

Young Activists for Peace and Dialogue

**Youth Exchange
Sievershausen
August, 15-27.2017**



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About the “Young Activists for Peace and Dialogue – project”:

In view of an increase in religiously justified discrimination and violence against society members who have a different religion or worldview in European Societies, the aim of this project is to strengthen the foundations for peaceful communities by fostering peaceful dialogue between young people of the EU, Turkey, Israel / Palestine and the Caucasus region.

About this Youth Exchange activity:

This exchange was carried out in cooperation with the local NGO “Antikriegshaus”, which is part of the German Peace Movement (see <http://antikriegshaus.de/>). The Peace Studies Center Sievershausen was established in the rooms of the Sievershausen Lutheran Church community almost 50 years ago. Those were the times when the Vietnam War escalated. Expansions and further re-organisations followed. Now there are several buildings, surrounded by a nice park, including a guest house and a museum with an assembly hall. Every year an international workcamp is carried out there, and the place really benefits from this international atmosphere. The seminar house offers sleeping rooms for 3-4 people, volunteers will have a lot of space for meetings, cooking, dining, relaxing and for indoor and outdoor activities.

In addition we were in close contact with an accommodation for refugees which are living since years in the neighboring town Lehrte. Most of the refugees living there are age 18-30 and are from countries in West Africa.

Groups of 5 or 6 young people from 6 countries (Georgia, Belgium, Germany, Israel, Azerbaijan and Greece met and learned about the concept “Friedensstifter (young people become agents of peace)” and about methods of empowerment with sensitive groups. The concept is used in school and non-formal educational contexts. The methodology is based on a set of exercises related to different aspects of violence, conflict and conflict resolution in groups.

Complementary to the pedagogical working units, the main focus was on the situation of refugees in Germany and what it means to be a “welcoming Society”: Participants were invited to visit refugees in their accommodation and to organize leisure time activities with them. They had the chance to get in contact with the residents of the Asylum Centre and to learn about their life stories, difficulties and perspectives. In addition the groups presented the work of their organisations to the others and discussed the current situation of refugees in their country and the political background and context.

Program Overview

Day 1 Tuesday, 15.08.2017

Welcome

Get to know each other, Orientation

Introduction to the topic, presentation of the program and of the participants

Organisation Details

Dinner

Day 2 – Wednesday, 16.08.2017

Breakfast

Group building activities

Common Agreements

Lunch break

– *small group visits refugee shelter in Sievershausen (one member of each team)*

Training with Maik Bischoff: Group building;

Introduction into peace concepts

Reflection

Dinner

Day 3 Thursday, 17.08.2017

Breakfast

Training with Maik Bischoff: Working on communication and planning in a big group; on trust and communication in smaller groups and pairs

Lunch break

Continued Training, "Refugee chair"

Reflection

Dinner

Day 4 Friday, 18.08.2017

Breakfast

Creating Workshop posters Training with Maik on conditions and values for peace

Lunch break

Group discussion on responsibilities within the group

Presentation of Belgian and Palestinian NGO

Reflection

Dinner

Day 5 Saturday, 19.08.2017

Breakfast

Preparation of the posters for the asylum seeker's housing

Lunch break

Training with Maik

Dinner

Day 6 Sunday, 20.08.2017

Breakfast

Visit to the Fest of "Lehrte hilft" Sommer Feast of DRK

Free time

Dinner

Day 7 Monday, 21.08.2017

Breakfast

Discussion groups and reflection concerning the incident of the week end

Lunch break

First day workshops in the AWO Accommodation Lehrte

Dinner

Day 8 Tuesday, 22.08.2017

Breakfast

Training with Maik on nonviolent communication

Preparation for the workshops of the afternoon

Lunch Break

Workshops in the AWO Accommodation Lehrte

Day 9 Wednesday, 23.08.2017

Breakfast

Preparation for the workshops of the afternoon

Lunch Break

Workshops with asylum seekers in the AWO Accommodation Lehrte

Dinner

Day 10 Thursday, 24.08.2017

Breakfast

Training with Maik on utopian societies

Preparation for the workshops of the afternoon

Lunch Break

Workshops with asylum seekers in AWO Accommodation Lehrte

Dinner

Day 11 Friday, 25.08.2017

Breakfast

Preparation for the workshops of the afternoon

Lunch Break

Workshops with asylum seekers in AWO Accommodation Lehrte Barbecue at the AWO Accommodation

