



SHARE YOUR PEACE

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

MODULE 8

THE ATTRIBUTES OF A PEACE EDUCATOR



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I. Introduction

During the past two decades, the world experienced some of the highest rates of violence, having affected large numbers of countries and regions, from the poorest to the most affluent, directly affecting the lives, dignity, and wellbeing of millions of people globally. The primary pillar for preventing armed conflict and violence, saving lives and freeing up limited resources for social needs is Peace Education.

By educating and empowering people for a democratic, tolerant and progressive countries by promoting values of democracy, responsible citizenship and social cohesion, peace educators strive to create peaceful and democratic societies. Peace educators enhance structures that promote the participation of youth in peacebuilding processes, contributing to their actively engagement and interest. They motivate young people to be agents of peace, promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue and advocates for social cohesion in their communities, because youth can be positive instruments in peacebuilding processes.

In the following e-learning module, youth will have an opportunity to learn about what are the skills, knowledge and competences of peace educators as well as they will understand the role of youth work and youth workers as catalyst of peace.



II. What is Peace education?

Understanding peace education is more important than ever, because we face a period in our history where war and conflicts cause the greatest destructions to lives and property than ever before. Violence affects people's life, development and well-being of societies as well as armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a countries' development, affecting economic growth and often resulting in long-standing grievances among communities. Moreover, young people growing up in conflict situations experience great challenges, because violent conflicts have negative impacts on all dimensions of their lives.

However, peace educators, as key agents in ensuring educational learning, both formal and non-formal, have the opportunity to ensure equity, peace and social cohesion. They also play a central role in building successful and sustainable peace in post conflict situations and they can be seen as part of the solution when rebuilding an education system. Before to see what are the attributes of a peace educator, let's focus first on what is peace education!



There are various definitions of peace education and a vast body of literature on this field. According to Ian Harris and John Synott, peace education can be described as a series of "teaching encounters" that draw from people¹:

- their desire for peace,
- nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and
- skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_education#cite_note-8



According to Ian Harris, peace education is comprehensive, interdisciplinary in nature and embraces a wide range of programs and initiatives. It can be classified under five main headings:

- Environment Education
- Human Rights Education
- International Education
- Development Education
- Conflict Resolution Education

All the five headings are part in the same educational effort and only by combining them we can see a productive peace educational programmes.



UNICEF defines peace education as “the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level”. Education for non-violence and peace includes training, skills and information directed towards cultivating a culture

of peace based on human rights principles. This education not only provides knowledge about a culture of peace, but also imparts the skills and attitudes necessary to defuse and recognize potential conflicts, and those needed to actively promote and establish a culture of peace and non-violence².

According to UNICEF, the learning objectives of peace education may include an understanding of the manifestations of violence, the development of capacities to respond constructively to that violence and specific knowledge of alternatives to violence. Two fundamental concepts of peace education are respect and skills. Respect refers to the development of respect for self and for others; skills refer to specific communication, cooperation and behaviour skills used in conflict situations.

Another approaches to peace education are “education for peace” and “education about peace”. Education for peace is the education in order to create preconditions for the achievement of peace and education about peace involves the developmental and practice of instructions and processes that comprise a peaceful social order.

Peace education highlights the essential unity of humanity and emphasizes the importance of constantly referring to the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation in efforts to resolve our common problems. Sowing the seeds for peace and

²² <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000160787>



justice through formal and non-formal education could nurture a new generation of world leaders and ordinary citizens who have a vision of peaceful and just world and who have both the skill and will to bring this vision to reality. Education at all levels is the key to building a culture of peace³.

Developing capabilities for peace through broad based education involves behavioural, cognitive, spiritual and attitudinal components. Peace education should include instructional practices that respect developmental, cognitive and intellectual capacities. It can empower and inspire learners and bring a healthy balance and diversity to activism. Any curriculum of peace must have at its core, teaching of empathy. An infusion or integration of principles of peace into the education programmes is advocated. Discourses of empathy and reconciliation in curriculum and pedagogy are critical components of the reformation of peace education goals. Emphasis should be on critical thinking, problem solving, language and life skills as well as open mindedness, expressiveness, peacefulness, flexibility and sensitivity towards various global issues.

