

Young Activists for Peace

Introduction Training: “Together for Democracy, Human Rights and Peace”

Berlin

May 19-25, 2015



Daily Reports by
Participants
Berlin
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Further information and documents can be found

at the “Young Activists for Peace Blog”:

<https://eu-projects.icja.de/content/Home/>

About the Young Activists for Peace project:

In view of eruption of hotbeds of war and growing tension between Russia and its neighbouring states as well as the European Union, young Europeans are affected and sometimes have a distorted view on the process of European unification. Contrary to the aims of the EU the approximation of some Eastern European countries causes division and mistrust and becomes a threat for peace.

Against this background the project "Young activists for peace" brought together youth and voluntary service organisations from Georgia, Russia, Ukraine as well as from Estonia, France and Germany in support of peace education and action. The objective is/was to enable direct encounters between young people from Russia, countries of the Eastern partnership and the European Union in the frame of the Erasmus+ Youth in Action Programme. The activities aim at breaking enemy stereotypes nurtured by the media and to turn them into positive personal experiences in order to foster active citizenship for peace and understanding between countries which are currently in conflict with each other.

About this training activity:

The kick-off meeting took place in Berlin and brought together 2 participants from each of the partner countries and 5 from Germany to learn about conflict resolution and peacebuilding and to share their views regarding the historical and current geopolitical situation and conflict in Eastern Europe and how this affects young people in Europe. Central programme element was the training on the methodology "Betzavta". By using a learning-by-doing approach, the group could learn how concepts like Minority and Majority, Fundamental Rights as well as Democratic Decision Making influence our attitudes and the decisions we frequently have to take in our daily lives and in our work with groups. Participants were also introduced to the concept "Friedensstifter/Peacemaker" and to the history of ICJA and yap cfd which evolved from the reconciliation efforts of civil society groups after the 1st (yap cfd) and the 2nd World War (ICJA). The group visited and was impressed by the history of the "Anti-War-Museum" in Berlin and the Middle East Peace Projects of the Socialist Youth of Germany. Last but not least the teams of the two youth exchanges got together and prepared themselves for their role and tasks in the upcoming Youth Exchanges "Peace Camps" integrating methods and educational activities which were related to what they learned during the kick-off training.

The group dynamic from the beginning was amicable and very positive about the opportunity to be part of the project. At the end all participants were very much looking forward to put theory into practice and to work together for the implementation of the two youth exchanges in July and August 2015.

Program Overview



Day 1 Tuesday, 19.05.2015

Welcome

Let's get to know each other, Presentation of programme, general introduction to project, team and participants

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Dinner

Expectations, Motivation, Seminar rules

Optional free time activity in Berlin

Day 2 -Wednesday, 20.05.2015

Breakfast

Presentations of organisations

Introduction to the educational concept "Jugendliche werden Friedensstifter"

Coffee break

"Statements about peace and conflict- what do you think?" – Opinion Poll

Lunch break

Presentation ICJA e.V.; Presentation Erasmus+ Program; Presentation yap / cfd / history; East Side Gallery walk

Dinner

Evaluation of the day

Day 3 Thursday, 21.05.2015

Breakfast

Introduction of Betzavta

Lunch break

Minority and Majority - Betzavta working unit

Dinner

Day 4 Friday, 22.05.2015

Breakfast

Equality before the law - Betzavta working unit

Lunch break

Excursion-Project visit: The Falcon Movement

Visit Anti-War-Museum

Evaluation of the project visits

Evening and group dinner out

Day 5 Saturday, 23.05.2015

Breakfast

Fundamental and civil rights - Betzavta working unit

Lunch break

Evaluation + Transfer of Betzavta-Training

Open Space

Free time and dinner out

Intercultural Evening, games, party

Day 6 Sunday, 24.05.2015

Breakfast

Introduction to Erasmus+ Programm,
Guidelines for Youth Exchange Activities

Youth Pass Tool

How do I apply this to my own work? Preparing our youth exchanges
and workcamps of summer 2015 / Agreements and task distribution

Lunch break

Final evaluation of training

Evening: participation to cultural event (street parade) Kreuzberg and dinner out