Dinner

Day 12 Saturday, 26.08.2017

Breakfast

Evaluation of the Youth Exchange

Organizing of the departure and the cleaning teams

Lunch Break Cleaning Farewell Dinner

Day 13 Sunday, 27.08.2017

Breakfast

Departure

Daily Reports

Day 1 – Tuesday, August 15th

Groups and participants were arriving during the day and were picked up either by Anna and Miriam, by Otto or Angelika of the Antikriegshaus Sievershausen. After Dinner Anna explained the program of the week and we started to organize our stay at the Antikriegshaus by filling in our names into the task lists that the ICJA team had prepared. We had lists for cooking and cleaning, for energizers and for workshop ideas. Afterwards we played a game to get to know each other a bit better and also to learn the names.

We were playing a memorizing game in which every participant should say his or her name and to add an adjective with the first letter of his or her name. For instance Sonja said sweet and Cathy sad cool and so on. Every person in the circle had to repeat all the names with the matching adjectives that were said before it was her turn to add her own name and adjective to the list.

Day 2 – Wednesday, August 16th

Morning

The second day of our youth exchange was quite intense and busy. It started with an energizer, followed by an activity prepared by Anna and Miriam. Participants had to write down on 3 pieces of paper what they thought they can contribute to this project; what was their motivation to take part in this youth exchange and what they expect from it. After writing down our thoughts, we started to work in pairs in order to discuss what we wrote on those papers. This phase of the activity was followed up by sharing our expectations, motivations and contributions in one big group and mapping the papers on the floor. Later on, facilitators divided us in 3 smaller groups, in which we had to focus on one of the above mentioned topics and discuss them once again. Generally speaking, many of us had similar motivations and expectations from this youth exchange and it was interesting to observe how many different things participants could contribute to it. This activity was very dynamic and participants took part in it quite actively.

The next teambuilding activity was called "Water and Rocks". Anna put some papers on the ground, which represented the rocks and we had to cross the imaginary ocean and getting to an "island" by walking on those rocks only. Each time, when there was nobody stepping on one of the rocks, Anna and Miriam would take that piece of paper away, thus making our task more complicated. We played this game 2 times, as in the first round our group failed to get to the island, when one of the participants "fell" into water. We tried it again and finally succeeded, as we made a plan on how to get to the "island" and everyone was helping one another. After this activity we had a short debriefing and discussed what the possible purpose of this game was; why we failed at the beginning and what helped us to improve our strategy.

After the teambuilding activity, we spent some time discussing in one big group "common agreements" that we were going to follow within the next 2 weeks. Some of them included quite common ones, like "no phones during the sessions", or "being on time for the sessions". We also discussed the importance of having a good communication, creating trustful and friendly atmosphere, so that everyone could speak up, as well as being tolerant towards each other (i.e no judgment; solidarity, etc.) and that we should work as one big team. Common agreements also included some technical points, such as "quiet time after 12 a.m.", keeping our

venue clean, etc..

By midday, some of the participants and our facilitators left to visit the Refugee home in Lehrte; some (the cooking team of the day) went to prepare the lunch, whereas the rest of the group was given free time to come up with ideas about workshops that we could carry out together with the refugees in the upcoming few days.

The group that visited the Refugee home spent around 1 hour there. They met the principal of the shelter and some of the refugees living there. They had a chance to ask them questions they were interested in, particularly about their living conditions; how they spend their time there etc.. Participants found out that there were a few families living separately; some of the refugees had jobs and that kids/teenagers went to schools. They also discussed with the principal what kind of activities they could make for the refugees and what they might be interested in.

Afternoon

After the lunch we had a few more activities led by our trainer Mike. During the first one we had a chance to get to know people that we hadn't had an opportunity to meet or talk to before. We were given different pictures and we had to walk around the room saying our names to other participants and exchanging our pictures, while the music was on. Once it stopped, we had to find a person who had the same picture like we did, and talk for the next 90 seconds on different topics, suggested by Mike. We had 4 rounds of this activity, and we talked about 1) The last thing we had done back home before leaving to Germany; 2) Things we wanted to change in the cities we lived in; 3) What we liked the most about our best friends and 4) What could possibly make us mad or angry. This game allowed us to talk to random people, and not the ones we knew or came to Sievershausen with.

