

UNITED Conference
Europe Without Borders
June 9-13 1999 in Potsdam (D)

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1 Introduction

UNITED for Intercultural Action - the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees - continues to grow as more and more organisations join: at the moment there are over 500 groups involved in the network. **UNITED remains the only initiative of this size to include organisations from both Western and Eastern Europe.** It is increasingly important to inform each other about activities and to exchange opinions between East and West with the prospect of the enlargement of the EU becoming more apparent. The tragedy of Kosova showed again that extreme nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia are amongst the most serious problems of the continent.

UNITED organises a series of conferences in several European countries to unite and concentrate anti-racist forces on the continent. The aim of the conferences is exchanging information, training skills and preparing future actions and campaigns. The conferences bring together participants from a wide variety of backgrounds and geographical regions. Special care is taken to reach a balance between female and male participants. All participants are expected to take active part in the conference, not only as 'consumers' but as 'producers' of information as well. Priority is given to nominations from black and ethnic minority delegates.

This conference took place in East Germany (in the former GDR), in the beautiful surroundings of the Hotel Petzow, a 19th century castle near Potsdam from 9th till 13th June 1999. Its title was "**Europe Without Borders. Joint European Action Against Racism and Fascism**" which reflects the range of subjects discussed.

In Potsdam 106 people from 91 organisations and from 31 countries came together. The most important results of the conference have to be found in this direct contact. Through the many discussions inside and outside the meeting rooms everyone has learned a great deal. Western Europeans have been introduced to the problems of working against racism in Central and Eastern Europe. The possibilities and problems of legal action in Western Europe have been turned upside down and inside out. Full-time office workers have got in touch with the voluntary grass roots activists. Men have been introduced to specific problems of women in the framework of migration. These encounters have provided all participants with more knowledge and inspiration for their future work.

The conference has been prepared by an **International Preparatory Group** consisting of representatives of the following organisations:

- o Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration - FFM (Germany)
- o Flüchtlingsrat Brandenburg (Germany)
- o Stowarzyszenie 'Nigdy Wiecej' - 'Never Again' Association (Poland)
- o Regionale Arbeitsstelle Ausländerfragen - Brandenburg (Germany)
- o Heinrich Böll Stiftung (Germany)
- o Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste (Germany)

with the support, of course, of the UNITED secretariat.

We hope the conference - through its debates, exchanges of views, and plans for co-ordinated actions - strengthened the European anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

The conference came up with specific plans for the future, including:

UN World Conference Against Racism 2001 /

European Preparatory Conference Against Racism October 2000

- o Preparation for the conference has started. An NGO conference will take place overlapping with the governmental conference.
- o UNITED takes part in the NGO resource group preparing the European governmental and NGO conference.
- o For the European Preparatory Conference: UNITED will set up (internet) structures to involve many more people than just the ones who can be physically present.
- o Special discussion lists, a website and internet conference are foreseen.

International Day Against Fascism and Anti-Semitism, 9 November 1999

- o Campaign theme will be 'resistance' as already decided on a previous conference in Ireland, but the focus of the campaign will be especially on youth and intolerance in schools.
- o UNITED will prepare a newspaper/poster that can be used in schools.
- o NGOs will try to build coalitions with other NGOs, teachers and others.

European-wide Action Week Against Racism, 18-26 March 2000

- o Ideas that came up included the organisation of song competitions, simulation games and an 'alternative parliament'.
- o Participants wanted a report that is easy to use for sponsors.
- o Proposed action: put the campaign logo on as many websites as possible.
- o Suggestion: think about a badge of partly transparent plastic for people to wear with the slogan: "**See the person, not the colour**".

16 June International Refugee Day / Refugee Campaign

- o The International Day is useful, but a long-term resolution of problems is more important than a short-term 'shock effect'.
- o Participants vowed to cooperate more closely with the aim to exchange information.