Day 7 Monday, 25.05.2015

8.00-9.00 *Breakfast- followed by departure*

Daily Reports

Day 1 - Tuesday, May 19th

The very first day of the project was itself an adventure. Participants who arrived at the Pegasus Hostel were met with warm heart and generosity by the German team at the reception. Yuri and Olga from Russia were the first ones to arrive. Last ones to arrive were Zariema and Inna from Ukraine as they got the visa on the last day. We first got to know each other using the method “toilet paper”. We took each as many toilet papers as we wanted and then for each sheet we had taken we had to give one detail about our life. This was very interesting as participants had taken many sheets and then had to tell us a lot about their lives... Later on we learned how to “Shakeit! Shakeit!” by doing another icebreaker which was good for waking up.



during the project.

We also drew a map with our names and connection links between people, which was again a great way to introduce ourselves to the rest of the group and to find out that for some reason or another we are all connected to each other.

The following activity was to get to know the program and then we discussed and agreed upon rules we thought we should follow to make the meeting a success. At the end of this first day we could already feel that participants were excited and looking forward to the upcoming week!



Day 2 - Wednesday, May 20th

The morning session started with the presentations of the participant's organizations. It was good that organizers gave us the possibility to present in different ways (oral, power point, flipchart etc. presentations).

We concluded this session and participants said they would keep in contact and send each other more details about their organizations and their programmes.



Conflict + Peace

We approached the theme by listening to a short presentation and doing an exercise of the educational concept called: 'how young people become peacemakers' (Jugendliche werden Friedensstifter") which I also used in many schools in Germany. We were explained that methods of this concept will be part of the programme in the upcoming youth exchanges of the project "Young activists for peace". The basic concept is: To discern a violence and give it a name; to reflect about our own behavior when confronted with violence and to organize help and to overcome the situation of violence.

We got to know the concept "learning by doing". An exercise was introduced and we got the task to "form groups according to power". We had to interpret what was meant and it was possible to think in different directions regarding the concept of "power". At the end the group came to the conclusion that this exercise was about the understanding each of us has about power. Participants didn't reflect that there might be a difference and assumed that their understanding was the same as the one of all the others in the group. At the final round we noticed how lack of communication can cause misunderstandings and wrong interpretation which can lead to conflicts between individuals and groups.

The next activity called "option poll" about statements which had to do with the theme "peace" which was really interactive. Different statements were read out loud one by one and participants had to decide where they want to



stay in the room, near to the sign with 100% (I absolutely agree) or 0% (I do not agree). After every statement everybody could tell why he or she took that position. At some points it was hard not to start a discussion, because sometimes there were very different meanings or understandings about the statement which was very interesting at some points too. Generally the session ended in a positive group dynamic.

Visit to ICJA office

During the visit to ICJA office, we had another relevant programme part of the day which was the brief presentation of ICJA and the history of YAP. Through this visit we also could see how big the organization is. It was interesting how this movement was born from a peace concept of two church denominations in Germany and USA and how over the years it transformed to a bigger movement which is open to everyone who believes in the aims of ICJA. The highlight of the presentation of YAP was also linked with the topic "conflict and peace" because it was after WW I that this ideology of activities like workcamps for reconstruction of war zones and peacebuilding were born and how this developed to the workcamp movement, promoting intercultural learning and bringing people of nations closer to each other to avoid future wars.

Very suitable to this message was this painting on the Eastside Gallery, which we passed by when going to the hostel:



Day 3 - Thursday, May 21st

This was the first day of the "Betzavta"- training ("Gemeinsam"), so we were really excited and happy to get an introduction by the trainer Cvetka who explained the rules of the Betzavta training. The most important rule is that it is all **about experience, not about exposure**. And participants should keep in mind that **the feelings which we have in the training are true**.

The first exercise was the "card-activity". It was about decision making.