After this one, we did a name activity. Trainer divided us into a few groups of 4 people and within those groups we were supposed to talk about the meaning of our names, tell each other who gave them to us and how we usually introduce ourselves (using our own name or maybe a nickname). Since we have a very diverse group of young people, it was interesting for us to listen to the stories behind the names from different countries as well as share our own ones.

The next activity was probably the longest one we had on this day. Our trainer put in the garden around 10 pieces of paper with quotes of different influential people and asked us to walk around, read those quotes and pick up the one we liked most. Then we formed a few random groups to discuss these quotes for the next 45 minutes and explain why we liked them. Most of the groups had quite constrictive discussions, during of which there were points that everybody agreed on/disagreed with, or the ones that led to completely new discussions. This activity helped us to think about some crucial topics such as education, peace, equality, justice, etc. and to see how many different ideas and thoughts people had on these issues. Our trainer then gave us some information about the people whose quotes were used and what they did for the global society. At the end of this activity, we were asked to think about peace and write down/draw on a big flipchart what came to our minds when we thought of peace.

At the end of the day, facilitators divided us into reflection groups which will stay the same for the rest of the project. Within 30 minutes we all reflected on our feelings about the day, about the activities we had done and gave some feedback about some issues we found important to improve.

Day 3 - Thursday, August 17th

Morning

The day began with an energizer with two parts. First everyone kissed an imaginary rabbit on any part of their choice and then to do the same to the partner to their left in a circle. The group was not sure of the point of the act during the first part of the energizer but quickly got more excited at the second aspect of it, although it was with reservation on a few people. I liked it.

During the training session with Maik, we did a tower building exercise. It involved everyone having hold of a string connected to a tool that was used to lift wooden blocks to build the tower. The group participated actively but the solution was not collective. When reflecting on the activity it was clear that the result was not satisfactory to anyone. I personally found the activity creative but it was quite draining on the mind.

We had a break and came back for the second part of the morning session. The training activity was divided into two, where we first paired up then one was to be blind folded. The former had to lead the latter to various places around the session area. The second part involved having groups of people blind folded and one person at the back of the line guiding the group around the obstacles in the area. In both parts, the guide had to either guide with touch only or by voice. The group was skeptical but could follow instructions of the activity as they did it. There was a good reaction of the feeling that people got especially for those who were blind folded and there was a feeling of trust between the members. The feeling I got was first of uncertainty but gradually found myself completely calm with my partners. We then left for a lunch break.

Afternoon

The afternoon session started with a short energizer of counting. It involved everyone in the group counting to ten one at a time. The game was not completed. The group was actively involved except for a few who were silent. It was frustrating but fun.

In the training with Maik we did an analogy of the world population and GDP according to the number of participants. We began with the population where we divided ourselves according to what we believed was the right representation of the population in the various continents. We then did the same for the GDP but with chairs instead of people. Finally, the participants divided into their various continents, were supposed to sit on the chairs accordingly.

The group was very involved. A voting system and a mediator were used. The impression from the group because of the result was quite energetic with various ideas and thoughts. Although the result was expected the lively representation in this small scale was surprising and shocking for me.

The group decided to do a short name game to help with the names but due to exhaustion decided to postpone it to the following day. The participants from Azerbaijan presented their organization (Common Sense Youth Org.) at this time. The participants then proceeded to the reflection session in their respective groups.

Day 4 - Friday, August 18th

Morning

Today was a different day than the rest of the week for the organization and the exercises. We started to get into deeper planning concerning the workshops. The day before, someone from our group took the initiative to make a list. This morning she presented all different workshops that have been proposed so far. All leaders of the different workshops spoke about this for giving more details about their workshop. After that, we organized the creation of the workshop posters which Miriam and Anna brought to the refugee shelter later in the afternoon.

After that the training with Maik started. The first exercise was about the different values a society needs in order to reach peace. At the first place, everybody wrote the seven most important values they had in mind for a peaceful society. After that, we had to come together with the person next to us, to compare and talk about our values and decide about 10 common ones. Then, we did the same with a group of four people and at the end with a bigger group of eight in which we had to come up with fifteen common values. At the end Maik took the papers and stuck them on the board so everyone could compare. We all found in our papers common values, for example respect, freedom and tolerance. At last we had to come again together with a group of six people, take a big moderation paper and draw our ideal city according to our values.

Afternoon

After lunch time, we started with a new exercise to remember all the names because it was still difficult to remember everybody's names.