2 Presentations- ... food for thought

THURSDAY 10 JUNE

Presentation "How to become a German: the citizenship debate in Germany"

by Almuth Berger (Ausländerbeauftragte Brandenburg - Officer for Foreigner Affairs, D)

On Thursday, 10th June, Almuth Berger, gave an introductory presentation. In her well-informed and detailed lecture she explained the recent controversies surrounding the passing of the new citizenship law proposed by the SPD-Green government. Although the new law makes it easier to obtain citizenship for 'foreigners' who have lived in Germany for 8 years (instead of 15 as before), it did not fulfil expectations for a breakthrough. It is still impossible to accept dual citizenship and immigrants' children born in Germany are forced to choose their allegiance when they reach the age of 18. It has to be noted that the right-wing conservative opposition staged a massive campaign against the liberalisation of the citizenship requirements with some clearly racist overtones. The CDU/CSU collected 5 million signatures against the new law. It is still not acceptable in the political mainstream to describe Germany as a 'country of immigration'. In Brandenburg ethnic minorities and migrants constitute only 2-3% of the population but even here the anti-immigrant campaign had an effect to the benefit of right-wing extremists.

Almuth Berger concluded that despite numerous criticisms she saw the new citizenship law in Germany as a step in the right direction and she pointed to the fact that many good projects in the field of anti-racism in the state of Brandenburg were a source of hope for the future.

FRIDAY 11 JUNE

Presentations and debate: "The role of the state in combating racist violence: Does it work?"

**by Sujata Aurora (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, GB),
Bernd Wagner (Regionale Arbeitsstelle Ausländerfragen -Brandenburg D)
and**

Pawel Kazanecki (Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe, PL)

a three-part presentation was given on the role of the state in combating racist violence.

Sujata Aurora focused mainly on repercussions of the much publicised Lawrence inquiry in Great Britain. Stephen Lawrence was a black teenager who was viciously attacked and murdered by racists when he waited for a bus. The police refused to give him medical assistance when he was dying and subsequently failed to persecute the perpetrators of the attack because of corruption within its ranks. Attempts at cover up were exposed by a thorough parliamentary inquiry which led police authorities to admit the existence of institutional racism in the police force. Shocking results of the Lawrence inquiry have made a lasting impact on the perception of racism in British society. Sujata also reflected on the recent bombing campaign targeting minorities undertaken by a neonazi group in

London: it backfired on the fascists with various sections of society now united against racism and fascism.

Bernd Wagner, an expert on right-wing violence in East Germany, is working for a mobile advice team against right-wing extremism in Brandenburg, a project affiliated to the Regionale Arbeitsstelle Ausländerfragen -Brandenburg. He outlined and evaluated various measures taken by different state agencies to combat the rise of racism and neofascism in Germany with particular attention to the so-called 'new lands' (East Germany, the former GDR) where the problem seems most serious. Bernd Wagner stressed that the problem must not be dismissed as a youth criminal issue like local and national politicians often argue. It has its basis in the political climate. Recently there has been a clear overlap between the ideology of the conservative right and the extreme right on issues such as immigration. It was stressed that right-wing extremism can be fought effectively only when democratic values are supported at grass-roots level involving various sections of civil society, schools, social work and the police forces.

Finally, Pawel Kazanecki spoke about the difficult political situation in Belarus. The authoritarian regime of President Lukashenka does not seem interested in combating fascist violence at all. To the contrary: Russian extremist groups such as the Russian National Unity, the Slavonic Assembly or Zhirynovsky's Liberal-Democratic Party have been given encouragement and support from the authorities. It is a part of the Belarussian President's policy of reunification with the Russian Federation which aims to restore the Soviet Union with its totalitarian system of government. At the same time the government uses extremist groups to harass democratic opposition activists.

All three presentations provoked a lively discussion which was later continued in three working groups. One of the points of discussion was on the roles of NGOs and governmental institutions. Are they opposite or complementary or completely independent?

The role of the state in combating racial discrimination

According to the United Nations' "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination", states should

"undertake to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms" and it continues "each state party undertakes to engage in no act or practice of racial discrimination against persons, groups of persons or institutions and to ensure that all public authorities and public institutions, national and local, shall act in conformity with this obligation."