The trainer told us: "Where in the end there are the most cards, there can be made a rule we have to follow, under certain circumstances the whole day." We were going to have 20 minutes time. In a circle we began to think about what rule to make. We had a long discussion, and several proposals were made. We didn't know exactly, what we had to do, because we all have had a **different understanding of the task**. The process of discussion was very difficult and in the end, when only one minute was left,



we felt time pressure and we made the rule "smile as much as possible for you" by voting with our cards. In the reflexion afterwards we put cards on the floor (red, yellow, green — traffic light system) to show and explain how we feel after this 20 minutes. Almost the whole group put yellow and red cards, because nobody liked the process of the decision. We felt quite uncomfortable about the fact that we neither managed to **listen to each other**

properly nor had the idea to **ask for more time**. We were discussing if the process of decision was democratic. We realized that we had pretty **different ideas of democracy**. **Is democracy only about voting?**

In the afternoon the topic was "minority and majority". The trainer handed out some pieces of paper with questions on it. For each question we should decide if the majority should decide or not. The questions were for example: **Should majority decide....** how I lead my life? On what I spend my money?"

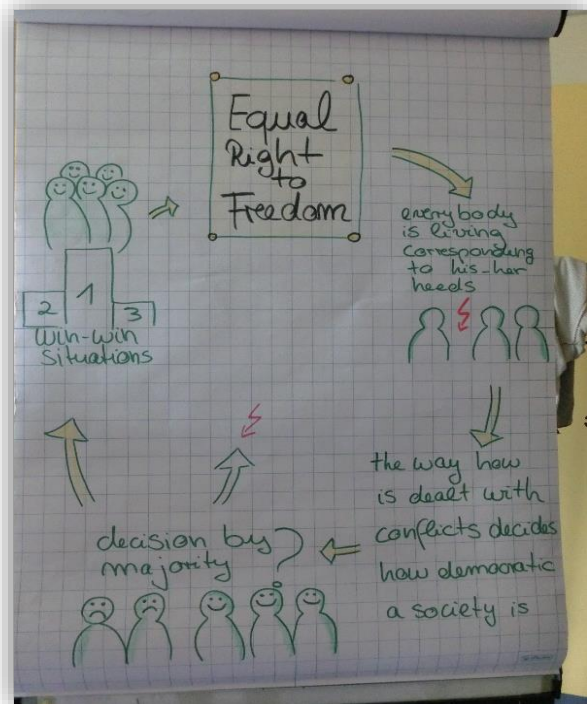


We discussed the question in groups. We all had strong and hard discussions. Later each group presented the results to the whole group. Many questions still were kept open, for example:

Who is minority? Who decides, which criteria you use for defining majority? What happens to minorities? Should experts decide? Are politicians minority?

If majority not decides, who does? What happens to the needs of minority? Are there possibilities to make everyone happy?

During the second part of the afternoon we did the “string” activity. Before the activity started we were asked to write down what we would like to do if we would have a 10 minutes break now, to write this wish on a paper and to put it somewhere in our clothes. Then we were divided in groups by four or five persons and got connected by a string. And then...we got a ten minutes break!!! The break was used in many different ways, some wishes became true and some not. **Do I really must fulfill all my needs? Am I happier maybe when I know, that the needs of other persons are fulfilled, too?**



These were questions we talked in reflexion right after this kind of special break. A small conclusion from our group could be that we need the society and can benefit a lot from it (have more fun, better ideas,...), but on the other hand we have to **make some compromises.**



In a short evaluation of the programme of the day it was emphasized that the group had been growing very fast together and many people felt that it had been a very interesting day. In the evening games were played and we had a nice evening together as group.

Day 4 - Friday, May 22nd

Friday morning we started with an energizer game called 1,2,3 game played by group of two where firstly we count one by one up to three, after we changed the number two to a sound, number three to a movement. The game was really nice because it stimulated group work and you had to correspond with one partner. All group members were following the same activity at the same time and furthermore our brain had to work a lot in this early morning which led to some funny mistakes in our movements.

CHOCOLATE GAME OR EQUAL RIGHTS GAME (Betzavta)

Before starting the game we created 3 teams with names and cheers, the teams were:

Shineys, Crocodiles and The Boys Scout Unicorns. In the beginning of the game we were told some rules for the game and we have a playing field from 1 to 25 with two numbers having stars and candies that can give you the right to create your own rule. At the end the winner was having a big tablet of chocolate. The very first position of each team was "not equal" because it was randomly chosen and not everyone was having the right to choose one paper out of three. At start there was an obvious leader, but after several movements, teams arrived at similar positions on the field because of the new coming rules made by the teams. Finally the price was divided fairly between the participants.



