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9. UNITED for Intercultural Action
**1. Summary**

54 persons from 26 countries discussed the possibilities, the methods and the topics of their actions against racism for the end of 1997 and 1998. Several topics were proposed as common focus points: "(EU) Citizenship and Equal Rights for All!" and "Nationalism". Special attention will be given next year to International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism, 9th of November 1998, as it will be exactly 60 years after the "Kristallnacht" of 1938. Solidarity with everyone struggling for an open and intercultural society is necessary, including organisations of gays and lesbians. Websites and e-mail will be used more and more as a new method of communication.

**2. Introduction**

The conference took place in a lovely village in the north-west of Slovenia in about an hour by car from Ljubljana and provided an exciting combination of beautiful surroundings, working spirit and an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. The focus of the conference was on nationalism, but provided also discussions on a lot of other topics. All topics have been presented, as much as possible, by experts, working group leaders and participants from both Central and Eastern Europe and from Western Europe.

Almost an equal balance of female/male participants was reached. They represented groups of various geographical origins, working fields and sometimes really different political approaches. However, their motivation for cooperation among all delegates was more or less the same: to provide a forum for discussions on racism, fascism and nationalism in Europe and to produce concrete results for practical actions in the future. Each delegate has taken home probably not exactly the same information and skills: some were more interested in the support of refugees, some in the methods of anti-fascist fight, some in the basic support of the human rights. It was certainly a long way to get to the place of the event (in total all delegates travelled 2*49198 km), but that was all the more reason to use our time together well.

Different working methods were used during the conference: lectures, debates, working groups, workshops for planning campaigns and collective initiatives and intercultural exchanges. This report is supposed to give a general idea about main topics and issues discussed during the conference, new plans and projects proposed by participants, to show how the social program went on and may be who knows - one day to stimulate you to nominate for participation in future UNITED conferences.

The conference was prepared by an International Preparatory Group consisting of:

UNITED secretariat, MLD - Young Liberal Democrats (SI), MOST - SCI Slovenia, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, DUHA - Rainbow Association (CZ), Comité de Coordination pour le Service Civil (F), League for the Defence of Human Rights (RO), ASTI - Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés (L), Nederland Bekent Kleur (NL)
3. Campaign Working Groups
The outcome of the campaign working groups summarises the practical results of the conference, although it leaves out all the valuable cross-contacts that were made between the organisations.

International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism - 9 November
It was underlined again that this European-wide action is not only a Memorial Day commemorating "Kristallnacht". Every year it has to link with actual problems in nowadays world: e.g. persecution of Roma, violence against minorities everywhere, refugees then and now...
The theme of 1997 is "Disadvantage, discrimination, detention - the responsibilities of the states". All means should be used to raise awareness.
Different actions that are prepared by the participating NGOs were discussed. It was decided to continue the tradition of sending a message of solidarity and information about what is happening around Europe: fresh ideas can always be helpful.
The coming year 1998, the 9 November campaign should be special, as 60 years have passed since the tragic night in Nazi-Germany. It's up to us to make the analysis of this hard lesson and its meaning for nowadays world. Several themes were suggested, such as violence against the 'other', exclusion in everyday life...
Because it is a special anniversary, we need to put extra effort in uniting a lot of organisations and mobilising more people. It was decided to try to organise a competition for young people, to create cartoons concerning this topic. It was clear however, that such an initiative can only have a European dimension if organisations throughout Europe take the initiative. All people interested can contact Cor van de Griendt (address: see list of participants) or the UNITED office.

European-wide Action Week Against Racism 14-22 March 1998
The Anti-Racist Week has become almost a tradition in a lot of countries. Most organisations confirmed that they will organise activities next year. The point was raised that activities need to be linked to something very actual, otherwise they become too much of a tradition!
It was proposed to use as theme this year "Citizenship and Equal Rights for All!" This topic is both interesting for organisations in Western Europe (linked to defending rights of 'Sans-papiers' and Third Country nationals) and for Eastern Europe (linked to defending rights of stateless people, migrants and minorities facing similar problems over there).
A special function could be fulfilled by the Internet and e-mail while preparing actions in different countries. In general participants agreed that a common issue for an action in different countries is possible, but not a common form and method of action. Attracting the mass media was mentioned as an extremely important aspect of a successful action. In Portugal, for example, a regular agreement exists with the journalist trade union. It was also proposed to do some practical lobbying on a specific actual topic, aimed at politicians and decision makers.
The different examples of actions given during the working group gave some new ideas to participants.

