

Living Together and Peace Education in Youth Work: Cross the Border! II



Project Summary

Grenoble
21-30 November 2014



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Project description

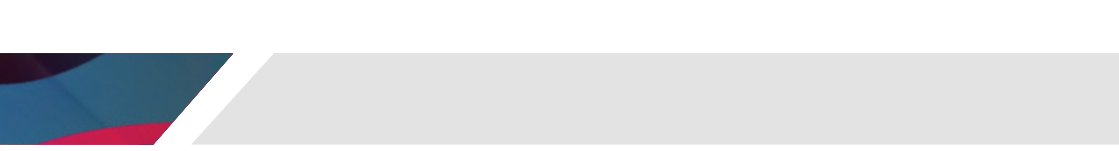
From November 21st to 30th 2014, the CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes organisation, in collaboration with its partners from Caucasus (**Loesje** – Armenia, **Great Silk Way International Youth Union** - Azerbaijan, **Civil Forum for Peace** – Georgia, **Center for Network Initiatives Support** - Russia), Germany (**Dock Europe**) and Ukraine (**Center for European Initiatives**), hosted a training course on the topics of living-together, conflict transformation and intercultural dialogue.

Entitled “**Living Together and Peace Education in Youth Work: Cross the Border! II**”, the activity was the continuation of a first project organised in France in November 2013 with the support of the European Programme Youth in Action and the local government of Région Rhône-Alpes. *Cross the Border II* gathered in Bouvante, France, 20 young people active in the youth field from Armenia, Azerbaijan, France, Georgia (including South Ossetia), Germany, Russia and Ukraine. During 8 days, they took part in training activities and exchanges focused on the role that young people can play in conflict transformation and the promotion of intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace.



Context

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the three former soviet republics of South Caucasus– Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – the region has been stricken with territorial conflicts (in Abkhazia, in South Ossetia and in Nagorno Karabakh) that have not been settled and considered now as “frozen”. Yet the tragic incidents on the frontline between Azerbaijan and the disputed territory of Nagorno Karabakh that happened in summer 2014 highlighted the instability of the situation. These conflicts have had a dramatic impact on the population of the region, almost 9% of whom are considered as internally displaced people (IDPs). North Caucasus, standing within the borders of the Russian Federation, has also been the scene of violence over the past 20 years. If the two wars in Chechnya has remained the symbol of the tensions in the area, interethnic, religious and terrorist violence has also plagued other republics such as North Ossetia, Dagestan and Ingushetia. The conflict in Ukraine, with the annexation of Crimea into the Russian Federation and the fighting in the Eastern regions of the country, has caused – beyond the numerous casualties and the economic chaos – flows of displaced people as well as the tearing-apart of families and communities.



Young people are directly and indirectly affected by conflict: restriction of mobility, inability to freely meet the “other side”, restricted freedom of speech... Many young people want things to change. Standing to inherit the conflict and its deep-rooted consequences, the youth of conflict-stricken regions can have a crucial impact in conflict transformation. “They have a potential to become catalysts for peace and reconciliation or continue a cycle of hatred, blame and intolerance”¹. Young people make up a significant portion of the population in Caucasus and Eastern Europe. Such a young population constitutes both enormous potential and challenge for these regions in the context of social, economic, and political development. This duality is also true considering implications for the existing conflicts and also for the deep and long-lasting consequences of the past ones. There is a real need for young people to be given the opportunity to take distance from their everyday life, to be provided support and tools to reflect on their perception of the conflicts as well as on the positive role they can play in conflict transformation as active citizens.

In France and Germany, in these of years of remembrance and commemoration of WWI and WWII, the rise of extremism and intolerance reminds us that peace is not only the absence of armed conflicts, but a fragile reality relying on the collective willingness to preserve, nurture and deepen our ability to live together. The action of the youth of these two countries can be crucial in the fight against hate speech and discriminations.

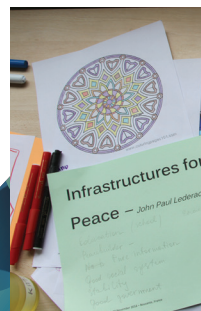
¹ SULTANI (J.), *Youth in South Caucasus: Agents of Peace or Future Soldiers?*, Caucasus Edition – Journal of Conflict Transformation, 2011

Aims and objectives

Cross the Border aims to engage with young people facing conflict and challenging intercultural situation by providing them with a neutral ground where they can meet and participate in a positive experience in living and learning together.

