have been interesting political developments over the last years.

A) <b>discrimination:</b> anti-discrimination directives of the European Union, experience of positive action in the different countries
B) <b>migration/asylum:</b> the proposals for a common migration policy of the EU, the pressure from the EU on non-EU countries to work on these issues
C) <b>colonialism/slavery:</b> the discussion that is going on about the UN World Conference Against Racism, the action that is going on against the purely market-oriented form of globalisation
D) <b>extreme-right:</b> prohibition of parties in Germany, proposals of new legislation on internet, election victories of extreme-right in several European countries
E) <b>education:</b> national curricula, measures against racism in schools, codes of good practice / against harassment in schools

### **Part 4: practical planning of follow-up action**

All working groups were asked to come up with several proposals for action, in the form of for example campaigns, media action, lobbying, etc. These proposals were discussed in the last plenary of the conference.

## **2.A DISCRIMINATION OF MINORITIES**

Participants at this working group all had their own ideas as to what constitutes a minority. The word has a lot of different meanings and even more connotations in the different countries. Where the Roma have struggled to be recognised as a minority, many black and ethnic minority groups have tried to shed the stigma of being a 'minority'. The Sami in Sweden have gained strength by identifying themselves with indigenous people and national minorities. Participants of the working group discussed their own experiences of discrimination. According to some of the participants 'minorities' were 'minoritised' and should not see themselves as 'minority'. The group explored their own prejudice through role-play.

The group discussed their experience of action against discrimination on two levels. Firstly they discussed on discrimination in education. Some of the activities that had been used against this kind of discrimination included: training for teachers, lobbying for a law against discrimination in schools, NGO intervention (writing a report together with different NGOs, and getting it published in the media), organising a meeting with parents and teachers to organise a complaints body against discrimination, working towards a quota system for minority teachers and teacher's assistants in schools.

The second level of action would be against racism in the streets. Measures that were discussed included the possibility of developing laws against hate speech, which already exist in some countries and are unthinkable in others. NGOs should work on setting up a complaints body, a phone line or 'hotline'. Some NGOs have worked with political parties to make all of them sign a charter condemning the use of 'race' as a way to win votes. Media campaigns and publicity campaigns aimed at the general public were discussed as an option as well. In general participants would like to exchange these experiences on a more regular basis.

The group summarised their experience of combating racism in four points:

<p><b>Investigation and monitoring of the problem:</b> This was felt to be especially important in the case of countries or areas where there has been a war.</p>
<p><b>Education of people on grass roots level to challenge existing prejudice:</b> One example of this type of action was presented in a video-film. The video showed how a teacher, by splitting a group of adults in 'brown-eyed' smart people and a 'blue-eyed' minority, explained the ways that discrimination can work in our society. The film showed for example how negative behaviour towards someone has a tendency of getting reinforced by that person's response and then in turn reinforces the prejudiced behavior.</p>
<p><b>Campaigns directed towards the government to take their responsibility in protecting citizens and non-citizens</b></p>
<p><b>Adjusting legislation on discrimination:</b> The group discussed the recent political development on the issue of anti-discrimination legislation. Particularly the anti-discrimination directives issued by the European Union were found to be encouraging.</p>

## 2.B ASYLUM AND MIGRATION POLICIES

Asylum and migration policies in Europe have a great influence on the way black and ethnic minorities are viewed in society. It is therefore indispensable to address these issues during anti-discrimination campaigns. The working group on asylum and migration came up with a discussion text, which is printed underneath. It summarises the discussion as it took place at the conference.

**Regularisation:** Several million people in Europe have an irregular residency status in the country where they live. This reality has developed as a result of restrictive and repressive immigration and asylum policies. EU Member States have closed legal channels for immigration and have made their policies restrictive for asylum seekers. The European governments should recognise their responsibility for this situation and have to adopt immediately measures for the regularisation of the status of all those people.