UNITED will distribute campaign material and information.

**Actions Against Political Nationalism**
A discussion on this topic had been started already on previous conferences and continued in the same direction. Unfortunately, the same problem appeared again: the definition of the word "nationalism". The questions "how far should the fight for independence go?" and "where is a limit between "good" and "bad" nationalism?" are still open for many participants. Different slogans were suggested, such as "1 Europe, 100 nations (flags), 1000 colours", "Nationalism is a way to a national degradation", "One nation - Human nation" and many others. An interesting proposal resulted from this working group. It was decided to find out the possibilities to organise a summer school near Tuzla (Bosnia) concentrated on this topic. The place would remind us of the seriousness of the topic of nationalism. It would give people a chance to go deeper into debates in an informal atmosphere. There are many things that need to be discussed and planned more thoroughly regarding this initiative. The realisation depends on local support.

**Long Term Strategies**
After a short evaluation of the last UNITED activities, the working group discussed the development of this on-going working group in the future. Is this working group still necessary? Which role should it play in future? From the first conference where the working group met, its members are more or less the same from one conference to another. That probably was the reason of the very efficient work it was doing - nothing has to be explained, the dynamic was obvious for all members. But it should not go on like that, otherwise a closed group can loose its momentum - and this is a danger. That brought participants to another extremely important question. What should the conference look like in the future? How can we solve the problem of "the veterans" and the newcomers and the different "languages" they speak? Unfortunately, the actuality of these problems is be-coming more obvious with every confe-rence. The wishes of all kinds of partici-pants should be taken into account.
For the coming year two overlapping topics were proposed as focus points: "(EU) Citizenship and Equal Rights for All!" and "Nationalism" both in Central and Eastern Europe and in Western Europe. The campaigns, conferences and information leaflets should be also a tool to develop the discussion and action on these topics further. The working group will continue to communicate, primarily by e-mail and will function as a think-tank. Anybody is free to join the on-going discussions.

**4. Lectures, Presentations, Debates**
Several expert speakers were invited to share their knowledge about the chosen topics. The issues they spoke about were not usual for previous conferences, nor for the majority of participants. The lecture "Solidarity with ALL minorities: homosexuals" should be mentioned as a decisive step in the development of anti-
Nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ist there a way out?

Miriam Struijk (Helsinki Citizen's Assembly, Tuzla)

Miriam Struijk originally comes from the Netherlands, but she is living in Bosnia since several years. Her lecture on the situation in this area had the advantage of the out-side view, not belonging to any of the groups involved in the conflict. She has shown a lot of knowledge and deep understanding of this delicate and long-lasting problem, including the knowledge that nobody, not even an outsider can be "neutral".

Due to Miriam’s particular position as a so-called "international", she was able to travel a lot around the country. This is a country, where the post and the telephone connections don’t work or work very badly, where in order to reach a place about 100 km away from where you are, you have to travel sometimes up to 8 or 9 hours. The mass media often present very positive information about the development of freedom of speech, freedom of settlement and freedom of movement in this area. But in reality one wouldn’t find any of those freedoms over there. Very often people who live in two closely situated cities have no news about each other for months and months, if visitors don’t bring some fresh information. So, the basic human right to get information is broken. Besides, the accessible news is rarely objective. The possibility to move freely is still something extraordinary.

The biggest problems concern the question of repatriation. As declared, people have the right to return. But they meet immediately administrative obstacles, housing problems. They were absent during the wartime, they brought back some goods, they want to return to "their" flat or house, while someone else is living there - all this creates jealousy and sometimes hatred of the population. The sad fact is that the mass media provoke a lot of conflicts and even pogroms by providing the wrong information, which is trusted too much. Nationalism didn’t stop with the war and doesn’t seem to stop soon.