SATURDAY 12 JUNE

Positive ideas for campaigning

Football against racism

by Andrea Enisuoh (Show Racism the Red Card, GB)

On Saturday, 12th June, positive ideas for successful campaigning were presented basing on the experience from Western and Eastern Europe. Andrea

Enisuoh gave an example of a very successful British campaign using football as a means of getting the anti-racist message across to young people. The campaign under the slogan 'Show Racism the Red Card' started in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the mid-1990s and it soon achieved a national and later international significance. An educational video which was produced as part of this cam-paign contains interviews with the biggest stars of European football who give their views about racism and anti-racism. The video has now been translated into several European lan-guages and more translations are planned. It is an excellent re-source for teachers, social workers and anti-racist activists.

Positive ideas for campaigning

Lobbying for the constitution

by Rafal Pankowski (Stowarzyszenie 'Nigdy Wiecej' - 'Never Again' Association, PL)

described the progress and success of the campaign for a ban on racist and fascist organisations to be included in Poland's new constitution which came into force in 1997. The cam-paign received support from various social and political groups as well as from the media. It may serve as an example of how success can be achieved even with a very limited cam-paign budget provided there is enough enthusiasm and deter-mination on the part of the campaigners. The next step is to lobby authorities to use the existing law when appropriate.

Surviving the Holocaust: a personal story

by Otto Rosenberg (Cinti Union Berlin, D)

In the afternoon a very emotional story was told by Otto Rosenberg a Sinti Holocaust survivor who gave a vivid ac-count of his experience of living under Hitler's dictatorship in the 1930s and being a prisoner of Nazi concentration camps for nearly a decade. When Mr Rosenberg finished his speech it was clear to all of us perhaps more than ever that lessons from that period must never be forgotten.

Petra Rosenberg, Otto Rosenbergs daughter, told us about the life of Roma and Sinti in Germany today. As a child school was never a safe or nice place to be for her, as both students and teachers discriminated against Sinti. As a result she quit school without a diploma. Now she has a university degree, but is still treated sometimes as if she were back-wards or stupid because of her background.

Roma and Sinti and the Holocaust

In addition to approximately 6 million Jews another estimated 5,5 million "enemies of the German state" were murdered during the Nazi era in Germany. This group included 'criminals' and 'asocials', mentally handicapped, homosexuals, Jehovah's witnesses, political criminals like communists and socialists, and Roma (sometimes still called 'Gypsies'). Estimates range from 200.000 to 600.000 Roma and Sinti who were murdered. From 1939 on they

were put in ghettos from which they were later seized for transport to the death camps. Although the planned murder that befell the Roma in Nazi Germany was unique, persecution has been common all through Europe. Roma were seen as 'stateless' wanderers that were a threat to the emerging bureaucratic states.

SUNDAY 13 JUNE

**Presentation and debate: Equal rights for women
by Paula Assubuji (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, D) and
Ivata Bartukova (La Strada, CZ)**

Finally, on Sunday, 13th June, the last day of the conference, a presentation was given on "Equal Rights for Women". Paula Assubuji and Ivata Bartukova spoke about the particularly difficult situation of illegalised migrant women who often have to go through much additional suffering just for being women. The joint work of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung and the Prague office of La Strada was presented. It seeks to help women who have been victims of human trafficking with the aim to put them to work in prostitution. The victims usually come from the former Soviet Union but it was pointed out that more recently many Kosovo women from refugee camps were subjected to trafficking, too.

Another important topic of discussion was the fact that women fleeing from violence are normally not recognised as refugees and their rights are not protected properly.