After that, we had an activity which came up from last nights' reflection groups. The activity was to reflect about living together, what problems we have, what things we must change in order to make it possible for everyone to feel good living with the group. In smaller groups we brainstormed about the different problems and afterwards we had a reflection round together. There was a big debate about the conditions of living together and the respect to each other. Everybody had the opportunity to explain in front of the group what he or she thought are the changes we have to make as we realized that the group dynamics of living together weren't balanced. We agreed on some rules that all of us will follow, for example: cleaning after ourselves, putting our names to the existing lists of cooking and cleaning as well as having in mind to be on time at the sessions and wake up our roommates.

Then the Belgian group presented their two sending organizations. The second group finished their presentation with a game: it was a competition game between two teams. Always one person per team had to come the Belgian leader and look at a word (for example: Homosexual, Refugee, ...) and had to draw this word without speaking while his/her group had to guess the word which he/she was drawing. After this game, we had a new debate: What was difficult to guess, why we guess this one drawing and not the other one, etc.. Our answers showed us how rooted stereotypes are in our way of understanding society. This gave us the opportunity to look deeper in how stereotypes are being created. The group talked a lot about different national stereotypes and the influence media creates.

Then the Israeli group made also a presentation about their organization. They spoke about the history of Palestine, the regional conflict and the role of the organization in order to empower Palestinian refugees in Israel but also the contact between Palestinians in Israel and the ones who live in West Bank and Gaza.

To conclude: this day was interesting and that's what people expressed during the days reflection groups.

Day 5 Saturday, August 19th

After a long and intense first week, everybody was excited about this week-end. On Saturday, the whole group left for Hanover by walking. It took us a whole hour just to be sure everybody was following (for a thirty minute walk) which taught us once again that solidarity takes time. Once arrived in the city, we split for a while and we all met again to get an alternative free tour of the city, an anti-globalization critic based on clothes production, by Florian. The tour wasn't as interactive and « moving » as expected, even though the information we received might have been surprising and relevant. Around 3PM, we finally all split for a real free time: a big part of the group went to Hamburg, and small groups stayed in Hanover and walked around as they wanted to. My group (made with 4 nationalities – Palestine, Greece, Turkey & Belgium) went straight to the flea market and then enjoyed the summer festival « Ein Fest für Alle », which was divided in small or bigger places in the old town. Every event was both political and joyful, and went from the gay & burlesque square to a big world music party. This was our final stop, where we each enjoyed world food, which for some was « home food » (Turkish, Palestinian, African). Despite the hard time we had trying to come back (trains were late or cancelled, and one of us got so tired and emotional, she burst into tears), we managed to get way home. We were a just a few to come back at the Antikriegshaus and enjoyed a quiet evening together. For me, it was a hard day, despite the good fun I had with some people, because I felt frustrated, most of it with the tour, which felt like losing one hour of my life. I was trying really hard to participate (so it would pass faster), but most of the group (and I understand them) just didn't show any interest and didn't try to hide it. But also because afterwards, we had to deal with everybody's needs and fatigue in my group of five, and despite the great talks we had, it didn't feel like a « free » time. But I'm planning to go back next Saturday, and enjoying the city a second time.



Day 6 - Sunday, August 20th

On Sunday, while a part of the group was enjoying a breakfast in the sun, the « Hamburg tourists » came back after a long « city by night tour » and went to sleep. At 1PM, 10 of us left for the Sommerfest of Lehrte, organized by associations of volunteers who work with refugees to help them settle and feel included in their new life. There we enjoyed an intercultural buffet & BBQ, as well as dances from other countries as Iraq. The sun who kept us company the whole week-end left us as we were digesting, and the typical German rain we had known for most the week came back to remind us it was almost Monday. I had trouble having fun to the summer fest because of some news I got in the morning. I found out that my leader (Ömar, from the CBB's – Belgium), a Syrian refugee who got asylum in Belgium, experienced racism twice during his trip to Hamburg. Once with the police, who checked his passport for more than 30 minutes, trying to see if it wasn't a fake one, and interrogating him about his camera (was it his ? How and where did he get it? How did he pay for it?) to « be sure he wasn't a thief ». His second bad experience happened when he tried to join the others inside some club and the security didn't let him « because he was a

