



RESOLUTION

INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES AT STAKE

COUNCIL OF MEMBERS
/EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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The European Youth Forum believes in the values represented in the European Convention on Human Rights: peace, non-violence, respect, inclusion, diversity and equality. After the attacks in France and Denmark and the massive killing of citizens in Nigeria and students in Kenya during 2015 and the ensuing backlash, we witnessed that these values were not respected all around the world. These hate crimes are a wake-up call for all of us.

Social and economic exclusion leaves space and opportunities to attract and recruit people for extremist violence. The youth movement, civil society and the public sector have to increase their efforts in combating racism, xenophobic and religious discrimination, as well as movements promoting these agendas.

Numerous austerity measures have contributed to rising inequality, hitting the most vulnerable groups the hardest. Moreover we see a rise in nationalistic and regressive policies regarding media freedom, other forms of expression, and immigration. Xenophobic, racist and other discriminative behaviour as well as language, cultural and religious discrimination is gaining acceptance and leading to closing borders and segregation of groups in society.

Lack of functional, transparent and accountable institutions is increasing citizens' distrust in politicians and institutions¹. This is particularly affecting young people and their participation in democratic life. Young people are, as a result, being characterised more and more as a group not interested in politics. We believe that this incorrect perception is often the result of intolerant politics that actually discourages citizens, including youth, from getting involved.

We believe that diverse and inclusive societies are the basis of Europe, and these values are the soil in which we encourage strong and fair democracies to grow and flourish. The main ways of achieving this is through education and policies aimed at promoting equal opportunities, intercultural understanding and social inclusion for everyone, especially for young people.

Furthermore, youth organisations, non-formal civic and political education are crucial for the development of critical and analytical thinking and, therefore, necessary for democracy. Civil society has had a historically important role in fighting undemocratic movements. Youth organisations provide space for young people, not least the most marginalised groups, to learn, experience and discover diversity, mutual respect, responsibility and democratic values. Formal education systems have a responsibility in nurturing these values as well by providing civic education to everyone as an integrated part of curricula.

¹ League of Young Voters, Addressing youth absenteeism in European elections, 2014 - http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/02/YFJ-LYV_StudyOnYouthAbsenteeism_WEB.pdf

Media is one of the main pillars of democratic societies. Nevertheless, media coverage is not always balanced, free of stereotypes, prejudices, bias, and it can enable an environment which is not supportive of an inclusive society.

We call for:

- A rising investment in programmes ensuring young people's rights to quality education and especially to civic and citizenship education and the development of media literacy, critical thinking, free thought and respect of diversity, with the aim of reaching youth of all geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- A strong investment in civil society, and youth organisations as part of civil society, which not only provide opportunities but also involve young people in democratic and empowering processes.
- Free access to education regardless of social background, country of origin, gender or age, or the level of education.
- Easily accessible support for young people who want to get involved in youth organisations at regional, national and international level but who cannot afford membership fees or activity costs.
- Social issues to be at the centre of public policy, including at the European level, ensuring access to rights that every human being should have such as access to public services, quality employment and a non-discriminative and inclusive society.
- The prevention of social divides and economic inequality in order to foster an inclusive society, especially to empower vulnerable groups in their access to rights. Targeted integration policies leading to the inclusion of all in society.
- Promotion of intercultural understanding within and among communities and countries.
- Equal access to information for all social groups, especially social minorities.
- Measures for a more inclusive society not to stop at the borders of Europe but instead a strong intercontinental cooperation promoting peace, non-violence, respect, solidarity, inclusion, diversity and equality.
- Strong anti-discrimination legislation implemented across Europe through advocacy for and the adoption of policies such as the EC Directive 2008/0140 on implementing the principle of equal treatment.
- A removal of all national legislation limiting the rights of specific minorities.
- Norm criticism to be promoted as a method to challenge norms that are restricting access to rights and equal opportunities for youth in society.

- Democracy and active citizenship as part of the school curriculum throughout the whole formal education system.
- Functioning, transparent and accountable institutions and democracy².
- Active empowerment of all citizens in political participation processes with specific attention for those groups who are now found to participate less in democratic processes. Specifically, we call upon the European Parliament to lead the drive to fully implement article 11 TEU in order to invigorate participatory democracy in the EU.
- Organisations and institutions to be representative of the diversity of their societies.
- A diverse society through ensuring political participation of minorities.
- The establishment of a European Day for Victims of Hate Crimes on July 22nd.

² Head of States Warsaw Declaration, May 2005
http://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517_decl_varsovie_en.asp