In addition, the term “education” in this context refers to any process – whether in schools, or in informal or non-formal educational contexts – that develops in youth or adults the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values leading to behaviour change. Peace education must address the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflict and violence, whether overt or structural, from the interpersonal level to the societal and global level.

III. Peace educator and its attributes

- Definition of Peace educator**

Following the above mentioned definitions for peace education, a peace educator is a person who encourage a global culture of peace and put all its efforts to build a peaceful and sustainable dialogue between people facing cultural differences, social inequalities, racial and ethnic discrimination, etc. The education for peace should explain the necessity and the possibility of peace as well as take action in favour of peace. Peace educators can improve people’s understanding of current conflicts and can help understand how our actions can contribute to more peaceful societies. The grow of peace education reflects on the development of peace movements that bring many changes in response to social, economic and political issues.

Peace educators can enhance structures that promote the participation of youth in peacebuilding processes, contributing to their actively engagement and interest. They can motivate young people to be agents of peace, to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue and advocates for social cohesion in their communities, because youth can be positive instruments in peacebuilding processes.

³ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED507654.pdf>



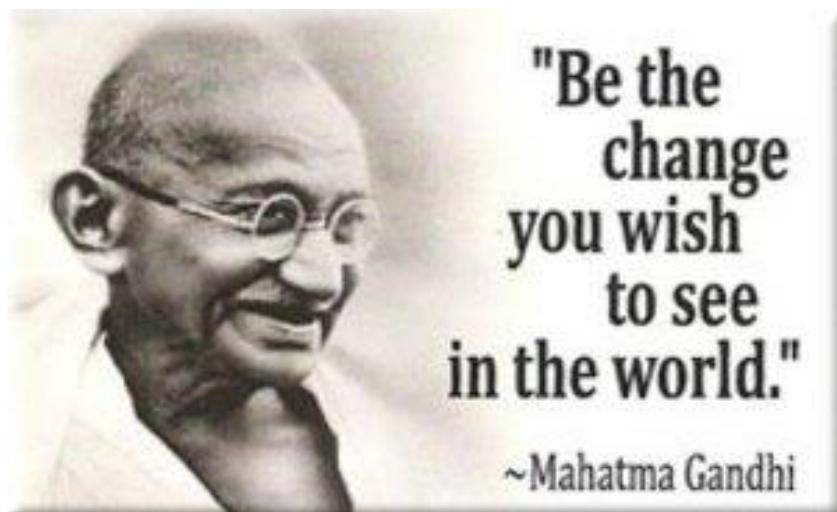
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Peacebuilding efforts involve a social change that can be brought about by formal, non-formal, and informal education; school-to-work transition; peace-building and conflict resolution; youth engagement, participation, and empowerment. Through different approaches and innovative ways, peace educators can encourage youth-led initiatives at local, national and international level, fostering youth leadership and youth peacebuilder networks. Young people can play a leading role in building peace and transforming conflicts, and through youth empowerment they can become peace educators as well. The empowerment of young people from different social, ethnic, cultural backgrounds can lead to conflict transformation processes while enabling environment for youth participation.

Peace educators can initiate partnerships with local and national governments, civil societies, private sector and the media. They can foster dialogue between different level institutions and young people, promoting community adoption of educational, social, and religious programs that mitigate environmental factors which raise the risk of youth adopting violent extremist worldviews. Moreover, they can design and implement initiatives for disengagement of individuals from violent extremism, creating initiatives and projects stopping the recruitment of vulnerable populations, such as internally displaced people and refugees.

Having the necessary competences, knowledge and skills can allow peace educators to create future educational peace programmes and partnerships that promote peace education. Keep in mind that becoming a peace educator, it does not only consist of taking a university degree on peace studies. Although, having a diploma on peace studies will be great, you can upgrade your competences and skills through different non-formal activities and other educational peace programs. To be a peace educator, does not mean that you need to have a perfect knowledge, skills, and attitudes. On the contrary, peace education is inherently a process of life-long learning, and we are all learners that are perpetually seeking greater knowledge and understanding.





- **The characteristics, skills, knowledge and competence of peace educator**

Peace educators should have the conceptual and theoretical knowledge about peace education as well as personal characteristics that support the peace and peace-making skills. Keep in mind that successful peace educators possess an array of attributes, so the list below is not an exhaustive. Following, let's see some of them!