refugee». To know that this was his experience of Germany really made me feel sad. But I got even angrier about the fact that the group didn't stand up for and by him. This lack of solidarity, when this all we have been talking about the whole week really shocked me. And drove me kind of mad. I spent the whole Sunday asking to the others who were supposed to be with him what were there side of the story. A lot of them claimed they didn't know, and thought he didn't want to come inside the club, or that he had changed his mind and went somewhere else. This whole story reminded me of this exercises we did on our second day. We had an imaginary river ahead of us, and paper-stones. The goal was to make the whole group cross the river. The rule was that no rock should be left with nobody's foot on it, otherwise the rock would disappear, leaving a huge gap and making the crossing harder. It took us two attempts to succeed, which actually surprised me. How hard is it to take just a few more seconds to check with the person behind you if she's still following, and if she's safe?! Apparently, for some of us, it takes too much energy and they would prefer to create « alternative facts » than to actually check by themselves. The leaders Anna and Miriam have decided to proceed this conflict resolution step by step and started in the evening by talking to Ömar, to see how he wanted to proceed. And tomorrow will start the hard process to raise awareness and solve this conflict as a group; a name that for now, we haven't deserved. This week-end just confirmed me that this Youth Exchange is both an intercultural dialogue lesson and conflict resolution training and in itself.

Day 7 Monday, August 21st

Morning

The day had quite a lot of issues to be sorted out especially in a psychological level. Because of an incident that took place in an excursion a group of participants had in Hamburg, a participant was very distressed and disappointed referring to the lack of support he said he received from the rest of the group as he interpreted later when coming back.

He was ambivalent whether to remain to the project in Germany or go back home. There were two separate groups coordinated from the leaders of the whole group, in order to create a space where this conflict could be resolved and the issues which came up could be solved out in the benefit of the specific participant and the rest the participants.

Most of the participants expressed their feelings towards what happened which actually, in my opinion, reflected the psychological situation that also some others have been.

The schedule of the day was rearranged but it was effective to have some issues and feelings opened up. Also other issues about the consistency of the schedule of the day were discussed.



Afternoon

In the refugee shelter later that afternoon a few exercises took place on an introductory level especially soccer and basketball games and jewelry handcrafts. It was the first day to meet the people living there and interact with them.

Day 8 Tuesday, August 22nd

The group seemed to have found a way to connect better so eventually the day passed by with creativity and cooperation. The group embraced the participant who felt distressed the previous day and everyone took their responsibility such in separate -one to one-meetings and also in bigger groups. It seemed that talking about feelings based on some facts helped us have a thorough understanding of each other. I believe that this specific situation taught each of us several aspects of the dynamics of a diverse group like this and also the differentiation of the psychological conditions of each individual.

Morning

In the morning session with our trainer we had several interesting exercises and discussions about conflict resolution in communication based on the technique of "Nonviolent Communication". It was also a good opportunity to associate this to the previous day's incident and also to some other 'conflictual' situations.

Afternoon

Later in the afternoon, in the refugee's shelter it seemed like we had adjusted better than yesterday and the planning of the day was more accurate. Several activities took place in parallel such as sports activities and also a workshop regarding 'Human Rights Issues'. The bond between the group including the international group and the refugees was more intense.

Day 9 Wednesday, August 23rd

Morning

There was another gathering of the group this morning for another evaluation of the previous days and the improvement of the following. There was a rearrangement of the workshops which would take place during the next days, highlighting the commitment of each of the coordinators of the workshops and also the rest of the participants. There was also a presentation of the organization of some groups, which was very interesting, and gave us the chance to exchange opinions and experiences.

During the day and the previous days also, there were times between the activities, training sessions and cooking activities when the participants had the chance to relax, chat in groups, have fun and tell about life stories. It was very fulfilling for the connection of people to share experience and feelings, which also helped in the learning process.

Afternoon

Later this afternoon in the refugee's shelter several workshops took place in parallel such as "theatrical" activities in which quite a lot of people joined and had fun. There was also an initiation and encouragement from a participant to cooperate with a person in the shelter in order to create a short film. That was interesting and creative and gave the chance to other participants to observe the process.

Day 10 Thursday, August 24th

Morning

The day started by making an energizer to wake us up. Its name was "The puking kangaroo". We stood in a circle and by the person who stood in the middle we were given three main activities: "Washing Machine", "James Bond", "Toaster" and "Puking Kangaroo". The person who stood in the middle commanded one of these actions and at the time was pointing on one of us. Two people standing next to them had to act according to the "order" given. It was a good starter, everyone were involved and went along with it. And at the same time it was funny and made us laugh.