Elections, as another problem, were covered by the lecture as well. The last municipal elections were held in September; the results, at the time of the conference, were not official yet. But it’s anyway clear, that the biggest power belongs to the nationalists in most parts of the country. People, being lost in the political situation, not trusting anyone, vote for the representatives of their own ethnic groups.

And, at last, the role of international governmental organisations and non-governmental organisations was mentioned. Thousands of "international" people within Bosnia are trying to unite their work on the peace process. They have some rights and some possibilities that local people do not have, and they
Solidarity with all minorities: Homosexuals
Bogdan Lesnik (Magnus Club, Ljubljana)
As it was already said, the topic of homosexuality was quite a new one to be discussed at the UNITED conferences. Sexuality can only be measured in different physical aspects (how, how often, with what results), but this will never explain the odd place it occupies in our society. Any sexuality is a point of view. It is culture that determines this point of view. Culture wants to define and control sexuality. This control is the control of the free behaviour of human beings, it is a violation of basic human rights. One’s sexuality sometimes can be in conflict with the law, and then she/he would try to conform, to change her/his own nature. In this way the culture will survive - not nature! Not the natural laws forbid homosexuality, cultural laws do. Sexuality is both unspeakable and clearly defined. When the law forbids a form of sexuality, it enters the bedroom. It is, as a result, not the homosexual community that puts sex on the political agenda and in the street, but the people making those laws. Gay and lesbian movements started to speak about sexuality in political terms, but have to confront the argument that sexuality should not be talked about openly. They don’t want to make a private matter public, but want the right to keep it a private matter without intrusions by the law. The debate, which has followed after the lecture, raised up the problem of criminal prosecution against homosexuals - still going on in some countries, for example, in Romania. In other countries homosexuality is not against the law, but quite a few "rules" are still extremely insulting for gays and lesbians. For instance, in some countries they are not taken to the army - which is a questionable advantage, but the reason for not being taken is ridiculous: moral perversity The right to adopt a child by a homosexual or a lesbian couple was touched as well.

The danger of words: A confrontation
Eric Simon (REFLEX, Paris)
With this presentation Eric Simon continued to reflect on a subject, which has been discussed during the conference in Bratislava and even became an extra-issue for the UNITED Information Leaflet (No.13). Normally words are the way of expressing oneself. But we must always remember, that what we say can be misunderstood by someone, just because this person put another meaning into some word or a set of words. And if in a conversation with a neighbour it can drive you to a private conflict, in a political discussion misunderstandings can raise more serious problems. The fact is that language is constantly changing. From one year to another the same word can mean something different. Everybody knows that when you have an appointment, you have to check if your watch shows the same time as the one of the person you want to meet. The same with words - if people want their discussion to be a constructive one, they have
to be sure, that words used by them really have the same meanings for all people involved in the discussion.

Unfortunately, sometimes the meaning of a word is changed on purpose. Politicians sometimes use a different word, because the original word is historically compromised. As an example, Eric Simon mentioned the use of the word 'deportation' in France. This word is historically connected with the fate of the French Jews, who were deported to concentration camps in World War II. Connected with illegal immigrants nowadays, the word 'deportation' always unpleasantly reminds of the problems that these people would meet in their home-countries. The word 'expulsion' is much nicer. It simply means, that they won't stay in France, nothing more.

Words are weapons, and dangerous, especially in politics, where symbolism is so important. We could see it during the so-called Cold War, when two "worlds" were using words as a part of their strategy. Some words have a strong lack of mutual sense, now that we aren't so tied to one side or the other. Who can tell today what such words as 'Liberty' or 'Freedom' mean? Different people - different meanings. The work on words is important, because this work is already going on, and those who are doing it are our enemies - fascists and racists.

The passionate discussion after the lecture touched the different interpretations of the words 'tolerance' and 'respect', 'liberalism' now and at its origin, 'nationalism' as freedom fight and as intolerance, and plenty of other problems, which showed, that even among the participants of the conference there was not the same point of view on many expressions and words.