Trafficking

In a world in which there are many people who want to cross borders, while the borders are closed more and more, trafficking becomes a very profitable occupation. Although there are a lot of people who bring people over the border for a small or even without a fee, there are also criminal organisations that profit from the weak position of migrants. Women are told that they have possibilities for a better future, if only they pay a sum to a trafficker who will bring them to Western Europe. These women are raped, forced to work in prostitution and pushed into a position of complete submission. She has no one to turn to. On the one hand there is the trafficker, who has often taken both money and passport from them and on the other hand there are the authorities who are only interested in deporting illegal men and women. In some countries measures have been taken to grant women who are willing to testify against the men who exploited them a temporary residency permit. The proposed Spanish foreigner law also contains such a clause, according to which anyone who testifies against a trafficker immediately gets temporary residency rights and does not have to wait the mandatory two years.

3 Discussin/Working groups- ...working together

THURSDAY 10 JUNE

Discussion groups on the situation in Europe

On the first day of the conference the participants divided themselves in four discussion groups. The goal of those groups was not to come up with concrete results but to encourage discussion and common understanding of basic issues.

Anti-fascism in eastern and western Europe

led by Kay Wendel (Opferperspektive, D) and

Rafal Pankowski (Stowarzyszenie 'Nigdy Wiecej'- 'Never Again Association', PL)

It concentrated on exchanging and comparing information about the context and methods of anti-fascist work in various countries (Latvia, Poland, Germany, UK, Sweden, Russia, Belarus...) with special attention paid to differences and similarities between Eastern and Western Europe. In particular the difficulty in using the 'left-right' distinction in Eastern Europe was brought to attention with examples such as the Russian National-Bolshevik Party, a dangerous mixture of fascism and pseudo-left sloganeering. There was also some room for a necessary discussion about the meaning of 'fascism' and about different political traditions which have formed today's anti-fascism.

Left-Right

The political terms of 'left' and 'right' originally refer to the seating positions in the General Assembly of the first French republic. They have come to mean different things over time and probably will change meaning again as years go by. In general 'left' usually means: progressive, believing in the possibility of change, in favour of equality and the protection of the weaker. 'Right' usually means: conservative, believing in stability and continuity, in favour of the victory of the 'best' and the leadership of an elite.

The Borders of Fortress Europe

led by Harald Glöde (Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration, D) and Salim Sagenya Okello (Flüchtlingsrat Brandenb. D)

The political aspect of the Schengen regime was discussed. There was also an exchange of views how to fight the increasingly restrictive policy of the European Union with regard to migration. It was stressed that various details of the European situation are part of one picture, be it the Polish-German border, the treatment of refugees in Hungary, or the problem of Kosovo refugees. Therefore it is appropriate to analyse them in the wider context of the whole concept of 'Fortress Europe'.

Anti-racist education

led by Sujata Aurora (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, GB) and Friedemann Bringt (Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedens-diensten, D)

This workshop discussed different perspectives on anti-racist education and how to make anti-racist ideas accessible and stimulating for young people. Many participants expressed the need to promote cultural understanding to break down prejudice and stereotypes - their organisations organised exhibitions in schools and displays of ethnic dancing. There was a discussion on 'accepting' youth work which has become common in Germany. It was agreed that there were both good and bad examples of this. There was a discussion on how to confront members of extremist groups with their racism, for example through visits to concentration camps, and whether it was right that these visits were a compulsory element of the school curriculum.

'Accepting' youth work

Since several years extreme-right wing youth have been a hard group to reach. Youth workers have tried to develop ways to be able to work with them. One of those ways is 'accepting' youth work, which accepts their ideology as a given. It aims to ameliorate their position with the idea that their political ideas will change as their social situation changes. Anti-fascists in Germany are not happy about this, as youth houses have sometimes become breeding grounds for fascist violence.

Inclusion & exclusion of migrants and minorities

led by Kusminder Chahal (Federation of Black Housing Organisations, GB)

This working-group initially looked at what the terms inclusion, exclusion, migrant and minority actually meant and whether it is possible to establish a baseline meaning for all countries. It was obvious from the discussion that this would not be possible. In some countries migrant means anyone who is black. In some countries minorities are only called minorities when they are officially recognised by the state. The group agreed that there were three clear perspectives which impact on inclusion-exclusion. These were the legal context, social policy context and the personal context. It was generally agreed within the group that the impact of exclusion in the context of migrants and minorities resulted in poverty, lack of benefits and poorer access to political participation. Thus the impact of exclusion affects all of the experiences of those excluded. The group discussed some of the issues attached to working effectively with migrants and minorities. Uncovering hidden populations which are not easy to access was seen as a key area of developing our work. Information and communication were seen as essential tools in working with excluded groups and creating an inclusive society through peer education (= education from others in the same group as opposed to out-siders).