After that Mike started his training by finishing last week's activity. We had to take back our posters about the utopian cities and each group had to explain in the circle their idea. The whole group was free to ask questions about their ideas. Like: "why your ideal city has a graveyard or why did you choose to create a space for intercultural meetings or disabled people". As we finished our descriptions of our utopian cities we had to come again into groups, different ones this time and make a reality check. How all these expectations and needs people have could be actually realized in our own cities. First we had to think what our cities lack and then write down our proposals of change. As we came into the big group again, a lot of ideas came up. We discussed about our choices as consumers and about our privacy and how important it is to protect our minds from all the companies' propaganda in social media and the internet. We also came up with ideas about education and how much does a person change after attending formal education at the school. The ideas raised a lot of questions which was a good thing to take with us back home.



After that Maik did an activity with us, called "The Walk of Privilege". He gave us small papers with short descriptions of identities like "I am a daughter of a bank management I study Economy at university." We were given instructions to imagine ourselves in the place of that identity we were given and think about our childhood, student years and our lives as this person. After 10 minutes we went outside where Mike asked us to stand in a line and answer the questions he prepared to highlight the difference in privileges. If our answer was "yes" we were taking one step ahead and if our answer was "no" we had to stay where we were. At the end there were gaps between people according to attributes of wealth, gender, ethnicity, religion and residence status.

After this we were asked what our first action would be to change our society. We wrote it on papers and kept them by ourselves. How the group reacted: it was very interesting to imagine oneself in someone else's shoe, so everyone was thoughtful and interested.

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How the group reacted: it was very interesting to imagine oneself in someone else's shoe, so everyone was thoughtful and interested.

Afternoon

After lunch we visited the shelter. More people went today than on previous days. We started with Omar's energizer. It was a dancing energizer where u repeat what the leader says. The leader has to pick random people in the group and they have to dance. The rest of the people have to dance according to what the dancing person is doing.

The next game we did was "Rush hour": The group is split into two where members of each side have their own chairs. The goal was to reach the other side the quickest. Whoever was the last on the both sides was eliminated and the chairs were removed. This was repeated until one participant was left on each side.

How the group reacted: It was a very active game where everyone joyfully took part.

After that Angeliki organized a Workshop called "Positive reinforcements".

We chose a partner with whom we had to exchange one of our happiest memories. During our speech our partner was making positive notes on our characteristics on sticky notes and stuck them on our body. Afterwards we changed roles.

How the group reacted: It was a good chance to speak and get to know each other better, so almost everyone show great interest towards this workshop.

Workshop: "National dances"

After "Positive reinforcements" the members of our group performed national dances. People living in the shelter were involved, especially children were interested. They were having a good time dancing with us guests.

Day 11 Friday, August 25th

Morning

As the morning started we did an energizer by watching video about the history of hip hop through dance and all the participants had to move like the dancers. Most of the participants were trying to follow the steps without success but the group felt motivated and warmed up to start the morning session.

After that, we watched a video about the refugees' situation in Greece. The video was quite emotional. It was showing real scenes from port authorities to protect the refugees that come to Europe for a better life. The Greek team was asked how they deal with the refugees' situation in their daily life. The Greek society because of the crisis is not capable of incorporating the refugees. They live in Greece under unhealthy situations. After that, we had a conversation about the refugees' topic in our countries. A participant from Soudan informed us about the civil war in his country. Moreover, the Georgian group talked about their fight with Russia and its result was the internal migration. Also Palestinians gave their input about the immigration situation between Palestine and Israel. The group was so shocked because they watched quite harsh pictures through the Greek short film, but also that gave us the opportunity to get more into the topic of refugees in each country.

Afternoon



During the afternoon we organized a barbeque in the shelter as it was our last day. We brought salads, different dips and meat in order to grill them in the shelter. Except of the food we had a workshop about face and body painting. We drew faces and hands of children and adults. At the same time volunteers were playing ping-pong, basketball, football and tennis. The group was so motivated. All of us were trying to give our best. At the end, some of the volunteers felt sadness because it was our last day and we wouldn't see them again. Also what I took from the last day was that actually this whole exchange is about learning and changing your perspective about people from different backgrounds living together and not at all about providing help to people in need.