Objectives:

- To share and learn from each other as young people involved in the youth field who are confronted with intercultural challenges and violence in their everyday life;
- To reflect personally and collectively on the concepts of non-violence, human rights, intercultural learning and dialogue;



- To share among participants their personal experiences of conflict and violence and their coping strategies, identifying what is common and specific between them;
- To explore new ways of communication and dialogue through creative and innovative activities;
- To learn about young people's realities in the participating countries;
- To motivate and support participants in their role as multipliers and peer leaders in intercultural dialogue and confidence-building activities with young people from their organisations and communities;
- To build connections with other projects and organisations active in the field of youth, intercultural dialogue and conflict transformation to enable the sharing of good practices and develop synergies at local, regional and international levels.



Project leader:

CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes organisation

CEMÉA (**Training Centres for the Promotion of Progressive Education**) is a French NGO founded in 1937. Its mission is to disseminate progressive education ideas and principles at the local, national and international level.

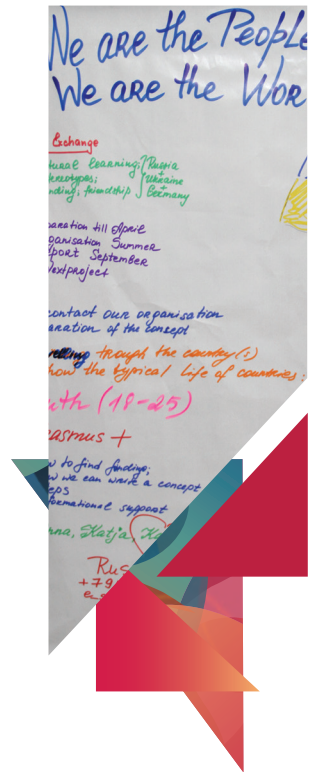
CEMÉA is a Progressive Education Movement acting in the field of education, health and social action, and culture. It is also a training organisation that contributes – through active education methods – to the learning of trainers, teachers, social workers, youth leaders and youth workers. In this regard, CEMÉA has a significant impact on the initial and lifelong learning of many people. CEMÉA acts to build a fairer, more inclusive and equal society in an educational and emancipating perspective.

CEMÉA are active members of the international networks FICEMÉA (International Federation of CEMÉA), EAICY (European Association of Institutions of Non-formal Education of Children and Youth) and SOLIDAR. Through these 3 networks, CEMÉA has developed activities at the international level with 107 partners in 65 countries. CEMÉA has also worked in close partnership with the OFAJ (French-German Youth Office).

Working in Partnership

Building a partnership means standing for a vision, working together on issues and strive for a common goal. It's uniting strength and act together to bring about educative and social transformations in the European political space and in the world. *Cross the Border II* was co-designed by all the participating organisations, and built following the needs and aspirations expressed by the young members of these organisations.

The implementation of *Cross the Border II* stands in the wake of the opening of CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes towards countries of the Eastern Partnership (Eastern Europe: Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine – South Caucasus: Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia). This orientation has led to the development of solid partnerships and to the implementation of several projects of training, exchange and mobility.



Center for European Initiatives



Center for European Initiatives is a public nonprofit organisation, created on the principles of voluntary participation, Human Rights, freedom of speech, common interests, self-government and equality. It stands for the protection of the legal interests, the equality of rights, and the freedoms of its members. Center for European Initiatives aims to assist in the reformation of Ukraine in accordance with European standards, to introduce democratic values and to develop civil society in Ukraine using educational and informational methodologies.

More information on: www.eu.sumy.ua/en

Center for Network Initiatives Support



Based in Stavropol, in North Caucasus, **Center for Network Initiatives Support** is a Russian nongovernmental organisation promoting the development of civil society institutions and the establishment of the conditions for an effective cooperation between these institutions and different levels of state authorities. It provides a legal, organisational, socio-economic, cultural and informational support to local organisations and promotes peace and friendship between nations to prevent social, national and religious conflicts. The main target group of Center for Network Initiatives Support is young people, especially students.

More information on: www.stavdd.ru

Civil Forum for Peace

Founded in 2007, **Civil Forum for Peace** aims at promoting dialogue between Georgian and Ossetian societies to build peace and confidence and create the necessary conditions for a peaceful and sustainable coexistence and development. The activities of Civil Forum for Peace include projects to support civil society and young people suffering from the consequences of conflicts, educational and mobility projects to enable the development of synergies amongst civil activists at the European level, as well as lobbying and advocacy activities for the protection of the rights of displaced people.