FRIDAY 11 JUNE

Training working groups

participants continued discussions during working groups with more specific topics.

Working with governmental structures

led by Jürgen Schäfer (DGB-Bildungswerk Thüringen e.V., D) and Mirek Prokes (DUHA - Rainbow Ass., CZ)

It dealt with positive and negative experiences in the work with various governmental bodies. Organisations represented at the conference have different approaches to the topic but a general attitude was accepted: while working with governmental structures it is necessary for NGOs not to become too dependent on government in their activities. It was also stressed that it is important to find the right people in the governmental structures who might be helpful. There was also some discussion about the need for (and the lack of) solidarity between anti-racist NGOs both on the national and international level.

Legal measures against racism and fascism

led by Piya Muqit (Grampian Racial Equality Council, GB) and Jonathan Knight (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, GB)

This working group focused on the British experience in using the law against racism. In particular the laws "Race Relations Act", "Breach of Peace" and the "Public Order Act" were mentioned. Equal opportunities policies used by employers were also given as a positive example of working for racial justice. British employment legislation was presented in this context, too. There was some discussion about possibilities of an American-style affirmative action as practised by some US universities. However, it does not seem plausible in Europe. Other legal aspects discussed included European human rights legislation and asylum procedures.

Using old and new media: the case of Kosova

led by Igor Ugrinovski (Ethnic Conflict Resolution Project, MK), Dalija Rendic (Anti-War Campaign Croatia, HR) and Brigitte Mauerhofer (Asylkoordination Schweiz, CH)

In the first part the participants shared their experiences and views as well as debated the objectivity of information they receive and the meaning of propaganda. In the second part smaller groups were formed which dealt with the different media of radio, television, Internet, and news-papers. Some interesting ideas for campaigning with the help of the media were pre-sented such as interviews with refugees, creating special radio-programs, telephone hot-lines, etc.. They can be used in daily work dealing with the consequences of the Balkan crisis.

Support and/or self organisation

led by Doros Polykarpou (Immigrant Support Action Group, CY) and Salim Sagenya Okello (Flüchtlingsrat Brandenburg e.V., D)

Participants of this working group agreed there is a need for cooperation of all organisations working for the well-being of immigrants. In order to reach such cooperation it is absolutely necessary to have a good level of communication as well as a democratic way of functioning. It was stressed by several participants that very often the anti-racist work is being dominated by the nationals of the respective countries and not by the migrants themselves. On the other hand, the example of the French Sans-Papiers (people without the right papers, especially residency papers) movement, which is run by migrants themselves, was given. The experiences of Portugal, Cyprus and Germany in the field of cooperation between anti-racist NGOs were also described. In some cases it has been possible to achieve a good level of cooperation between migrants' organisations and other organisations supporting the migrants.

SATURDAY 12 JUNE

Campaign and action working groups

The participants of the conference took part in working groups dealing with concrete campaign proposals seeking to exchange experiences in running campaigns and to co-ordinate their efforts in the future.

International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism

led by Rita Queiroga (Associazione Rieti Immigrant-Provincia, I)

During the discussion about the annual commemoration of the "Kristallnacht" pogrom on 9th November the following points were mentioned as necessary in order to achieve success with this campaign:

- establishing coalitions with other organisations;
- defining the target group of the campaign;
- presenting a clear link between the history of Nazi oppression and the actual campaign theme.

The focus of the campaign should be young people in particular. If possible, they should be confronted with the living testimonies of Holocaust survivors. Other methods of reaching people were mentioned, too, such as radio and television programs, special web sites on the Internet, school debates, etc. Anti-fascist groups may also use the occasion to lobby governments for a more outspoken policy against neo-fascism.