After the game, we sat and had a reflection about the game, if it was fair or equal, how the rules were made and how we felt in the game. Participants also mentioned some comparisons with the situation in

Ukraine and Georgia. Again topics like Majority and Minority, about the law against discrimination and the common sense in general came up.

After lunch break the group went to the headquarters of the "International Falcon Movement" in Germany to learn about their activities, particularly about their peace and dialogue projects in Palestine. While our visit there we got to know about the impressive work for peace of this youth organization in the Israel -Palestine conflict. It showed us a way more how to get active personally. The Willy- Brand-Center for example provides space for a political dialogue between Israeli and Arab partners as well as for culture events which are organized together.

The group then went on to the Anti-War-Museum where we were very warmly welcomed by its founder and promoter: Tommy Spree, whose grandfather already had built the first Anti-War museum in Berlin right after the first world-war.

We were given a presentation on the history of the museum and different important aspects about war and peace in history, particularly the history of the two world wars in Europe. It was an experience unique in its kind, we've learned a lot and some of the participants were very touched by the authentic stories we heard. In the museum we could go down into an old air-raid shelter and take a look at original items and photos from the two world wars.

At the end of the visit we evaluated the visit and the group then enjoyed the evening in the city center of the famous Berlin district "Kreuzberg".

It was a very long day during which we've learned really a lot of things, maybe the day where we've learned the most things about peace and the tragedy of wars.



Day 5 - Saturday May 23rd

Betzavta

It was the final session of the Betzavta training. Nonetheless, the activity was very educational and useful. First of all we were asked to prepare presentations about our view of what is fundamental and civil rights of a citizen. As usual, a lot of people got an understanding of the task in different ways and as a result we faced 3 completely different but interesting presentations.

Without losing time we started to practice decision-making again. The task's name "chair activity". Participants got divided in two groups, got separated and the trainer gave different instructions to both groups. When the first group started to do their exercise they put all chairs up to a tower as high as possible - but they had to face an obstacle. The other group also had gotten a task, also with the chairs but a different one. They wanted to make a circle as big as possible with all the chairs in the room. Most of the participants stayed calm firstly and tried how to manage this problem, also thinking about the whole aspects they've learned about in Betzavta training. The chair activity allowed to observe the behaviour of participants and participants even mentioned that they could see each others' different values. During the task, we faced a dilemma: We cannot make everyone satisfied because we cannot rush as some want and act simultaneously with sustainable negotiations as want people who would like a democratic decision where the process is longer and more important than the product. The last solution was reached by a combination of offers as well as acting and practice. The construction of chairs which



could have been the result was changed only because of one vote against what some participants found at least unreasonable. The question could be when majority can/should/want to be decided? After this activity it was quite sure to us – the feelings caused by Betzavta exercises ARE real!

Transfer

In the afternoon we had an activity for evaluation and transfer of Bezavta-training. It made us think about how we can apply what we have learned of Bezavta in our future activities and more concretely how to use them for the Young Activists for Peace Youth Exchanges in summer. Beside concrete ideas as for example that some wants to apply the method of cards from different colours to see how satisfied participants are, we agreed in taking awareness of problems in group processes and we committed to use an approach which enables creative solutions.

Open Space

In the late afternoon Open Space was the method to invite participants to propose own workshops. The participants split in groups which could decide how to use the time best. Some used the time to discuss topics in small groups, others prepared the evening's farewell party and one group did an excursion to memorials of conflict and destruction to the Berlin Cathedral, which after destruction during second world war was started to be reconstructed in 1975 and celebrated its complete restoration only in 2002.

Party

The party in the evening was a completely success and we could see that group members were ready to prepare and organize things by themselves. Every team brought food or drinks from their country and then there were many group activities where all participants were involved in moving, singing, pantomime and dancing.



Day 6 - Sunday, May 24th

The last day of the training started as usual - with having a light breakfast at Berlin Pegasus Hostel.