In addition to such measures for the regularisation of those who now are in irregular situation, other mechanisms should be used to avoid similar situations in the future. Immigration laws should always include a possibility of resolving the irregular situation of any person.

This means there should be ordinary procedures in the law that allow applying for legal permission for any person in an irregular situation. As an example we could look at the law that was in force in Spain during the year 2000, that allowed applying for a residence permit to all people who could demonstrate having been in the country for two years.

An ordinary procedure for regularisation of residence and work status for all migrants living in Europe should be established on a European level. The process of regularisation should be part of immigration law and should exclude criminalisation of any of the parties involved. The period of the process should be linked to the date of entry to the country.

**Right of asylum:** The right of asylum has become more and more restrictive in Europe. It is necessary to change this tendency and rebuild a good asylum policy. The Geneva Convention must be applied without the restrictions that have been introduced over the last years. In addition, the right of asylum has to include those situations that are not explicit in the Geneva Convention, such as the persecution by non-state agents; the persecution because of gender; sexual orientation; natural disasters, etc.

The concepts of "safe country of origin" and "third safe country" should be removed from asylum policies and practices. All applications for asylum should be examined by the country where the application is presented.

We reject the accelerated procedures for asylum applications. The asylum procedures should be fast, but they have to have all the necessary guarantees for access to legal aid and the right to appeal.

The deportation of the applicant whose asylum application has been refused should be put on hold until all the appeal rights are exhausted.

In all processes relating to immigration and asylum, free legal advice and the assistance of qualified interpreters should be obligatory.

Only authorities specialised and qualified in the issues related to immigration and asylum should carry out all official procedures.

Carrier liability for the transport of persons without adequate documentation or papers should be removed as this allows the carriers (airline, rail or ships) to indirectly determine immigration policy.

The Geneva Convention, the UN Charter for Refugees and the UN Declaration of Human Rights should be observed alongside and with immigration law in consideration of applications for regularisation.

**Immigration:** The European States and the European institutions should make a clear recognition that the flow of migration to Europe of the last decades has been positive for economic and social developments. This recognition implies a global change in immigration policies, which should be open to immigration and respectful to the rights of the immigrants.

The immigration laws should be changed in such a way that they introduce legal channels through which labour migrants can enter Europe.

The social and civil rights of the immigrants and refugees should be the same, from the date of registration, as those of the nationals of the country in which they reside. This general criterion should be particularly applied in aspects like: right to work and total application of the principle of equal opportunities; full access to education and professional training; right to the social security and

health care; access to public services or services opened to the public without any kind of discrimination, etc.

The right to work should be granted from the date of registration, for all categories of applicants.

The right of family reunion should become effective and restrictions present in many European States should be ended immediately. The concept of family should take into account the different cultural traditions with regards to family life. The visa restrictions should be removed in order to allow the circulation of relatives.

The approval of the EU Directive on family reunion should not be delayed.

The right to permanent residency should be given to all immigrants, refugees, and their families within a maximum 5 years of residency in all European States. The freedom of circulation and the right to reside and work in another European country must be guaranteed to every person with permanent residence.

The freedom of circulation should not deprive a person of any rights and benefits due for the period of residence.

Inside the country there should not be any restriction for the free circulation of a person regardless of his/her immigration status.

**The Right to Vote:** The right to vote in local, national and European level elections should be given to any person with permanent residence and to those with refugee status.

## 2.C COLONIALISM AND SLAVERY: A THING OF THE PAST?

As all working groups, this group started out by trying to agree on the use of some key terms. Colonialism, slavery, neo-colonialism, and globalisation: all these terms were used by the participants, but not always in the same sense. The group refined the term colonialism into 'modern colonialism' and 'old colonialism'.

<p><b>Modern colonialism</b> involves multi-national corporations that create structural inequalities in a country and in the world, it is a mostly peaceful and non-violent way to exploit people.</p>
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<p><b>Old colonialism</b> is the practice of colonising a country by force; it uses violence to gain control.</p>
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As an example, Russia is involved in both types of colonisation. It is exploited by multinational corporations, but is involved in a colonial-style war in Chechnya at the same time.