- **Broad understanding in the field of peace education**

This first point is more than clear, so we will not focus a lot on it. Evidently, a peace educator need to have deeper understanding of what is peace and visions of peace; conflicts, its effects and dynamics; conflicts causes, prevention and resolution tools, and methods. Often peace education can be also related to human rights education. Peace educators have to know how to reduce prejudice, negative stereotypes, and tensions between people who belong to different cultures. Thus, peace educators need to educate learners about cultural similarities and differences, because for the culture of peace to become established, it is necessary to accept the principles of uniqueness in diversity and to establish the social norms of respect, dignity, and the rights of every individual.

- **Interreligious and Intercultural competences**

Interreligious dialogue, also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to a mutual understanding and respect that allows them to live and cooperate with each other in spite of their differences. Knowledge acquisition about other cultures and religions, will help peace educators to promote the importance of cooperation and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, where each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the rights of the other to practice their faith freely. Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue can take place in both formal and non-formal settings, including human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities on many levels (between neighbours, in schools, place of work, during non-formal seminars, etc.). The main objective of interreligious dialogue is peace.

Moreover, as we all know, intercultural education fosters understanding, acceptance and engagement between people of all kinds of cultures and backgrounds. It promotes the value of diversity and the competences needed to engage appropriately and effectively across differences. Specifically, when peace-building and humanitarian work calls for conflict resolution, intercultural competence is required to develop culturally sensitive and appropriate solutions⁴. An intercultural competent person shows affective, behavioural, and cognitive abilities, such as openness, empathy, adaptive

⁴ <https://medium.com/connect-intercultural-insights-for-global-citizens/educating-for-peace-the-role-of-intercultural-learning-456c65795c80>



motivation, perspective taking, behavioural flexibility, and person-centered communication. Thus, intercultural competency can be defined as transformation of learning into desired attitudes, and a growth process where an individual's existing knowledge about culture is evolving to intercultural knowledge, attitude, and behaviour.

- **Peace literacy**

Peace literacy provides a realistic and empowering framework for understanding what it means to be human, the root causes of violence, the nature of peace, and the anatomy of trauma, including childhood trauma, racial trauma, and war trauma. Peace literacy frames peace not merely as a goal, but as a practical skill-set that helps us to increase realistic peace in our lives, communities, nations, and the world. Peace literacy also helps us fully develop our human capacity for empathy, conscience, reason, and realistic hope. Thanks to peace literacy skills, peace educators can make a positive difference in their communities and contribute with more ideas, helping to create a more peace literate world.

Peace literacy is growing movement of educators and concerned citizens who want to empower people with training, skills, and understanding needed to heal the root causes of the problems, rather than merely addressing surface symptoms. The idea was created by Paul K. Chappell, a West Point graduate, former Army captain, and Iraq war veteran who grew up in a violent household and struggled with trauma throughout his school years. Realizing that humanity is facing new challenges that require us to become as well-trained in waging peace as soldiers are in waging war, he created peace literacy to help students and adults from various backgrounds work toward their full potential and a more peaceful world⁵. Consequently, peace literacy is must to have for a peace educator.



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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/596e3d9fa5790a4879aa0327/t/5bad607b15fcc01559f8059d/1538089083555/PLGuide2018.pdf>



- **Communication skills**

Effective communication benefits everyone. It helps improve relationships, increase understanding, and model positive interactions. Moreover, peace educators who hone their communication skills are prepared to instruct, advise and mentor learners. They must be skilled at listening to their public as well as explaining things clearly. Peace educators need clarity of thought to present different topics. They must be able to break down complex ideas into simpler parts and smaller steps to transmit to their learners. They must be able to adapt their methods of communication to all the public regardless of ability or learning style. During their face to face interactions, peace educators need to find the right way to interact in the form of dialogue and deliberation promoting peace, reconciliation, and the identity changed associates with peace education. For example, dialogue is designed to redress weaknesses in power-oriented concerned resolution techniques. Although the theory of dialogue can be complex, at its core it is concerned with stimulating growth and change. Also, peace education that incorporates the principles of reconciliation encourages a promotive communicative relationship that includes ways to manage future conflicts, mutual respect, security, humanization of the other, and establishment of a trusting and cooperative discourse. Reconciliation is particularly crucial to conducting parties who have ended violent contact but must still continue to live and work together⁶.