More information on: www.civil-forum.org

Dock Europe

Dock Europe was founded ten years ago in Hamburg, Germany, and has been active in the field of popular education and social work. The organisation promotes mobility as a learning tool and the inclusion of intercultural issues in trainings for young people and adults. Their goal is to develop pedagogical and social actions that take into account the linguistic and cultural diversity that characterize societies in Europe and beyond. Dock Europe provides a platform of skills, tools and resources at the crossroads of social work, European construction, mobility and intercultural education. This platform and, to a larger extent, their network, enable the building of exchanges and trainings, in particular for and with young people.

dock europe e.V.

More information on: www.dock-europe.net

Great Silk Way International Youth Union



The **Great Silk Way International Youth Union** (GSW IYU) was established in 2012 with the purpose of the coordination of activities contributing to the establishment of mutually beneficial and sustainable relations between youth organisations and young individuals, as well as representing and protecting the common interests of youth in the countries historically located on the Silk Route. GSW IYU activities are based on and designed for strengthening intercultural dialogue, cross-border cooperation and increasing the involvement of youth in these issues on a global level. GSW IYU organises an International Forum of Young Poetesses every year, as well as various activities such as trainings and campaigns.

More information on: www.gswyouth.org

Loesje



Loesje Armenia is the Armenian member of the international nongovernmental organisation Loesje. It was founded in 2010 with the following main focus areas: Human Rights and peace education, personal development of young people, intercultural learning and active citizenship. Loesje Armenia has organised and hosted a large number of international youth exchanges, trainings courses, summer camps and seminars – all of them with the common aim to inspire and empower youth.

More information on: www.facebook.com/loesjearmenia

Institutional and Funding Partners

Région Rhône-Alpes

The **Région Rhône-Alpes** local government has institutionally and financially supported this project in the frameworks of its cooperation with the Armenian Municipalities Association and its “Peace, Human Rights and Cooperation for Development” network.



Erasmus +

The **Erasmus + Program** of the European Commission co-funded this project as a mobility project for young people and youth workers in cooperation with the Partner Countries neighboring the European Union.



The Training Course



Participants

Cross the Border gathered 20 young people (aged between 18 and 32) coming from Armenia, Azerbaijan, France, Georgia (including South Ossetia), Germany, Russia and Ukraine, all of them active in the field of youth – either as professionals or volunteers – and facing intercultural challenges and conflict-related issues in their work with young people. The criteria to take part in the course included being able to use the English language independently in both written and oral communication and possessing a sense of responsibility for one's own actions and a commitment to personal and community development. Participants had to be curious, open-minded and appreciative of diversity. Finally they had to be willing to commit themselves to engage in follow-up projects at local or international level and be involved in an organisation or network, institution, formal or informal group ready to support them for the implementation of these follow-up projects.

The diversity and the strong motivation of the group were key elements for the success of the course, enabling participants and the training team to live a very rich and deep experience of learning and living together. Three more participants should have participated in the project – two coming from Abkhazia and one coming from South Ossetia. They were refused their visas despite all the efforts made to support them in the visa application process.




Programme

The programme of the training course was designed to gradually increase the confidence and comfort of participants to go through the delicate learning process together, and to empower them to engage with the concepts and develop competencies to put them in practice through initiatives to be implemented in their own communities.

The first part of the programme was focused on providing spaces and opportunities for participants to get to know each other on different levels and build a strong group that would act as a safety net when tackling sensitive topics. This was followed by understanding what building blocks of their identity are and what makes them different from others. Diversity, both in the group and on the societal level, was then explored from two perspectives: through understanding concepts that act as a backbone for clashes in the society and the way that they feed into each other (stereotypes, prejudices, hate and violence) and through analysing the elements of intercultural learning as a process to learn and grow from diversity.

The second part of the programme invited participants to look at the positive potential of conflicts and elements of “hardware” (Infrastructures for Peace) and “software” (Nonviolent



communication) needed to exploit that potential and achieve sustainable peace in their communities. After gaining confidence to be around each other and address personal and sensitive issues, participants were provided spaces to share how their lives are affected by conflict and also to put into practice some elements of nonviolent communication.