Day 12 Saturday, August 26th

We started the day by the group evaluation for the whole two weeks. The evaluation was divided into two parts. The first part which we did together included:

“the washing machine”, which symbolized the parts of the program that we would want to improve in the future, “the trash” which symbolized the things that we would like to leave behind because they’re not useful or bothered us and “the luggage” which is the good things we collected here and would like to take with us. Everybody participated in writing together about each part mentioned above. We noticed that we wrote the most on the luggage paper. The second part was the evaluation papers in which everybody separately filled in.

After that we did an exercise called “warm back”, for which we wrote about the positive things we found in each other in these two weeks on papers stuck to our backs. The outcome was to have a paper full of nice and positive things as memory from the friends we met at the Youth Exchange.

In the middle of the day there was a presentation for ICJA organization from Selen.

After the lunch time, we played a game called “secret Santa”. For this game we had to collect small gifts from each person and then giving it someone randomly. Most of us gave a gift from our home country that shows a piece of the country’s culture.

At the end of the day we cleaned the house together and started packing and preparing for leaving tomorrow.

We felt that today was special because it’s the last day here after two weeks we spent together. We had mixed emotions: on one hand we were sad for leaving and on the other hand it was nice and joyful and we had a lot of fun.

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

The Feedback of the Youth Exchange in Sievershausen were quite mixed which reflected the diversity of the group that had been visible from the beginning. About 70 % of the

participants had mainly hoped for friendships and were generally interested in meeting people from different countries and having a good time with them. An amount of around 30 % were motivated to engage in political discussions and learning about peace building and exchange ideas concerning the methods of the other NGOs. Accordingly diverse were the voices in the reflections groups where the majority seemed to be contend with the outcome of the two weeks whereas some of the group seemed to have expected something different.

The feedback concerning the workshops in the AWO accommodation was more consentaneously positive, as everyone enjoyed the activities and learning how to organize workshops for big groups of people and how to offer something that many people would be interested in. The visit to the AWO Accommodation Lehrte for a whole week was a big learning experience but also brought up the question whether conducting workshops with refugees for such a short period of time is really making a difference. On the other hand it was highly appreciated by participants that they had the opportunity to establish personal relationships, talking with them rather than about them.




However it seemed like the most difficult task was not the content of the training or the planning and implementation of the workshops but rather to live together respectfully and responsibly. Until the end we had ongoing discussions concerning the tasks that should have been equally shared by everyone in the group. Throughout the two weeks we confronted each other and tried to come to a common ground on these issues which was not always easy but very necessary as it stressed that communication and peace building starts at a very personal level. The most outstanding demonstration of this principle happened during the first week end when a part of the group went to Hamburg on the Saturday night. When only a part of the group was allowed into the club and two of the group had to wait outside because they weren't let into the club because of the racial profiling policy at a club's door the group didn't stick together and the two were left outside waiting for the rest of the night for the others in order to take the train home together with the group ticket.

It took a long time until this incident could be addressed. Shame, guilt, anger and miscommunication blocked the way until finally the group admitted to their negative feelings of shame and guilt and could apologize to the two left out participants. In the end the issue was resolved on a personal level where the group realized how difficult it is to stick to ones principles if the outside world follows a contradicting structure.

This was by far the biggest step we had to take as a group and we were happy to have dealt with this challenge. Despite the difficulties it was sad to part from each other in the end.

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

Annex 1 – Final Evaluation by participants

	Points received				
	4	3	2	1	0
					
My learning growth	38%	52%	10%		
Motivating atmosphere	20%	57%	19%	4%	
My opportunities to participate	73%	23%	4%		
Opportunities for practical application of course`s content	14%	62%	24%		
Time management of a learning process	24%	52%	19%	5%	
Topic selection of learning content	29%	52%	19%		
Methodical structure of the workshops	33%	48%	19%		
Materials (texts, presentations)	38%	33%	24%	5%	

Annex 2 – Participating Organisations

Belgium	Javva CBB	http://javva.org/ http://www.compagnonsbatisseurs.be/en/organization/
Israel	Baladna	https://www.asfarifoundation.org.uk/baladna/
Georgia	Civil Forum	http://cforum.org/#/home
Germany	ICJA	http://www.icja.org/
Azerbaijan	Common Sense	http://csyo-az.org/en/
Greece	ELIX	http://elix.org.gr/index.php/en/79-elix-ngo-en

Annex 3 – Articles, Links and Social Media

Facebook group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/243194122722936/>

ICJA official facebook page post

<https://www.facebook.com/ICYE.Germany/?fref=ts>

Social Media Posts and Articles by the partner organizations

Coordinating Organization:

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