Commemoration of the "Kristallnacht" pogrom

On 9 November 1938 a massive nation-wide pogrom started in Nazi-Germany, later named "Kristallnacht". It left many Jews dead in the streets, hundreds of Jewish businesses and synagogues destroyed. It marked the beginning of the Holocaust. Since 1988 commemorations have taken place, not only to remember the victims from 1938, but also to campaign against the rise of neo-nazism and racism in Europe today. UNITED has involved a large variety of groups and

organisations in this annual European-wide campaign around 9 November, symbolising the diversity of people that have been victims of fascism and that struggle against it today. We focus on the same date and the same theme, as much as possible, to increase the publicity and impact of our statements.

European-wide Action Week Against Racism (18-26 March 2000)

led by Bogdan Enica (Organizatia Studentilor 'Dunarea de Jos' Galati, RO) and

Valentin Gonzalez (Movimiento contra la Intolerancia, E)

Experiences from past campaigns in Spain, France, Portugal and Romania were exchanged. New ideas were also introduced. It was proposed the annual campaign report prepared by UNITED be used more for the purpose of presenting the campaign to the media and sponsors. Other proposed themes included such diverse topics as: intercultural marriage as a focus of interest, a list of 'anti-racist' (multi-cultural) restaurants, pubs and discos, anti-racist song-writing competitions, encouraging school children to have penpals in other countries, conducting anti-racist drama games, etc.

Action Week Against Racism

21 March is the Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of the United Nations. During the European-wide Action Week Against Racism thousands of people take part in all kinds of activities, like demonstrations, festivals and discussions. We show what we want to work for a world without racism and intolerance. UNITED coordinates the activities on a European level and publishes lists of activities all over Europe. European press is alerted to this special event and campaign materials are spread around. European Cooperation during campaigns develops an even greater motivation, inspiration and more publicity, which strengthens the anti-racism movement.

International Refugee Day (16/6)

led by Panayiotis Dragatis (Greek Council for Refugees, GR) and Pavel Nechutny (Organisation for Aid to Refugees, CZ).

A video presenting the life of refugee women in the Czech Republic was shown. Drawing from Czech, Hungarian and other experiences, the discussion focused on the best way of using the campaign to inform society about the plight of the refugees. Among others it was stressed that more international cooperation was needed, especially in the field of regular exchange of information. It is highly desirable to involve refugees themselves in all actions. It was also argued that the public should be encouraged to have a longer-term interest in the refugee problem. Actions using 'shock' tactics may only have a short-term impact and should not be the only means of influencing public opinion.

Refugee campaign

In response to the worsening situation of refugees in Europe, a long term campaign has been launched in support of refugees. It includes research around the deaths of refugees that can be attributed to Fortress Europe and lobbying for a just immigration and asylum policy. European-wide activities center around 16 June, the International Refugee Day

UN world conference against racism

led by Saskia Daru (UNITED for Intercultural Action) and Mustapha Benyamina (Anti-Racism Information Centre, CH)

The potential role of non-governmental organisations in the preparation process was debated regarding both the main UN event and the preparatory European conference which is going to include an NGO representation. The main topics to be introduced by NGOs, as proposed by the working group, are:

- support for grassroots activity; - rights of minorities.
- cooperation between governments and NGOs; - refugee policy;
- lack of official reaction to the rise of the extreme right; - globalisation;

It was also suggested that decentralised meetings can be held during the conference, and they can be linked by the Internet. UNITED will aim to set up an Internet conference, comprising a new information website, chat sessions, discussion lists and live coverage of the official conference.

UN world conference against racism

European conference against racism

The General Assembly of the United Nations has decided to organise a World Conference Against Racism before the end of 2001. As usual, preparations are going on on each continent. In Europe the preparations are co-ordinated by the Council of Europe. Inside the Council of Europe the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is in charge of the preparations. ECRI has invited a group of NGOs to be involved in the process. UNITED is one of seven NGOs in a 'resource group' preparing both the governmental and an overlapping NGO conference. Before and during the official governmental conference an official NGO conference will take place.