- **Peace advocacy skills**

From the previous module, you learnt that peace advocacy aims to create non-violent alternatives and promote the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence. Moreover, peace advocacy as a project aims to raise communities' awareness on education, the culture of peace and dialogue. So, between the people in charge of providing such advocacy in the communities, are also the peace educators.

The peace educators must motivate young people to take an active role in peacebuilding process, creating sustaining peace initiatives, and motivate them to participate actively and meaningfully in peace processes that affect their lives. Peace educators can empower young people in negotiating and implementing peace agreements, ensuring that young people's views will be taken into account in security-related discussions, and facilitating their participation at decision-making levels. Peace educators have to inspire youth to be peacekeepers and to be able to identify those who have the power to make the necessary change because lasting peace can be achieved only through collective action and the engagement of all parties' levels and stakeholders. Undoubtedly, as advocates for peace they need to possess a peace advocating skills.

⁶ https://www.academia.edu/4025079/Contribution_of_Communication_to_Peace_Education



- **Leadership mindset and skills**

Leadership skills are vital for peace educators, because this is the ability to teach and mentor people to reach a shared goal. Peace educators who are leaders can promote effectively a positive peace in their communities and creatively engage other people in transforming a culture of violence into a culture of peace. In general, when people are motivated to act individually and function collectively for the benefit of humanity and the planet, peace leadership is present.

The term “peace leadership” refers to the mobilization of action for change. Central to peace leadership is a desire for inclusion and cohesion whereby individuals are enabled to live in liberty to their fullest potential, free from the oppression of powers who seek to wield dominance. Peace leadership therefore is focused on creating a positive peace, while including essential elements working against forces for violence and aggression, or negative peace⁷. The literature around traits and characteristics of peace leaders tend to look to charismatic leaders such as Gandhi or King as examples of how peace is brought forth. While such literature does acknowledge the role of the masses in such movements, the primary attention is given to a “leadership as person” model that leaves absent the interrelated importance of other aspects of such peace processes. These leader-focused discussions also occurred in the literature in terms of peace leadership skills. Between the leadership practices necessary for leading social movement are building relationships, crafting a public narrative that facilitates purposeful action; engaging in creative strategizing to challenge those with power; and catalysing action. Leadership for peace is also related to negotiations, especially at the international scale, where thanks to the effectiveness of individuals and teams to forge agreements, they can meet mutual interests.

As leaders, peace educators can be seen as exceptional individuals, who manage to inspire and mobilize significant numbers of people to achieve or try to achieve exceptional and positive things.



⁷ <http://integralleadershipreview.com/12903-47-an-integral-perspective-of-peace-leadership/>



The peace educator is a responsible global citizen, an intentional agent of a culture of peace, a person of vision, capable of hope and the imaging of positive change. The peace educator understands that education should be means towards constructive change, and he or she is motivated to be actively involved in the community, seeing himself/herself as a person responsible to the society. Between the skills that a peace educator should have are also listening, negotiation, peer-mediation, problem solving, critical thinking, intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication. A peace educator should be an effective listener and listen other carefully to understand and negotiate effectively. Problem solving and critical thinking are intertwined and important skills because the educator should solve problems effectively by thinking critically. Similarly, intercultural communication skills would be helpful for a peace educator to manage effective interaction with a new culture.

Apart of the skills and knowledge that peace educator must possess, surely, he or she need to have the basic and necessary personal characteristics – to be tolerant, open-minded, respectful, patient, self-confident, encouraging, peaceful, forgiving, fair, empathetic and supportive⁸.

However, as mentioned in the beginning of this part, the presented list was neither exhaustive nor definitive. The important thing for us to remember is that it is best that we begin our journey as a peace educator with our own personal or inner transformation.

IV. Youth workers as catalysts of peace

Youth workers are seen as essential actors in contributing to peacebuilding processes, because as agents of positive change, they can act as peace educators in their own organizations and communities, at local, regional and international levels. Equipped with the right skills, knowledge, and confidence, they can effectively manage and turn around potentially harmful situations in a clear, assertive and constructive manner. Empowered with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills, they can use the culture as a tool to build a system for intercultural dialogue and more effective mediation as well as implement strategies for conflict resolution and for succeeding a cross-cultural dialogue. They can promote values of tolerance and prevention of violence, to give a voice to marginalized youth and to enhance values of human rights, freedom and dialogue.