Later on we were given an introduction to the programme Erasmus+ and to the guidelines which also have to be respected. We also learnt about "Youth Pass" which we also are entitled to get and discussed how this will be handled for our training and for the Youth Exchange activities in summer 2015.



After many questions by participants we split into two teams to discuss about our tasks and motivation and to prepare the programme of the upcoming camps in summer.

After a prolonged three hour session we got together in the conference room, to present each other what we had discussed and the programmes of the two Youth Exchanges in Sievershausen and Denkte.



After lunch break we were evaluating the whole process of the training. We were given the famous 3 cards (green, yellow, red). Each of us could choose one of them to share our impression of the week we spent together. After doing that we explained why we chose a specific color. Also we were given an evaluation questionnaire with questions: was the training cognitive for us, did we like how it was organized, what were the drawbacks etc. On the back side

participants had an opportunity to write wishes and proposals for the summer camps. After the evaluation we had a few energizers which made the last minutes in the conference room even more entertaining and touching. Everybody had a slight smile on the face. For some people it was a smile that denoted tiredness for others this smile denoted excitement of the upcoming summer. We cleaned the room together and afterwards the group was ready to go for a final evening in Berlin.

At the end of the day everyone was a little bit tired and happy for finishing our training



with such a nice evening. Thinking about the upcoming Youth Exchange activities we realized we did not have to say good bye to each other because pleasant and enthusiastic work is waiting for us during the next months and soon we will meet each other once again in Denkte and Sievershausen.

Conclusions (as mentioned by participants during the final evaluation round)

The results of the Kick- Off-Training are very positive and will be very valuable in the further development of the youth exchange activities in summer 2015.

Participants were eager to get to know concepts of democracy and peace education such as “Betzavta” and “Friedensstifter / Peace Maker” and thought what they had learnt was relevant for international youth exchange and workcamp activities and could also be applied in their professional and personal lives.

The practice transfer of the learning contents was particularly successful because the participants were at the same time in the role of learners and in the role of youth workers/leaders having to prepare methods and programmes for the following two youth exchanges. Participants felt more and more responsible and motivated to be part of this experience and even developed a sense of ownership.

The project visits to the “Falcon Movement” and to the “Anti- War Museum” were very helpful in making participants realize the importance and role of civil society organisations in raising the historical consciousness and active peace commitment of young people. The current geopolitical conflict situation in Eastern Europe was set in relation to the history of wars in Europe. This and their own experience during this 6 days made participants realize how important direct personal encounters of young people are to break enemy stereotypes nurtured by the media and to turn them into positive personal experiences.




Proving that this is possible - the training was a great opportunity to make new friends by living and working together and to get to know and to share experiences with young people in Germany and in the city of Berlin!

We would like to thank all participants, partner organizations as well as all supporters for their good cooperation and highly valued contributions!









Visit to the Anti-War-Museum in Berlin, May 22nd 2015

Annex 1 – Final Evaluation by participants

	Points received				
	4	3	2	1	0
					
My learning growth	40%	53%	7%		
Motivating atmosphere	67%	33%			
My opportunities to participate	87%	13%			
Opportunities for practical application of course`s content	27%	53%	20%		
Time management of a learning process	6%	47%	47%		
Topic selection of learning content	40%	60%			
Methodical structure of the seminar	47%	40%	13%		
Materials (texts, presentations)	26%	60%	7%	7%	

Annex 2 – Participating Organisations

ESTONIA	MTÜ NOORTEVAHETUSE ARENGU ÜHING ESTYES		www.estyes.ee
FRANCE	SOLIDARITES JEUNESSES MCP		www.solidaritesjeunes.org
GEORGIA	Public Union Bridge of Friendship KARTLOSI		www.qartlosi.org
RUSSIA	Center of voluntary movement "DiGe vu Samara"		www.digevu.ru
UKRAINE	All-Ukrainian Association for Youth Co-operation Alternative-V		www.alternative-v.com.ua
GERMAN Y	ICJA youth action for peace		www.icja.de www.yap-cfd.de

Co-ordinating Organization:

ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch weltweit e.V.

Stralauer Allee 20E
Berlin

Tel.: 030 20007160

icja@icja.de

www.icja.de