Colonialism and slavery are at the root of racism and cannot be relayed to history, as long as racism exists. There are already many initiatives on issues such as the power of multi-nationals to determine how people in the so-called Third World countries live or on the need for debt cancellation. Organisations who struggle against racism and intolerance should consider whether it would



be beneficial to link up with such potential allies. We should not shy away from a discussion on the fundamentals of our society: how is our economic system connected with the discrimination of migrants in our societies and in the world, for example. The group was especially interested in the role of companies such as McDonalds. There are no boundaries in true globalisation, but there are many in the globalisation propagated at this moment by the big political and economical players in our world.

Several campaigns were highlighted, such as the UNITED campaigns that have been co-ordinated over the last years. Participants were invited to actively support the campaign for regularisation, and to work with the campaign for equal rights of all citizens of Europe that is being led by Asyl in Not in Vienna, and to support the campaign for the victims of the war in Chechnya. There is a need to co-ordinate action between countries to encourage constitutional reforms. We need to think about ways to give (economical) power to ordinary people.

Concretely it would be welcomed if one of the organisations in the working group would work out a text on the connection between globalisation and racism, which then could be made into an information leaflet for the rest of the network.

## **2.D FIGHTING EXTREME-RIGHT IDEOLOGIES**

What can we do to fight against extreme-right ideologies? Participants presented their anti-fascist work and the situation in their countries. Right-wing extremism is a phenomenon, which is unfortunately widespread in Europe. In some countries right-wing extremism made its successful comeback only a couple of years ago, in other countries it has never been really absent from the time before World War II. It is a reality with different faces, as the far-right label fits the neo-nazi hooligan-like person as well as the sharply dressed extreme-right party politician. Underneath the packaging, the ideologies have a lot in common. Similarities are radical nationalism, intolerance, rejecting equality, anti-Semitism and violence towards ethnic minorities, as well as towards the anti-racism/anti-fascism movement.

The participants spoke about the influence of mainstream politics on right-wing extremist arguments and vice versa. Mainstream politicians have to be extremely careful not to encourage the extreme-right by making xenophobia 'normal'. They should take care not to be influenced by the propaganda of the extreme-right as well. The will to collect as many votes as possible often pushes them to use inflammatory and discriminatory language. Acting against far-right groups and opinions should not limit itself by focusing on (relatively small) neo-nazi groups only. At least a part of our actions has to be developed in such a way that we affect mainstream political opinion as well.

It is not enough to fight the far right. There should be an added value in our struggle. We need to make clear to the public what our own ideas are and what alternatives we can offer.



When we speak about the occurrence of the extreme-right in EU candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe, we should take into account the special position of the Roma. They are attacked by self-proclaimed neo-nazi skinheads in many countries.

Good practices in fighting the extreme-right have several things in common. The most important points that were discussed were:

The need to build a good media strategy
The need to build up a network of correspondents that can provide accurate and detailed information
The use of positive messages as well as negative
A belief in our own programme allows us to establish an attitude that is not just reactive

Although anti-fascist and anti-racist activities often concentrate on the big cities, it should be noted that there is a lot of intolerance in the countryside that needs to be combated too.

Extreme-right ideologies can be found in our political and social institutions, where it is embedded in an 'institutionalised racism'. It should be combated on all levels.

The UNITED campaign on 9 November, the International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism has often focused on the dangers of the far right. The discussion that took place within this working group has contributed to the preparations of the campaign. More information can be found on the UNITED website [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org).

## **2.E. EDUCATION AGAINST PREJUDICE**

Skinheads and neo-fascism are appealing to youth in Central Europe, maybe even more than in Western Europe. This is dangerous for all parts of Europe, as the enlargement of the EU and other processes make the spreading of these tendencies possible. Participants in the working group wanted to share and explore ideas to counter this trend. In general people, including migrants and ethnic minorities, do not know their rights and if they do they often do not know how to stand up for them. Education in Human Rights is therefore an important part of any education against prejudice. History is misrepresented to European students, which conducts them to hold on to old stereotypes. Tolerance education is lacking almost everywhere.