Although people find various reasons for war or conflict, it is important to resolve conflict situations before they reach the level of war when people considered rational beings. Youth workers have the ability to develop an understanding, taking action to end conflict situations and creating a peaceful environment. Through leadership, they can

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340240642_Peace_Education_and_Empathy_The_Effect_of_Peace_Education_Program_on_the_Empathy_Trends_of_Primary_School_Students



prevent the formation of a conflict, create cooperation and harmony between people or communities as well as contribute to build a sustainability peace. Youth workers as peacebuilding leaders have a crucial role in peacebuilding process, because their leadership is vital for the establishment of each of the peacebuilding phases. They act as role models for others by engaging in peaceful actions and efforts to create peace. As peace leaders they can provide a safe area for others to share their knowledge, deepen their understanding, and apply the principles of peace such as nonviolence, empathy, compassion and trust. Thus, youth workers can contribute to the formation of a peaceful environment by motivating non-violent movements in society and motivating them to create peaceful systems that lead to fair change.

According to UNESCO, a peaceful environment can be achieved by creating a culture of sharing that is shaped in the light of the principles of freedom, justice, tolerance, democracy and solidarity. In this respect, youth leadership can contribute to the formation of peace by creating a culture dominated by a sense of partnership between the individuals and the groups. Youth leaders at all levels can make important contributions, because they are community producers who build social and community structured designed to meet the needs of their citizens and the safety of their people. Through range of activities, they can enhance the capacities of young people as peacebuilders and advocate for peace before institutions such as the United Nations and its agencies and the European Union.

Youth workers can ensure young people access to training opportunities in conflict transformation, mediation, negotiation and advocacy skill. They can encourage young people to become active, self-reliant and self-reflexive citizens and provide them with tools to work for peace and solidarity in their own communities. So, thanks to youth work activities, young people can reflect on a vision for peace and see themselves as active contributors and powerful multipliers toward this vision. Many revolutions have been started and led by young activists who were able to create networks, mutual support structures and common platforms for advocacy, sharing resources and ideas.





Youth workers and ICTs

Information and communication technology (ICT) has become an integral part of our societies, playing both a positive and negative role in social cohesion, conflicts dynamics, and broader social issue. However, when applied correctly, they can be used with great success in terms of peace promotion and peace advocacy. Equipped with the right digital knowledge and skills, youth workers can promote peace with ICT-driven initiatives, because ICTs offer potential for peace in several ways.

ICTs can help address the root causes of violent conflict, by promoting mutual understanding and knowledge, essential factors in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconciliation. Moreover, youth workers can initiative online activities to foster the participation of future generations in peace processes throughout the world because Internet is seen as information space through which a limitless number of individuals and organizations can have direct access to a global audience, especially with the rise of social media channels. Social media can facilitate peace by encouraging valuable dialogue between people from different ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds. This dialogue can, in turn, alter attitudes, change perceptions, and encourage increased tolerance and mutual understanding between ethnic groups who would otherwise never have had the opportunity to engage with one another.

Social media activism includes creation and dissemination of Facebook pages and groups, Twitter hashtags, videos on YouTube, etc., where youth activists spread the message of peace among broad public. There is immense strength in numbers as various campaigns over the past decade have indicated.

For example, the #ArabSpring campaign brought the world's attention to the multiple protest and unrest in countries ranging from Syria to Tunisia and united like-minded individuals who were eager to take action in the hope of a new order being born. The Arab Spring Movement was active in Middle Eastern and Northern African (MENA) countries from late 2010 until middle of 2014. After the initial events in Tunisia, during which citizens were tired of repression, corrupt government officials, and a lack of economic opportunities, a crisis arose which spread from Tunisia to Egypt, Algeria, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, and finally into Syria. This political and social turbulence from trying to overthrow authoritarian governments also had an impact on other country's regional views and geopolitical trends around the globe.



A recent social media example is the use of anti-war messages according to the context of conflict between India and Pakistan in 2019, such as "make chai ("tea") not war". This message was widely shared and discussed on social media. On Facebook, this message has been



linked more than 12,000 times, commented on around 2000 times, and shared more than 5000 times.