Kosova Crisis

led by Albana Qatipi (Useful to Albanian Women, AL) and Igor Ugrinovski (Ethnic Conflict Resolution Proj., MK)

Finally, there was an impromptu working group dealing with the pressing issue of the Kosova crisis. The situation of the Kosova refugees in Albania and Macedonia as well as the hard work conducted by humanitarian organisations in the refugee camps was presented. The potential future role of NGOs in further helping the refugees was discussed. It was also stressed NGOs had a vital role to play in informing societies world-wide about the real situation in the region and the refugees' situation in particular. There was no agreement between the participants of the working group about the political dimension of the crisis and whether the use of armed force against Serbia was justified.

Refugee

Refugees are sometimes defined as those asylum-seekers that are awarded a refugee status and sometimes as anyone who needs refuge from danger. Another definition is 'a person who flees in the face of danger or a life-threatening situation'. The choice between those definitions is a political one. Sometimes economic refugees are recognised as well. They are people who flee from economic uncertainty, exploitation, hunger and misery. The Geneva Convention definition is detailed and somewhat restrictive. It includes those persons that are persecuted on the basis of their supposed race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The African definition of refugee includes those seeking refuge from natural disasters and famine too. The recent Dublin agreements limit the Geneva Convention definition to refer only to political persecution of individuals by the state.

4 Social Program

Traditionally, the UNITED conference started with an informal games' evening designed to 'break the ice'. This evening is the first of several intercultural parts of the programme. It worked very well and the participants had the first occasion to meet each other in the exceptionally friendly atmosphere, again typical for UNITED events.

On Thursday, 10th June, a representative of the **Ministry of Justice of the Land Brandenburg** joined the conference and delivered a well-received speech about his government determination to tackle racism. Then there was the usual International Snacks session with an amazing variety of food and drinks brought by participants from all over Europe. Everybody could literally taste multiculturalism. Simultaneously the traditional Info-Market was held. All organisations could present their publications, leaflets and posters as well as establish working contacts to be developed in the future. We were joined by numerous German organisations who came to the castle especially for the Info-Market. There was also a unique opportunity to watch videos from various countries, most notably a film about the disabled people's struggle for equal access to public transport in Sweden which was presented by **Sari Nykwist (Network Against Racism and Youth Federation of Mobility Impaired, S)**.

On Friday a special bus took the participants to Potsdam to visit several local projects:

Opfeperspektive (Victims Perspective), Flüchtlingsrat Brandenburg (Council for Refugees in Brandenburg), Mobile Beratungsteam (Mobile Advice Team), Antidiskriminierungsbüro (Office Against Discrimination) and Aktionsladen "Eine Welt" ("The OneWorld Shop")

The projects were presented and discussed, contrasting the situation in Potsdam with the experiences of participants in their home countries. Afterwards participants explored the bars of Potsdam. This break from the conference to join 'real life' for an evening was welcomed by all.

On Saturday, 12th June, the social programme was crowned with a brilliant concert of a local group playing old Jewish tunes. It was followed by an intercultural evening which used numerous talents of the conference participants: singing, dancing and more.... Those who were still ready to dance had the opportunity to further enjoy themselves during the Farewell Party with a Ghanaian DJ from Berlin.

Needless to say, the participants went home with a deep belief that fighting racism can be fun too.

The conference owes a lot of **thanks to** the members of the International Preparatory Group, especially Birgit Funke of the Regionale Arbeitsstelle für Ausländerfragen Brandenburg and Harald Glöde of the Forschungsgesellschaft Flucht und Migration as well as to all the experts, the participants and our sponsors who made this conference a success.

Because of the war in Kosova, we experienced a lot of visa problems. Thanks to Claudia Roth (member of the German Parliament, chairman of the committee for human rights and humanitarian aid) for her help in solving them.

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 or write to info@unitedagainstracism.org

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