In educating the masses against prejudice and discrimination, the two principal instruments to work with must be multiculturalism (or interculturalism?) and the media. What can be done?

Working in schools (both in formal and informal education systems)
Working with adults (professionals, parents, trade unions, teachers, etc.)
Showing our activism in everyday situations

The participants in the group decided to work on two very concrete proposals, for which they want to take responsibility themselves. The first proposal is to organise a Summer Camp for youth. It could be called 'Good Will Summer' and should be on the issue of history. The Camp would aim to include especially students of 16 to 19 years old as a target group. The plan would be to propose the project to funders such as the Council of Europe and the Soros Foundation for possible financial support. 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 of the camp would be to promote anti-discriminatory views in education, with particular attention to history and its hugely different interpretations.

The second project would be 'anti-discrimination education day' within the European-wide Action Week against Racism 2002. The organisations that would commit to organise activities 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.

### **3 "THIS IS HOW WE DO IT": WORKING GROUPS ON METHODS**

For several days the participants worked in thematical working groups. The working groups on methods were meant to bring together different groupings of participants. The participants split up to gather information on working methods, and would come back to their old to implement the knowledge that they had acquired in concrete plans for action in the field of the thematical working groups.

#### **3.A WORKING GROUP ON LOBBYING**

The working group started by defining lobbying and discussed the limitations of lobbying as a working method.

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 where necessary
The establishment of partnerships
Careful targeting of the lobbying activity

Lobbying action goes through several stages. The members of any lobbying group need to set out clearly what these stages are and then decide on a division of tasks. They will need to create strategies and tactics for each task. Then they should move towards making contact and approaching the target of the lobbying action, for example a politician or civil servant. After a first contact, a

commitment should be established. It is important that the lobbying group keeps track of the activities of its members. It has to maintain communication. If necessary issues should be split to diversify the possible approaches in the hope of creating a 'positive domino effect' and using forms of 'soft manipulation'. Issues of mobilisation of both the public and the media were discussed. Follow-up to these lobbying activities should include obtaining feedback, ensuring that commitments are implemented. There is a need for courage and perseverance, which can be influenced by having a mid-term and long-term follow-up strategy. Evaluation and documentation are important at all stages of the lobbying process, as it may serve to improve the next activity.

When all of this would have been taken into account, participants concluded, this would mean: **"you have the power to change!"**

### **3.B WORKING GROUP ON FUNDRAISING**

All participants in the group were - not surprisingly - looking for sources of funds, successful methods of approaching funders and forms of funding organisation both on a short and long-term basis. A particular concern was the way to acquire funding without compromising autonomy and ethical considerations. The UNITED info leaflet no 11 'Shake your money maker' was seen as a good start for fundraising. The info leaflet is available from the UNITED office, or on the internet site [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org).

Participants discussed their usual sources of funding and discovered that the form of organisation is important for the possibility of successfully acquiring grants. The EU, for example, requires clear cross-border partnerships. Such a partnership implies that funds are shared between the partners, which could be the start of a problem. Also, the EU requires co-financing, which means that up to 50% of the project should be financed by another donor. In fact, national, regional or local government is often able to provide a much higher percentage of funding. Unfortunately their criteria are sometimes changing from year to year, depending on the political parties in charge. 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 or employ project workers that work for the NGO. Often such 'alternative' funders could take over phone charges or office rent. Of course it is also possible to finance activities through membership fees or subscriptions, as well as monthly donations from members and private sympathisers. The public could support the work by buying T-shirts, CDs and books, without committing themselves long-term.