In addition, these two countries have experienced four wars between 1948 and 1999, and peace efforts on the part of civil society activists have existed for many years. However, civil society's use of social media for peace is a new trend, and extensive field research show that correct social media strategies of civil society activists can ease the risk of war and violence and improve the prospect for long-term peaceful relations between both countries⁹.

Internet and ICT technologies help youth workers reach and engage young people around the world. Using online consultations, webinars, social media outreach and digital guides to peacebuilding, they can promote peace and peace education. Such examples are also our e-learning materials that aims to empower young people to become pro-active agents of peaceful change, addressing societal conflicts.

Youth workers and fake news

Let's not forget that social media has also become an instrument for conflict escalation through fake information. The presence of new media and the Internet has made it easier to amplify worldviews during violent times. Mobile phones, for example, have been pointed out as having the potential to escalate violence by facilitating ways of

organizing and sharing grievances, and social media platforms can accelerate the spread of hateful content. Moreover, social media has become a platform used by no state actors and political parties to spread disinformation about other group as a means to bolster tensions and conflicts. Spreading fake news can occur at all levels of society, and this is part of the danger in social media's relationship with conflict.



In this scenario, youth workers have an important role to play because they can train young people to recognize and combat online hate speech, and identify ways to build peace online. Through non formal trainings and different activities, youth workers can help young people to combat hate speech and increase awareness through accurate information. Online disinformation has been blamed for fuelling violence all over the world, so there is an urgent need for educating young people on how to disengage with fake news, improving their public awareness and individual's critical thinking skills.

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340384822_Conflict_and_Social_Media_Activism_of_Civil_Society_for_Peace_Between_India-Pakistan



Youth workers and prevention of violent radicalization

Youth work has a role to play in building democratic resilience and empowering young people to become active participants in the European democratic society. Youth work as well as non-formal and informal learning can foster active citizenship and participation of young people in diverse and tolerant societies, preventing marginalisation and radicalisation potentially resulting in violent behaviour.

The succession of terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015 and 2016 involving young people who were born and raised in Europe, as well as the rise in incidents of hate-crime and xenophobia, highlighted that in order to maintain open and inclusive societies, radicalisation leading to violent extremism has to be prevented at an early stage. Youth work has a role to play in empowering young people to be active citizens and thus keeping them guarded from extremist ideologies potentially leading to violent behaviour. It helps young people gain skills and competences through non-formal and informal learning, such as teamwork, leadership, intercultural competences, problem solving, and critical thinking. It supports young people in the difficult identity issues that can arise in adolescence. It can make a difference by supporting young people, especially those at risk of marginalisation and social exclusion, with their problems by empowering them to deal with the challenges of growing up in a complex, pluralistic modern society¹⁰.

Through mentoring and guidance, youth workers must help young people to express and explore their own identity as well as that of others. Youth workers should accept the need for young people to express their fears and frustrations in relations to intercultural or interfaith issues. When intercultural and interfaith dialogue is occurring, youth workers should try to stress the common values instead of spotting the differences. Moreover, youth workers can provide positive narratives to counter extremist ideologies. By counter narratives, it is meant either an alternative narrative (for positively presenting facts and offering alternative solutions to spiritual, psychological, social or political needs, desires and grievances) or a deconstructing narrative (which enables a young person to critically analyse an extremist ideology and debunk its inadequate answers to those needs and grievances).



¹⁰ http://www.injuve.es/sites/default/files/informe_coe.pdf



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Youth workers and peace advocacy

With the approval of the Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security by the UN's Security Council in 2015, the role of youth in peacebuilding has gained recognition and direction. However, in many European countries, the involvement of young people in peace process at political level is very low.

In this scenario, youth workers and young leaders have an important role to play because they can empower young people to engage in peacebuilding through youth peace advocacy, taking place at all levels of decision-making. They can encourage young people to come together and help each other towards the achievement of a culture of peace. Moreover, they can design innovative youth-driven advocacy projects fostering the involvement of young people in peace processes at local, national and international level.

Youth workers need to apply the principles of learning by doing for youth empowerment, particularly in the field of empowering young people for taking actions for conflict transformation through youth-led advocacy. They can inspire youth to be key players, able to identify those who have the power to make the necessary change because lasting peace can be achieved only through collective action and the engagement of all parties' levels and stakeholders. Youth workers can initiate partnerships with local and national governments, civil societies, private sector and the media. They can foster dialogue between different level institutions and young people, promoting community adoption of educational, social, and religious programs that mitigate environmental factors which raise the risk of youth adopting violent extremist worldviews.

