

# PAX - Peace Against EXclusion

## Hosting Organisation

Ananda Marga Pracaraka Samgha Portugal (subsequently referred to as Ananda Marga or AM) is registered as a non-profit spiritual community, with the aim of helping people to achieve personal development and promoting voluntary service. It lays emphasis to social service, sustainability, living ecologically and community development. Moreover, it supports activities of self-development, on a physical level (e.g. physical exercises and healthy lifestyle), mental level (e.g. artistic expressions and life-long learning) and spiritual level (e.g. yoga, meditation and spiritual practices).

## Topic

In 2011, statistics produced by Eurydice<sup>1</sup> showed that a third of the youth (18-24) in the European Union was at risk for poverty or social exclusion. This can lead to material deprivation and inequality, marginalisation, and health issues, which in turn can cause more social exclusion, thereby reinforcing a vicious cycle. One of the ways to remedy social exclusion amongst youth has been the adoption of the Youth Strategy by the European Union, thereby making use of youth work, which can mitigate the increase of social exclusion and improve its consequences (Eurydice 2013).

The intrinsic idea of social exclusion is that there is a group from which one is excluded, which generally is the majority or mainstream in society. Experiencing social exclusion thus also involves the experience of a dividedness within, or distance to, the general society. This has consequences for the experience of conflict, both intrapersonal (regarding one's social identity), and interpersonal or between groups (experiencing separate groups, with in- and out-group processes, stereotyping and groupthink). Although conflict in and of itself can be considered an integral part of life and an opportunity for growth, the way we deal with conflict is detrimental to the potential to (de-)escalate conflict. Furthermore, the concept of inner conflict, and thus inner peace, is often left unaddressed, whereas we believe that every type of conflict one gets involved in is a reflection of inner conflict. Cultivating inner peace would thus be the most accessible and steady method for generating outer peace.

## Objective

The objective of this project is therefore to expose youth in minority positions to tools and activities that will help them to become more peaceful, both internally and externally, which will in turn empower them to obtain a more equal position in society and to stand up for their rights, thereby dealing successfully with the conflict this might arouse and ultimately contributing to a more inclusive society.

To address some of the causes that contribute to social exclusion, this project has formulated the following goals:

- Connecting individuals to increase and improve intergroup contact, communication and understanding;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/eurydice-study-social-exclusion-2013.pdf>

- Creating continuous self-awareness about one's values, intentions, emotions, feelings, needs and behaviour;
- To empower marginalised individuals to stand up for their rights and to meet their own needs;
- To provide youths with the tools to deal positively with inner and outer conflict, ultimately contributing to a sense of inner peace.

### Activities

To achieve these goals, the following activities will be carried out:

- Introductions with attention to social and cultural identity, ranks, and intercultural exchange;
- Non-Violent Communication workshop;
- Tools for third-party conflict management and resolution;
- Emotional Intelligence workshop;
- Inner Peace activities.

Most of these activities make use of role playing and theatre, games, physical activities, group discussions, talks in smaller groups, and accessibility to and talks with an expert/counsellor/coach, as well as introspective and grounding practices (meditation, yoga, sharing meetings, journalling, time in silence (Manobrata), and time in nature).

### Output

We envisage to produce output of the project. For the Training Course, this will be a toolkit with non-formal methods, formulating activities, steps, and instructions on how to enhance inner- and outer peace in oneself and, subsequently, in others too.

For the Youth Exchange, the output will be a creative work (a movie or other digital art) that symbolises the importance of peace and the lessons learned, to be disseminated amongst the youth's local communities and other stakeholders.

### Target Group

Youths (18-30) that are part of a minority group or position (in terms of their cultural-, ethnic-, or national background, gender, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disabilities), NEET and youth workers that work with this target group or have personal experiences being in a minority position.

### Activity

- Training Course: max. 20 people, 6 days (1 day arrival + 4 days activities + 1 day departure)
- Youth Exchange: max. 40 people, 7 days (1 day arrival + 5 days activities + 1 day departure)