Participants discussed the ingredients of a successful project presentation:

Keywords that are in fashion or easily acceptable, such as 'youth' and 'citizenship'
Location and partnership are in a priority area
The funder's benefit in contributing to the activity is clear, while controversial activities are not highlighted
The project presentation should be prepared by people who define a clear strategy to raise funds and pursue this strategy persistently
An outside firm is used to draw up the application (not everyone agreed on this one)
The form of the organisation is selected for best effect with a tax-deductible status

The working group concluded that it would be good to form a grouping of organisations that can exchange information and experience on fundraising. There was also a proposal to investigate the possibility of establishing a solidarity fund for action against discrimination, where NGOs and private persons contribute without direct influence of the authorities.

### **3.C WORKING GROUP ON MEDIA**

When preparing a campaign, or other awareness-raising activities, it is essential to discuss media strategies. Participation in the working group was quite varied. Some participants were media professionals at the same time as being activists and were experts in this field themselves. But there were also people interested in the possibilities of developing more of a strategy for their own work towards the media. The reason why media are so important is that they are a way to inform people (both the general public and target groups such as refugees and migrants) about our work against racism and xenophobia. The media are sometimes the only way to reach the government. It is also a way to quickly inform as many other NGOs as possible. The mass media are not the only kind of media, and participants discussed the problems they faced in setting up their own media. NGOs often have their own newsletters and newspapers, but they face difficulties in making sure these reach the intended target groups. Although participants put a lot of emphasis on paper publications and one-on-one contact with victims of racial discrimination, they also discussed alternatives, such as the use of the Internet. UNITED has recently published an information leaflet on the topic of working with the media. You can order it from the UNITED office, or download it from the website [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org).

### **3.D WORKING GROUP ON INTERNET**

The workshop on the use of the Internet for anti-racist activists was not a hands-on working group. The participants discussed their strategies, problems and solutions and will hopefully put their ideas in practice on their own computers at home. For non-governmental organisations, who do not always have access to

the mass media, the Internet can provide an alternative method of providing information to a wide public. UNITED uses its websites intensively during the European-wide campaigns, a.o. to publish updated versions of a European-wide list of activities and background information on the campaigns.

The communication strategies are aimed at 4 goals:

Provision of alternative news to activists and the general public
Provision of information and resource material on anti-racism issues
Building an Internet and real-life community
Working against racist websites

The problems with working with the Internet are strongly related to the problems that exist with any media of communication. They include the need for a clear target group, and a need for clear and concise information. It is important to make websites simple, especially when we want to communicate with parts of the world that may not have the speediest Internet connection. Not many people realise that websites that use pictures as a means of navigation will be very difficult to use for people with visual impairments. There are general guidelines to help webmasters build sites that do not cause people with disabilities problems. A website needs to contain updated and relevant information (including a real life address of the organisation) and should have at least an explanation in English, even if the rest of the site is in another language. A general problem that has been compounded by the use of the Internet is 'information overload'. As internet is still relatively new, there seems to be a sort of legal void as to the behaviour of both information providers and information consumers on internet, for example where copyrights are concerned.

Participants summarised the possible solutions to the above problems in sound practical advice:

NGOs should consider linking websites to share the burden of providing interesting and updated information. A good start would be to link to the UNITED site ( <a href="http://www.unitedagainstracism.org">www.unitedagainstracism.org</a> ) and the Internet Centre Anti-Racism Europe (I CARE on <a href="http://www.icare.to">www.icare.to</a> ).
Active news exchange within the network would be helpful for all organisations.
Including a search engine in the design of your website will make looking for info easier (e.g. via <a href="http://www.google.com">www.google.com</a> )
Taking direct, legal or political action against racist websites is not easy, but can be done (check out the Dutch <a href="http://www.meldpunt.nl">www.meldpunt.nl</a> )
Webmasters should check all links to other sites before putting them on the websites (there are software programmes that do this). This will diminish irritation of users.
It is quite easy to monitor who visits your website to determine whether you reach your target group.
Information can never be completely safe and secure, so we can only change our attitude, not reality...
NGOs could start hosting other organisations' websites if those have difficult access to the Internet
Those of us who use the Internet regularly should start educating colleagues, clients, and friends in how to use it.