The work on a list of definitions, which can help all of us, will be continued. All who have any suggestions or comments, don't hesitate to contact Eric Simon (address: see list of participants) or the UNITED office.

Laibach and Neue Slowenische Kunst: Culture and Ideology
Lev Kreft (All Different - All Equal, Slovenia)

Lev Kreft started his presentation with basic information about the odd Slovenian rock-group called Laibach (in German language: Ljubljana). The name is well-known, but at the same time the group still remains mysterious, unexplained. They belong to a much bigger group "Neue Slowenische Kunst" (NSK) including, besides Laibach, a theatre group, artists and many more. This brings the discussion about them on a totally different level. A video, which we were able to see before the lecture, gave the basic idea about the methods used by Laibach. Lev Kreft added more details and presented impressive, extremely hierarchical and strict scheme of the Neue Slowenische Kunst's structure. The spiritual "State of Art", created by them, is supposed to fight all possible political manipulations. According to Neue Slowenische Kunst, only a universal work of art is able to reach this aim - by simulating the same power and aggression they are fighting against. This path, indeed, brought them to the simulation of "Nazi Kunst" and "Socialistic Realism". Is it a kind of criticism? But is it only that?

NSK used to be a kind of institutional opposition in Slovenia - but in a way they were part of the institutions by imitating them. They use the black Manevich cross as a symbol - but it is often considered as a kind of Nazi symbolism. They
were always against manipulations - but one has never known names of the Neue Slowenische Kunst’s board. Many people connected with NSK were involved in their own manipulation. They have tried to be extraordinary - but they have named themselves "retroguard", in opposition to "vanguard". But art cannot be discussed without taking into account the effect it produces on people. Who visits concerts of Laibach? Sometimes people who get there the dose of aggression and hatred they are looking for: nazi-skinheads, fascists “Embassies” of the "State of Art", that were opened in many countries (first one was opened in Moscow in 1992), are sometimes abused for doubtful political purposes.

The speaker was trying to give us as much information as he could, without providing an answer to the question if they are using fascist attributes just as a part of a game or there is something more to it. Everyone can answer this question differently, and the proof of it was the debate, which followed after the Lev Kreft’s presentation. But mainly participants have agreed, that the manipulation of compromised symbols and words can make people used to them and the immunity of society against them, might be lost.

**European Union Citizenship versus Fortress Europe**

Different NGO’s standpoints: Jürgen Schäfer (UNITED)
Mirek Prokes (DUHA, Czechia)
Klemens Diemling (Helping Hands, Austria)

At the beginning of the debate every participant got a sheet of paper with the UNITED initiative "European Union Citizenship and Equal Rights for All!!" (see page 11 for the full text). Jürgen Schäfer (UNITED) started the debate by explaining the idea and aims of this proposal. He provided several examples of injustices in Europe: of the situation of Turkish youngsters, who can’t get the German citizenship even in the third generation; of stateless Roma people, being expelled from one EU country to another; of paperless people in France, who have been made paperless by newly introduced laws. In the name of UNITED, Jürgen called on all NGOs, parliamentarians, political parties, journalists and human rights activists to make the governments understand, that minority groups should have all the normal political and social rights. All possibilities for voluntary integration have to be provided and the access to equal rights must be secured. That brought UNITED to the necessity to develop a wide concept of EU citizenship for all people who live in the EU. The EU citizenship should be granted to everybody, who has been born in an EU member state or who has lived in the EU for at least three years. This wide concept of EU citizenship would therefore be applicable to different groups of people that are now living in a discriminated position and would have the significant advantage, that all specific demands of minorities can be deduced from it. The regularisation of "illegal" immigrants in Portugal and Spain in 1996 was presented as a realistic way of solving some of the problems.

Miroslav Prokes (DUHA, Czechia) presented a rather sceptical point of view concerning EU citizenship. His main argument was: even if this proposal works out and all people living in the EU get equal citizens’ rights, even if -as a result- the gap between "first-” and "second-class” citizens disappears, it would still leave out a "third class” of people - those who are outside Fortress Europe. There
could be a possibility that the borders would be closed forever to all future asylum seekers and refugees and migrants. The question is if this price for the better conditions of those who are inside is acceptable.

