

Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe aisbl



Brussels, 15th of December 2011

European Christian and Muslim Youth show a good example of interreligious dialogue and dialogue with secularism

From 4th December to 11th December 2011 thirty five young people from Europe and beyond, Christians and Muslims, from different traditions and national backgrounds gathered in the European Youth Centre Budapest, Hungary, for an Interreligious Study Session "Secularism and Religions: Working Together for a Common Europe" which was organised by the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) and Forum of Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) in cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE).

"Moving towards a decade of close collaboration between European Christian and Muslim Youth, EYCE in collaboration with FEMYSO organised a study session to reflect about the relations between secularism and living faiths in Europe. It is important to note that this event was more than a vision, but a wider interfaith dialogue coming from the member organisations of EYCE and FEMYSO with a joint aim to work together to unite our work in the field of active citizenship. This was a good example of interreligious dialogue and LOVE," said Najatte Kaaouss, participant and member of the board of trustees of FEMYSO.

The participants got the opportunity to deepen their knowledge about different religious and cultural traditions, experience interreligious dialogue, as well as acquire practical tools and skills to further promote the ideas discussed.

"This was the first interreligious event of EYCE and FEMYSO I participated, and I must say I was impressed. This event showed how the interreligious dialogue can be - and really is - put in practice. It was great to see the commitment of all the participants to work together for a common goal and to be part of the genuine sharing of experiences and ideas," said Sini Tyvi, participant and EYCE Executive Committee member.

Several guest speakers and workshop leaders contributed to the programme of the training course with their knowledge and expertise. Theoretical background of secularism and the process of secularisation was offered to the participants through the lecture of Michaël Privot, the director of The European Network Against Racism (ENAR). The discussion was further elaborated by a presentation of real dialogue on European level between religious communities and European institutions in the speech of Rüdiger Noll, director of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CSC/ CEC). Participants actively engaged and contributed to the discussions with the guest speakers.

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On the 8th of December the participants had the opportunity to visit various religious communities in Budapest. The visit started with the visit to the Knights of Malta charity, where the participants got introduced to a variety of the charity projects run by this Christian based organisation. This was followed by a visit to a Synagogue and a short meeting with a representative of the Jewish community in Hungary. The field visit continued a presentation and discussion about the Muslim community in Hungary and the Muslim midday prayer at the Mosque.

Friday, 9th of December was the day of experiencing prayers, when the participants had the opportunity to share and discuss their faith traditions. There was an Ecumenical Christian prayer held in the morning and Muslim Midday prayer in the afternoon. Participants showed great interest in one another's faith tradition and many interesting questions were asked.

During the practical part of the study session, the participants had the opportunity to experience and learn from a variety of workshops: advocacy, empowerment and motivation, dialogue in practice and creative thinking. The final part of the programme provided the participants with knowledge and ideas for use in their practical work by providing sessions on advocacy, project management and social marketing. This inspired and motivated the participants to work on creative ideas for the projects to be implemented in their own context.

A variety of highly creative and interesting projects was developed by the participants, integrating experiences and knowledge gained during the study session. The participants enriched the atmosphere of the event greatly with creative approaches to the activities. EYCE and FEMYSO wish the best of luck to all the participants for the implementation of the projects developed!

For more information on the study session or the work of EYCE, contact Kristine Jansone, EYCE General Secretary, on general.secretary@eyce.org or +32 2 510 6171.