Participants had the opportunity to get familiar with concrete examples of tools that they could later on implement in their work in their respective communities. One of them was the “Living Library”, which allowed participants to share personal experiences of Human Rights violations and the other the “No Hate Speech Movement”, as an international campaign for combating hate speech online and offline. The thematic part was closed with the focus on reconciliation and the different elements that are needed in order to achieve it: peace, justice, mercy, truth and healing.

In **the last Part** of the programme, participants took part in an extensive process of planning follow-up projects that encompassed individual, local and international initiatives. It aimed to, not only facilitate the process of generating concrete ideas and developing partnerships, but also support participants in gaining confidence and enthusiasm to really implement those initiatives afterwards and prepare them to return safely to their respective communities.

	Day 1 21 Nov	Day 2 22 Nov	Day 3 23 Nov	Day 4 24 Nov	Day 5 25 Nov	Day 6 26 Nov	Day 7 27 Nov	Day 8 28 Nov	Day 9 29 Nov	Day 10 30 Nov
Arrival	Opening and Walkabout	Key-words Exploration	Inter-cultural learning - evening follow-up	Infra-structures for Peace	Human Rights	Grenoble	No Hate Speech Movement	Project planning		
	Coffee break									
	Welcome space	Identity	From stereotypes to hate and emotions	Active listening	Introduction to the Living Library	Grenoble	No Hate Speech Movement	Project planning and presentations		
	Lunch									
	Power of Group	Inter-cultural learning	Hate and Violence	Assertive communication	Living Library	Grenoble	Reconciliation	Evaluation		
	Coffee break									
	Restorative Circles & I speech	Inter-cultural learning	Conflict	Conflict-Personal stories	Living Library	Grenoble	Introduction to follow-up projects	Closing		
	Reflection groups									
	Dinner									
	Welcome evening	Games Night	Food and drink night	Childrens stories and fairy tales	Be together evening	NGO Fair	Dinner in town	Free evening	Farewell party	
Departure										

Programme



Methodology

The training team resorted to a large array of approaches and activities to cover the project objectives and meet at best the needs of the group. Non-formal education methods were the grounds on which the programme was developed. It included experiential learning, discussions in plenary or small groups, creative and artistic activities and spaces for personal reflection, among others. Every day was concluded by a self-directed session during which participants could – individually or in small groups – review their days, reflect on their learning and express their feelings through creative tools. The evening activities were meant to develop participants' mutual understanding, enable them to practice their learning from the sessions and relax. English was the language of the course but participants had some occasions to express themselves in their mother tongue. At the end of the week, an evaluation was conducted to give participants the opportunity to reflect on and voice their experience through both formal and non-formal methods. Individual interviews did complete the evaluation process. Participants were supported in their learning by a team of three experienced trainers and two support staff.

The team

Edouard Portefaix is an active member of CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes and works as a freelance project manager and facilitator. He previously worked on youth social inclusion and civic engagement within the United Nations Development Programme in Ukraine and alongside African National Paralympics Committees within the London 2012 Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games. He is actively involved in the development of the No Hate Speech Movement at local, national and european level. Passionate about the role that young people can play in conflict transformation, Eastern Europe and Caucasus, he took part in several projects involving youth from these regions, including internally displaced people. Member of the pool of trainers of the Council of Europe Youth Department, he has been the coordinator of the project *Cross the Border*.



Nik Paddison has worked over the last 15 years as a trainer of youth workers, leaders, volunteers and activists in the European youth field. He has been based in South East Europe since 2003, the bulk of his work is focused on the South East Europe and Caucasus regions. During this period he has been a part of youth work and non-formal education/learning recognition, working with local and international organisations in the above mentioned regions. Over the years he has developed numerous activities, theories and approaches related to the field in the context of non-formal education/learning. Since 2010 he has been working as a freelance trainer/writer/consultant/copy editor for youth NGOs, European networks, and the European Union and the Council of Europe Youth Departments.

Snežana Bačlija Knoch is an international freelance trainer and facilitator, with particular interest in intercultural learning, conflict transformation and empowerment of young people, youth workers and youth NGOs. She is passionate about facilitation of non-formal education and creative possibilities it brings along, and dedicated to exploring spaces for embracing conflict. She has been active in youth work and non-formal education field for the past 13 years and in that time has worked on more than 100 different educational activities on local, national and international level, mainly focused on the South East Europe and the Middle East. She is member of trainers pools of number of different EU institutions and the Council of Europe Youth Department. She holds a master degree in Applied Conflict Transformation Studies.