Klemens Diemling (Helping Hands Austria) spoke about the question if we should campaign about something that is not realistic in most countries in Europe at the moment. Does it make sense to propagate a European Union Citizenship for Third Country nationals if it is already difficult to get them a residency permit?

The discussion showed the variety of questions and problems, which appear in people’s mind when thinking about this complicated issue. Won’t the EU citizenship destroy the feeling of belonging to this or another nationality? Will France remain French and Holland remain Dutch? Should all asylum seekers get the citizenship? Isn’t this proposal too unrealistic? None of these questions was answered in the same way by all participants of the debate. Plenty of people still were not ready to trust EU laws and regulations at all - no matter which ones. The debate was continued in the working group.

5. Working Groups

Eleven working groups were held during the conference. They can be divided in three categories: information, training and campaigning. As we have presented the results of the campaign working groups at the beginning, only the information and training working groups are presented here.

Nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Is there a way out?

The discussion on this issue started already just after the lecture. It brought participants to the problem of the extremely fast rise of nationalism in the post-communist era. Members of the working group agreed that probably the lack of the democratic tradition and long years under the pressure of ready-made ideology made people a kind of prisoners to the logic to follow. Religion and nationalism may have offered new structures to obey. The relation between nation and religion was discussed in depth. Some irrational feelings can rule peoples minds. Croatia was given as an example, where hungry and poor people without bread and roof were “proud to have a state”.

NGOs have to be as independent from their states as possible and to do their best to build up a civil society both in reality and in peoples minds. There are different ways in which a state and a society can be build. All should be taken into account and discussed. Could Bosnia become a kind of country like Switzerland with its cantons? Does the presence of many western NGO’s play a role, and is this role positive or negative? At this moment people in Bosnia are still used to hate their former neighbours. It’s necessary to study geopolitical factors as well as political and historical ones and to train people in peace education.

How the mass media stimulate the conflicts

This topic attracted so many people, that the working group had to be split into two parallel ones. But the topic was the same: the negative role of the mass media in conflicts. A Spanish example was given: a case of racist murder has been
clearly stimulated by the mass media. The situation is similar in all countries, as was shown by presenting each person's own experiences. Can there really be independent mass media? Professional journalists are pressurised both by those they are working for, and by reaction of the public, which is often especially happy to hear the things that confirm their prejudices. The possibilities and problems of censorship were discussed. Should the law interfere in the work of media? How should we actually understand tolerance in the mass media? Where should be the limit of what we accept and what we don’t accept? What should be our contribution? Could the Internet be one of our chances for independent and low cost media?

**European Union Citizenship versus Fortress Europe**
The discussion in this group was the prolongation of the debate started in the plenary in the morning (see report above). But very quickly it took another, a little more abstract direction. The initiative of UNITED is not a law; it’s just a proposal. Some people said that such a proposal is unrealistic at this time. So, the question was, what should be more important to us: reacting to nowadays situation or to promote a goal, a principle. We should look not only for what we can do, but also for what we want to do and what is needed. Then the question remains if we want EU citizenship? Again a lot of doubts emerged. It is still difficult for many people to trust EU, their laws and anything connected to the EU. One of the delegates suggested that if more possibilities would be given to minorities and migrants inside the EU, more people would want to go there and more restrictions would appear on the borders. As a result EU citizenship could result in a high wall around Europe and make it even more of a "Fortress". On the other hand, if everything works out as it is said in the proposal, that would be really worth fighting for.