### 3.E WORKING GROUP ON NETWORKING

At the basis of co-ordinated awareness-raising and campaigning are local, national and European-wide networks. Participants in this working group started with analysing their own position in a variety of networks. All the participants expressed their feeling that it was important to be part of networks, especially on a European level. However, they admitted that most of their contacts were with the 'central point' in the network and less with the other members of the network.

The fundamental idea of a network is co-operation. It is necessary to be open to all that want to become part of it. The main objective of most organisations that join a network is to find new ideas and ways to contribute to the well functioning of the network.

It is important that every member understands the mission and the objective of the network and subscribes to the rules, whether they are formal or informal. All members need exact information about the network's activities. Members must share common values. The members must redefine the objective of the network periodically and democratically. It was suggested that a solution to the problem of communication could be to have a 'networker' within each member organisation. This 'networker' would be a person that helps administrating the network in areas of fund-raising or as project manager. One of the big benefits of belonging to a network is the added visibility of one's own organisation.

## 4 AND...

### 4.A PRESENTATION: SAMI IN SWEDEN

#### ***Lillian Mikaelsson, Sami Foreningen Stockholm***

Lillian Mikaelsson took the floor to speak about the Sami in Sweden. Many only know them by the name 'Lapps'. She told participants about the history of her people. As is the case for many indigenous people, their history and way of life has been denied for a long time. When the Swedish government discovered the vast natural resources that were to be had in the territory of the Sami people they began policies that would keep the Sami people in a very inferior position. They did not have the right to decide about their own lives. The reindeer form an intricate part of their traditional way of life, but the right to keep reindeer was only given to part of the Sami population. It took a long time before Sami were allowed to attend normal schools, vote, etc. A discussion took place about the role of the land for the Sami and how this would relate to migration. If it is wrong to settle on the land where Sami have lived since ages, does that mean that migrants are not welcome there? Does the right to preserve one's culture interfere with the realities and necessities of our multicultural societies?

Comments by Lillian Mikaelsson, on the questions suggested above:



*We want the right to decide in our own affairs, culture, language, land and reindeerherding. Like any free and democratic people... We want the Swedish government to recognize us as a people and the right to our land so that our ancient reindeer herding will not be erased and destroyed for ever. We do not want forestry to take all the grazing land. The whole issue is about the right to maintain our culture where the reindeer is of essential importance since we are dependent upon the reindeer and always have been. And the reindeer is dependent upon having enough land to graze, breed and mate. That animal is the bearer of our culture. So we do not want land just to have borders. We want access to the grazing land for our animals. This is something quite different than just establish a nation. In the context on the website it looks like 'no smoke without fire'. In a way it is like saying that beneath our claim upon the ancestral right to the land is the risk that we, the sami people, will expel all people that don't belong there, like the ethnical Swedes. As if we don't like "foreigners" and "strangers".*

*We do want to be a part of the world and to participate in the developments of the world. This includes accepting the possibilities to meet other cultures and learning from each other and benefiting and liking and enjoying also each other. And disliking in some cases since we are all humans.*

*We have ourselves been exposed to prejudice and racism from the Swedish authorities and in some cases from ethnical Swedish individuals.*

*At the conference in Göteborg, as I understood, many refugees and immigrants participated. And the theme of the conference also included the issue of the right for people to live in any country. I must say that I strongly agree with this claim. You should phrase the questions differently because now it looks like a needed advice to the sami people. One gets the impression that we (sami) do not want any other ethnic groups in our land. This is not so. The best for all people is that nations were to be dissolved and regions should be established instead. Nations and boundaries have only caused war and other bad things. Not that I know that all the sami people think like that. We are no different from other people in a general way. No better and no worse.*

*Anyway what we want is to have the freedom and the right to self-determination. To be freed from the century-long guardianship by the Swedish state! As stated in the UN-conventions.*