Support Staff

Joan Deas is a member of CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes and a PhD student at the Institute of Political Studies in Grenoble. She has specialized in conflict resolution, humanitarian and mediation issues in Middle East conflicts. She has worked as a researcher and as a project officer in various countries, including Canada, the Palestinian West Bank and the Gaza Strip. She is a research associate at the Raoul Dandurand Chair of Strategic and Diplomatic studies in Montreal, Canada. She is also a member of the international network 'Faculty For Israeli-Palestinian Peace'.

Jérémy Martin works as a webmaster for CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes. He is also a professional trainer in the field of youth work and coordinates youth camps. Jérémy took part in the first edition of *Cross the Border* as a participant and got involved in the second edition as a support staff. He focused on the logistical support and the project valorization.





Results and impact

The theories of change supporting *Cross the Border II* are the individual changes theory and the healthy relationships and connections theory. Their underlying assumptions are that peace comes through transformative changes of a critical mass of individuals – in their consciousness, attitudes, behaviors, and skills; and that peace emerges out of a process of breaking down isolation, polarization, division, prejudice and stereotypes between/among groups. The results and impact of such a project are yet difficult to assess precisely, especially in the short term. Participants lived a rare experience of intercultural learning and leaving together. They questioned their perceptions and explored together topics related to conflicts, acquiring new knowledge and sharing personal experiences. Throughout the week they developed strong bonds that they have nurtured after the course through social networks and the work on their follow-up projects. For some of the participants it was the occasion to meet “the other side” for the first time and to hear stories that they don’t have the opportunity to hear in their communities. Participants gained self-confidence and took ownership of new tools and methodologies that they will be able to reuse in their communities, supported by their sending organisations. Interviews will be conducted one year after the project to better assess the impact of *Cross the Border II* on participants in the longer term



Follow-up projects

During the last part of the programme, participants worked on the development of personal and collective follow-up initiatives whether local or international. Here are some examples:

Journalists for Human Rights

The project is based on the organisation of workshops on Human Rights reporting and conflict coverage for students in journalism in Armenia. The aim is to empower them and provide the future journalists with specific knowledge about Human Rights. The project is expected to take place in mid-spring 2015 in Erevan. The workshops will be facilitated by experts in journalism and Human Rights.

Living Library

Based on the living library approach, this project aims at building bridges between societies divided by conflicts and supporting the development of the trust-building process. One of the key aspects will be the collection and the sharing of personal conflict-related stories in Georgia (including South Ossetia), giving voice to internally displaced people.

Conflict awareness

This project will take place in Germany and target social workers and refugees. It aims at making the participants aware of conflict and miscommunication as well as providing them with training and tools, such as active listening and non-violent communication. The project will also connect with the No Hate Speech Movement.

Fairy Tales for Peace

The project aims at changing perceptions and supporting children and teenagers suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder and post war trauma in order to prevent future violence and foster peace-building and values of reconciliation. This project is inspired of an initiative carried out in the Balkans after the war and is expected to target populations from South Ossetia.





NO HATE SPEECH MOVEMENT

The No Hate Speech Movement is an international campaign against hate speech and for Human Rights online that has been carried out by a movement in which youth has had a major role. The Movement relies on national campaign committees, numerous activists, an important network of partner organisations and the Council of Europe – which is at the origin of the Campaign. Launched in Mars 2013, the Campaign is now active in more than 35 countries and has spread out of Europe in America and Africa.

The campaigns objectives are the following:

- To promote media and Internet literacy
- To support young people in standing up for human rights, online and offline
- To reduce the levels of acceptance of online hate speech
- To map hate speech online and develop tools to combat it
- To support and show solidarity to people and groups targeted by hate speech online
- To advocate the development of and consensus on European policy instruments combating hate speech
- To develop youth participation and citizenship online and associate young people with Internet governance processes.

CEMÉA Rhône-Alpes joined the No Hate Speech Movement and has included workshops within its training sessions on youth work (BAFA, BAFD and BE JEPS) to raise awareness about the Campaign topics amongst youth workers. Workshops in schools and trainings of trainers have also been organised within this framework.

More information on the online platform of the Movement (www.nohatespeechmovement.org) or on its Facebook page.



For more information on this project, please contact:

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