**Legalisation of 'illegals'**
Participants of this working group started with a short presentation of the situation with "illegals" in their home countries (e.g. Ireland, Slovenia, Romania, Portugal, and Switzerland). Actually so-called "illegals" claim nothing but fundamental human rights. The specific case of Roma and Sinti people was pointed out. The problems and discrimination they are facing at all levels deserve special attention of anti-racist groups. All countries will have to think about "illegals". Even countries, which were not receiving many immigrants up to now (such as Romania, Poland etc.), will have to deal with them in the nearest future.
Especially, the attention of participants was focused on the case of Portugal, where illegal people got the legalisation ("amnesty") and were granted a residence permit in June - December 1996. Positive and negative aspects of this event were discussed.
More information on legalisation of "illegals" can be found in UNITED Information Leaflet No. 12. (Available from the UNITED office and from the website: [http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/publications](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/publications))

**Out of school education against intolerance**
The participants of this working group mainly shared their experience and methods of different activities one can arrange outside school to educate people...
against intolerance. Three main fields of possible work were mentioned: information, actions, and training courses. Actions, for example, can include games and other social events, which attract a lot of people. Training courses were said to be probably the most efficient way of educating people, because they take place over a longer period of time, more intensely and with a long lasting effect. During any discussion and any action the organiser always has to take into account the emotions and feelings he triggers with his presentation. The question rose up, which emotions a trainer is "allowed" to show and which emotions he should provoke during activities. It definitely depends on the group a trainer is working with: you can expect other reactions from kids than from policemen. But it should also depend on the atmosphere in this particular group, at this particular time. Some participants recommended shock as a pedagogic effect, caused by showing extreme realities. Different ways of education were discussed as well, such as using music, theatre, Internet cafes and an anti-racist web-site. Special attention was given to European programs of youth exchange journeys. Such programs can be perfect combinations of pleasure with (inter)cultural education.

Conflict prevention and resolution
This working group focused on three possible conflict regions in the Balkan region: Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia. What can be done to prevent conflicts erupting into war? The whole area is like a box full of gun powder, ready to explode. A lot of suggestions of participants immediately got a reaction by people more experienced in this area, bringing to mind the enormous technical or visa problems ready to appear on the way of this or that initiative. One of the participants proposed the possibility of a "meeting" by e-mail organised for students of Belgrade, Kosovo. Letters of support are not enough in this case; real understanding is missing. Special attention should be paid to the background of people and the history of conflict areas. Initiatives to follow: exchange of cultural experience, exchange of lawyers, support of school activities, hospitals. Non-violent actions should be discussed together with activists originally from the region. It is not Western people and NGOs to decide how to behave. Mass media participation in the conflict also became a topic for discussion. Everybody agreed that problems of this area are no more internal problems but international ones.

Improving web communication
It is clear, that Internet is extremely helpful in the international work of human rights groups. Unlimited informational sources, very easily reachable, quick and relatively cheap, the possibility to spread one’s information to a very wide audience via a web site - all those advantages make e-mail and WWW indispensable tools. Of course, there are some disadvantages in using Internet as well, such as the price of its service in some countries, possible misunderstandings between correspondents of e-mail as a result of not being able to see or hear each other. It can be also difficult to select what you really need among the enormous amount of information a user gets through the Internet can also be difficult. One can learn how to get rid of the information that is not needed. Different ways to get in touch with each other by computer were discussed during this workshop. The participants promised to take a look at each others pages and send comments about them by e-mail. Two proposals will need
to be researched further: the idea of a web-conference and the creation of a UNITED webring.

By the way, don’t forget to have a look in the new UNITED European Address Book Against Racism, which now includes the websites of the listed organisations! And take a look on the website:
http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/

6. Social Program
The Political café offered participants the chance to discuss in an informal atmosphere a difficult question: "How sexist are we?" Due to the relatively small amount of those who came (is it already a sign of something?) the discussion was not so wide, and the fact that women were in majority showed that this topic still does not seem to be important for everyone.

The Video evening offered a choice of films with initiatives and activities of different groups.

The Info market as usual had a great success by giving everyone the opportunity to collect and to offer a lot of materials, posters, books, leaflets, stickers etc. Our bags became twice as heavy afterwards.

The International Snacks offered a lot of local delicacies from the home countries of participants. The only problem which made many people suffer was the amount of food we wanted to eat but already couldn’t.

