

European Conference “Regaining Europe – The Role of Youth Work in Supporting European Cohesion”

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Tuesday, March 12th to Friday 15th 2019 in Leipzig, Germany

Introduction

The current developments in Europe raise some concern about its future. While Europe was and is in a constant state of flux, the UK’s decision to exit the European Union is an unprecedented indicator of a growing mistrust vis-à-vis an open and solidary Europe. The main concern these days is to preserve European principles and prevent a return to nationalist tendencies.

The idea to discuss Europe’s current situation and the potential role of youth policy and youth work in fostering the European spirit is rooted in the “shock day” in June 2016 when Brexit happened, but also in the growing nationalism and populism across Europe. The list of current challenges is long, beginning with the lack of solidarity between European countries in essential political issues, in particular the integration and hosting of refugees and the social divide.

The National Agencies for Erasmus+ Youth in Action and the European Solidarity Corps from Germany, Slovenia and Italy in cooperation with the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership will host the conference

“Regaining Europe – The Role of Youth Work in Supporting European Cohesion”

from Tuesday, 12th till Friday, 15th March 2018 in Leipzig, Germany.

Why having a conference?

The organisers of the event are facing the above mentioned challenges on a daily basis and with increasing concerns, in particular regarding the upcoming elections to the European Parliament. They are convinced the European idea needs to be renewed. It would need a new European narrative that responds to the realities of everyday European life. The idea is to discuss the current situation in Europe and the potential role of youth policy and youth work, including the programmes Erasmus+ Youth in Action and European Solidarity Corps, in helping to restore the European spirit and foster European cohesion.

Aims of the conference

Ideas and motivations to organize the conference are to create an environment for critical debate on European values and the future of Europe while making youth work more political and more European. Accordingly, the conference aims at reflecting on common European issues such as democracy, citizenship, solidarity and the social dimension of Europe as well at motivating and mobilizing participants, in particular young people, to act for the idea of a strong Europe. It will provide an opportunity to exchange on shared European values and the future of Europe and to deepen the dialogue beyond borders and between citizens.

The conference shall also contribute to the reflections on the new EU Youth strategy and the EU campaign “12 ideas”.

Target groups

About 120 participants are expected to take part in the conference; among them will be youth workers from diverse levels and backgrounds as well as policy-makers, decision-makers, officials, researchers, stakeholders and members of European networks in the field of youth.

The Manifesto

It is planned to publish prior to the conference a Manifesto on Youth Work in Europe, summarizing the current situation in Europe from the perspective of young people and identifying demands and possible solutions. It will be drafted by an editorial group of experts and serve as a basis for reflection in the conference. Following the conference the Manifesto will be revised by the expert group in accordance with the discussions at that very place and largely published.

The programme

The programme foresees a welcome and interactive opening session on the first day. Inspirational keynote speeches including buzz groups in the morning of the second day titled “Regaining Europe” will be followed by a panel discussion representing participants from diverse backgrounds such as European institutions, representatives from National Ministries responsible for youth, public administrations, National Agencies and the civil society.

Eight parallel expert fora from the afternoon of the second day on will discuss topics such as democracy development, nationalism and populism, diversity, inclusion and inequality, dignity, migration, solidarity and human rights.

A creative sharing of forum results will take place in the morning of the third day, followed by an Open Space on 'Youth work, youth policy, young people - what is our role in shaping Europe?'. Results of the open space sessions will be shared in the late afternoon. A farewell party with special guests will close the day. On the fourth and last day a panel will be looking at the European Union from outside, from China, USA, Arabian countries as well as Eastern European and South Eastern European countries, before summing up the lessons learned and discussing next steps.

Call for participants

The selection of participants will be based on this call. Participants should be ready to share practical and theoretical knowledge on the topics of the conference and be open to controversial standpoints within and outside the youth field. Furthermore, they should be ready to share specific experiences in international youth work and its development, building on Erasmus+ Youth in Action and the European Solidarity Corps or other relevant European programmes; participants may be youth workers, paid or volunteering, representatives of youth organisations and other experts in the field of youth.

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Deadline for Applications: 20th January 2019

Selection criteria

The organisers will aim at composing a group of participants representing the widest possible diversity of perspectives and experiences from across the European youth field. The composition shall be balanced and diverse in terms of geographical, gender, professional backgrounds including local youth work and youth movements from European level; social and/or cultural groups underrepresented in political dialogues will be particularly considered in composing the conference participant's group.

Dates (including arrival and departure) and venue of the conference

Tuesday, 12th to Friday, 15th March 2019

The event will take place in Marriott Hotel · Leipzig / Germany