Youth workers can encourage youth awareness and commitment to tackling community conflicts and challenges, through the creation of local youth activities and campaigns. Youth workers can provide young people a better understanding of reasons and mechanisms driving religious, ethnic or identity-based tensions at a community level. They can organize quality projects and programs that involve or benefit young people and promote social inclusion on all levels, from the local to European one.

Advocacy works!





With the necessary support, youth workers can design and implement a youth-driven actions, initiatives and trainings, exploring the full potential of youth in peacebuilding process from the grassroots level and promoting a culture of peace, at local, regional and international level. They can create a common and safe space to share experiences, challenges and initiatives. In the following pages, we will see two examples of training courses that were organized by youth organizations and supported by the Erasmus Plus programme of the European Union.



“Face 2 Faith” project was a training course that took place in Yerevan, Armenia, in October, 2019, and was coordinated by Copernicus Berlin e.V. This training gathered together 28 youth workers coming from Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain, Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia.

The main objective of “Face 2 Faith” was to help and support youth workers in improving their competences in the field of inter-religious dialogue. Moreover, thanks to the training activities, participants raised their competences to empower youngsters in their communities and raise their competences and motivation for critical review towards media and media reporting, when it comes to religious backgrounds. Youth workers were provided with new knowledge for fostering mutual understanding, challenge stereotypes and prejudices. The training activity helped youth workers to share and exchange knowledge on interreligious dialogue and allocated space for youth workers to develop project ideas in the same field.

Thanks to the participation in this project, youth workers increased the network with colleagues from other countries and organizations as well as later created youth initiatives promoting interreligious dialogue. Such non-formal educational opportunities help youth workers to act as multipliers in their local area, and consequently benefit young people in their communities promoting interreligious dialogue between them.





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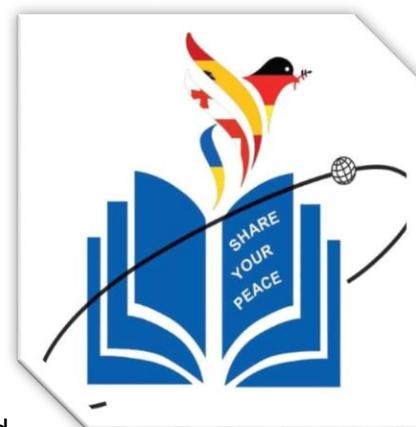
Another very successful project was “Youth & Peace”, a training course coordinated also by Copernicus Berlin e.V., and organized in Yerevan, Armenia, in the beginning of September, 2019.



The project gathered together youth workers coming from Germany, Bulgaria, Spain, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia. The main aim of the training was to provide youth workers with the necessary competences and tools to develop projects in the field of peacebuilding through raising awareness about the necessity to diplomacy approach.

Thanks to the project, participants understood the role of international youth organizations in youth diplomacy and peacebuilding, and acquired appropriate knowledge and skills related to the topic. They learnt and shared best practices as well as got to know about the existence and the work of peacebuilding initiatives and campaigns. They learnt how to develop qualities awareness campaigns on peace topics and also organized several campaigns during their stay in Armenia.

Important to mention is that after this intensive training week, came the idea for applying for the current KA2 project “Share Your Peace”. Working in international teams, youth workers realized that promotion of peace is crucial for our societies’ wellbeing and that young people have a crucial role to play. However, promoting their participation in peacebuilding is not an easy mission, and a social approach that connects young people to civil society, and provides them with opportunities, training and support for their active engagement and participation is more than needed.





V. Conclusion

Peacebuilding efforts involve a social change that can be brought about by formal, non-formal, and informal education; school-to-work transition; peace-building and conflict resolution; youth engagement, participation, and empowerment. Through different approaches and innovative ways, peace educators can encourage youth-led initiatives at local, national and international level, fostering youth leadership and youth peacebuilder networks.

To do so, peace educators should have the conceptual and theoretical knowledge about peace education as well as personal characteristics that support the peace and peace-making skills. However, to be a peace educator, does not mean that you need to have a perfect knowledge, skills, and attitudes. On the contrary, peace education is inherently a process of life-long learning, and we are all learners that are perpetually seeking greater knowledge and understanding.