The Intercultural evening showed as always such a variety of talents among participants that we could only wonder why they are not professional artists. But probably all people who have been at UNITED conferences before felt the absence of our dear Jurgen Heuvink (who organised and presented this evening before) and missed him a lot. However, the author wants to underline that Klemens and Eric tried their best to fill his shoes and the result was better then any of us expected. At the end of the evening everybody got a chance to say good-bye to Jürgen Schäfer, whose earlier announced decision to leave UNITED provoked a humorous good-bye from all participants.

We want to give our special thanks to Dertum Band (Bosnian music), which has given us an unforgetta-ble evening.

The other social programs we won’t forget: long and warm discussions mixed with drinks and dances and a romantic trip to the mountain and a waterfall.

7. Thanks to
The International Preparatory Group, the experts, the leaders of the working groups and all participants who came to the conference and worked on it. We thank all our Slovenian co-organisers especially the drivers who worked at the most ungodly hours. And special thanks to Mateja Demsič, the kind fairy godmother of the whole conference. We thank our sponsors, especially the European Youth Foundation and the Slovenian Ministry of Education and Sport, Youth Department.

Report written by: Alexandra Koulaeva
8. EU Citizenship and Equal Rights for All!

EU Citizenship and Equal Rights for All!
An initiative of UNITED for Intercultural Action

The fight against racism and against discrimination of minority groups on grounds of their ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation, sexuality, social status and disability is supported by various forces in society. It will lead hopefully to binding European anti-discrimination laws, which will protect potential victims effectively. Anti-discrimination legislation alone however is not sufficient.

We have to ask: Why a youngster of Turkish background even in the third generation does not automatically get the German citizenship? How long will stateless Roma people be expelled from one EU country to the other? Why can a residence permit in France be withdrawn after 20 years, because of accommodating an 'illegal' immigrant?

Putting a stop to the restrictive naturalisation policies, would mean to show solidarity with the different minority groups. **We call on all NGOs, parliamentarians, political parties, journalists and human rights activists** to make the governments understand that minority groups can not simply be viewed as workers, who do not require political and social rights. While respecting the different cultures, all possibilities for voluntary integration have to be offered and the access to equal rights must be secured.

A necessary legal condition would be to develop a wide concept of extended **EU citizenship for all people who live in the EU**. For nationals of EU member states this will mean complementary rights to the rights they already have. For all other people living in the EU, it will mean full access to citizen's rights. The EU citizenship should be granted to everybody, **who has been born in an EU member state or who has lived in the EU for at least 3 years**.

This wide concept of EU citizenship would therefore be applicable to:
- EU citizens residing in another member state (5.5 million)
- EU citizens living unregistered in another member state
- third country nationals, e.g. migrant workers and their families (12 million)
- stateless persons, e.g. Roma
- asylum seekers and refugees
- undocumented people, the so-called 'sans-papiers' or 'illegals'

To fight for equal rights with this concept has the significant advantage, that **all specific demands of minorities can be deduced from the EU citizenship:**
- the right of free travelling in the EU
- the right of settlement in all EU countries without temporary restrictions
- full access to the labour market and housing
- the right to vote and to be elected on local, national and EU-level
- full access to social security: health care, unemployment benefits, pensions
- access to education and vocational training
- the right for family unification
- protection against violation of personal liberties: data abuse, fingerprinting

As anti-racist and human rights organisations we cannot exclude any group from our solidarity. That is why we include specifically the so called 'illegal' immigrants into our concept. They are the most exploited, living under inhuman conditions and having to fight day by day for their survival. In total there are several millions in the EU, including an estimated 0.3 million in France and half a million in Germany. They desperately need a regularisation of their status, such as has taken place in Portugal, Spain and Italy in 1996.

To lobby for extended EU citizenship is of course difficult, but we should not orientate too much to the 'realistic', which is often very cautious, but to what is desperately needed by the discriminated groups. If many of the problems, that minorities face in the EU, are created by an unjust global economy, we should not hesitate to force the persons responsible to carry the consequences. Citizenship and equal rights should not stay an utopia, but become a normality. Knowing of the different political discussion in the EU countries, we invite everybody to help mobilising for as many of the above demands as possible.

9 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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