#### **4.B WORKSHOP ON HOMOPHOBIA**

*Rune Hauger, Minorities of Europe*

Did anyone ever ask you why you turned heterosexual? And how did your parents react when you told them about your heterosexuality? During the workshop on homophobia participants took part in a role-playing game, that allowed them to ask all questions, even 'stupid' ones. A lively discussion started, which continued outside of the workshop. For most activists it has become clear why the fight for the rights of gays and lesbians should be linked with the struggle against racism and discrimination. UNITED has taken the initiative to set up a partnership project with ILGA (International Gay and Lesbian Association) and Mobility International (working for the rights of disabled people). The results of this project can be found in the final report, which is



available on paper from the UNITED office as well as on the website [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org).

#### **4.C SOCIAL EVENTS / OTHER ACTIVITIES**

Social events at the conference included an info market, intercultural snacks and an intercultural evening with amazing contributions by almost all participants. Particularly noteworthy were a Slovenian human beatbox, a fashion show of traditional African dresses and a song from Germany that made everyone get active and move. The evenings were a time of relaxation, but the participants took this time also to get to know more about each other's organisations and the situation in the different countries. It is often in the evenings that the most intercultural learning takes place.

A special solidarity action was presented in support of Harald Glöde and his fellow prisoners, who have been in jail since December 1999 for alleged terrorist acts. Harald Glöde is an anti-racist activist who has been active within the UNITED network. He has spent a lot of time on the case of taxi drivers who have been given severe sentences for transporting 'illegals' just after they allegedly crossed the border between Germany and Poland into Germany. The trial against Harald Glöde has been criticised by eminent Human Rights lawyers as a 'show trial', as the only evidence is provided by a crown witness, who has gained financially from testifying and whose testimonial is shaky at best. More information can be found on [www.freilassung.de](http://www.freilassung.de).

Every day participants were asked to submit short reports about their working groups on paper. These were collected for the final report, but also for a daily edition of the conference newspaper. Many participants expressed their satisfaction with this effort.

#### **4.D ...AND THANKS TO...**

We owe a lot of thanks to Hasans Vänner and Nätverket mot Rasism who helped organise a.o. the technical facilities of the conference. This conference was prepared by an international preparatory group, that included the above mentioned organisations as well as Martin Luther King Organisation, CITE and Young Women from Minorities. We thank the National Integration Office (Sweden), especially for making the participation of participants from Central and Eastern Europe possible. We could not have enjoyed a better atmosphere than in the Wendelsberg Highschool, so we owe them a big thank you. And of course the conference would not have been possible without the support of the Commission of the European Union, whose financial contribution does not imply that they agree with the contents of the discussions at the conference.

## **5 UNITED for Intercultural Action**

UNITED for Intercultural Action

European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees

Racism, nationalism, fascism, discrimination, asylum policies... all of them have a European dimension even though they often look like pure national issues. Reports from all over Europe demonstrate the increasing dangers facing migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. Often these dangers are increased by undemocratic intergovernmental decisions like the Schengen Treaty. Strangely enough, racist and fascist organisations have strong European links from Portugal to Russia, from Sweden to Italy. Fortress Europe needs to be fought at local, regional and European levels - it cannot be fought on one level alone.

Linked through UNITED, hundreds of organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together on a voluntary basis. They base their cooperation on common actions and shared activities on a mutual respect.

UNITED is and will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe.

Through the UNITED network organisations meet each other, work on common actions and share information. Europe-wide action weeks, campaigns and such are planned and discussed on UNITED conferences. Like-minded organisations find each other on such conferences and work together on specific projects on specific topics. The workers in the secretariat are in constant contact with the network organisations, ensuring that information and proposals for action are transmitted rapidly. Information is received from more than 2300 organisations and mailings are sent out to about 2500 groups in Europe.

If you want to get involved... Discuss the ideas and aims of the UNITED network within your organisation. Let us know that you would like to join or receive information. And add us to your mailing list!

More information you can find at [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org) or write to [info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org)

**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](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org), [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org)