



Worlds of Experience

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Youth Volunteering against Racism

Dear friends,

The recent years have witnessed a significant rise in racism, hate speech and hate crimes against refugees, migrants and minorities across the world. Political and financial instability in many nation-states, the aftermath of an ever increasing number of terrorist attacks, and political rhetoric is fuelling fear and resentment within communities. In the 44th issue of the ICYE Newsletter, we therefore take up the theme **Youth Volunteering against Racism**.

The ICYE programme is based on the principle of cultural exchange, which embodies the promotion of intercultural understanding, of equality of opportunity and of peace. Hundreds of young ICYE volunteers embark on a cultural exchange and serve year after year in civil society organisations around the world. Young volunteers have the potential to make a difference by sharing a positive message about inclusion and diversity and thereby countering prejudiced and racist attitudes.

In **Volunteers Voices**, 7 current volunteers discuss their reflections on the theme of racism. Among the diverse experiences of the volunteers, one aspect is prominent in its reoccurrence in many of the articles: the presence of latent, unintentional racism in everyday life, which in its covert form is not regarded as racism and serves to normalise racist discourses and 'othering' processes in society. At the same time, as an US-American volunteer in Spain writes, the interaction with one person is all it takes to realise that we are more similar than we may initially assume, and little by little, this will change the mind-sets of many and inspire the hearts of tons.

ICYE Programme News include: the 30th General Assembly of the ICYE Federation in Denmark; reflections on the situation of refugees by a former ICYE UK Board member; "Zusammen Leben" and "SAWA" two initiatives to support and involve young refugees in volunteering respectively by Grenzenlos/ICYE Austria and ICJA/ICYE Germany; the final evaluation meeting of the Erasmus+ Project "Calling Youth to Action in a Global Visibility Drive"; and the new ICYE Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project on "Skills and Competences for a Global World".

News from Int'l Organizations feature: Youth delegates at the 72nd UN General Assembly; ILO's report on World Youth Skills Day - 17 July 2017; the new UN SG report on "Youth development links to sustainable development"; and the 10th UNESCO Youth Forum.

News from NGOs report on: WEF report on "How Skills-based Volunteering can help you succeed in the age of robots"; the 2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index and 6 Fundraising tips for small NGOs.

Wishing you an interesting reading, we look forward to receiving articles and pictures for the next issue of "Worlds of Experience", dedicated to **"The role of intercultural communication in volunteering"**. Please send your contributions to icye@icye.org, before 31 January 2018.

Warmest regards!
ICYE International Office

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Racism without Intent

Mae Cosgrove (USA)
Volunteer in Spain

The first place that comes to mind when someone mentions “racism” probably isn’t Europe. And while discussing racism in Europe might seem like child’s play compared to South African Apartheid or downright irony coming from an American like me, it remains a global issue from which no one is exempt.

To give you a little background on me, I have lived in the United States almost my entire life; I was adopted from China when I was a baby (so no, I don’t remember anything about it). Though being Chinese is a part of my heritage, I consider the American identity to be my own. This is something that I have had to explain to people throughout my entire life. And while America makes headlines by hate crimes committed by radicals, it is generally in fashion to at least try to be politically correct when referring to minority groups. This is not me pardoning racism by any means, but rather an explanation that Americans are usually not the gun crazed maniacs you see on TV or in our White House.



This year I am volunteering in Madrid and Aranjuez, Spain. Before I embarked on this journey, I attended a training session in which we had a seminar solely discussing being an American abroad. In this seminar, we were taught how to respond to loaded questions about America’s most controversial political issues such as gun laws, our choice in president, and immigration. I have even been warned not to travel to certain places because it is too dangerous for an American abroad. But while all of the aforementioned topics have arisen within my time here, it surprisingly has not been my biggest issue regarding race.

I have been in Spain for about a month at this point, and already I am starting to notice that people on the streets are quite a bit more blatantly racist than they are back home (at least to my face). Upon introductions to new people, I am commonly asked where I am from. I always answer, “Los Estados Unidos [The United States],” and about fifty percent

of the time, I am met with a confused expression and the phrase, “but you look... [pulls corners of the eyes to mimic a squint].” I have not been met with this level of racism since about the third grade. My reaction to this is to tell them that I was adopted from China when I was a baby and that I have now lived in the US for most of my life. But the only part that people seem to take away from this sentiment is that their impression of me was right — that I am Chinese. They become almost excited at this confirmation, as if I have now given permission for all the stereotypes to flood their minds.

My coworkers and friends do their best to help me dispel any of them, but it still doesn’t stop a good number of people from calling me “El Chino,” instead of bothering to learn my name.

The worst part about it is that there is no malicious intent. I’m sure many might look at this as a positive; but does a punch in the face still hurt just because someone didn’t mean to hit you? So does racism. And I’m not sitting here complaining that people are hurting my feelings. This isn’t a condemnation that all Europeans are racist. Rather, I am pointing out that racism without intent is still racism. Ignorance is still destructive, and the most valuable thing we can do about it is to educate people. All it takes is knowing one person to realize that any “foreigner” is still a human being and perhaps a lot less different than they initially seem. Little by little, this will change the mindsets of many and inspire the hearts of tons.

Erasmus+ is funding not only the EVS-Project, but also united against racism

Georg List (Austria)
Volunteer in Russia

(unitedagainstracism.org) is an organization trying to tackle discrimination by connecting national organizations and movements throughout Europe. Twice a year unitedagainstracism organises a conference in different places on various topics. At one of these conferences, I learned everything about EVS and how great it can be. Since I am a European citizen who can work, travel and live easily within the EU, I thought with the help and security of the EVS Project, I could explore realms beyond the Schengen area, uncharted territory, at least for me. This led me to Samara, Russia. Another reason why I came here is an encounter of the already mentioned United-Conference. There I have fallen in love with a very awesome woman from Samara (please note that I used the present-perfect tense, an action began in the past and continues in the present). In the beginning of my project, I was a bit shy to admit this very personal pull-factor, but I strongly believe that there are millions of reasons to do an EVS, and all of them are good reasons. Further, I had experience in anti-racism work and also worked with handicapped people, so I thought I want to gain more impressions from elsewhere in the world.

As a foreign woman, as a global citizen

Katherine Gutierrez (Honduras)
Volunteer in Taiwan

Yesterday I had my last day in my project. Nine months passed by very quickly, as a lot of other volunteers already stated. I chose to help in the Project Desnitsa (Десница), an organisation that promotes Inclusion for handicapped people using wheelchairs. My colleagues are really nice, also the work climate is pleasant, the hierarchy is flat, and you can engage anybody anytime.

The work Desnitsa does is very important for the Samara communities. Keeping as many people as possible vital, active and self-dependent makes a society broader. Also the exchange of volunteers is in my perception a solid way to deconstruct prejudices. Most importantly, a mutual feeling of friendship and international understanding are created. I got a lot more sensitive towards borders, either on a map or in my head.



Why anti-racism work is more important than ever. Through the last decades, legislation in a lot of countries changed. Anti-discrimination laws were established in many countries throughout Europe especially because of the Pressure of the EU to do so. In the case of Austria, I can say that anti-discrimination legislation was more copy pasted than implemented. That makes these laws very hard to execute, therefore they stay ineffective. For a long time the Austrian government succeeded in telling the story of a country that has no problem with racial discrimination. A majority of people was convinced.

As time passes on and payment inequality is soaring and economies continue to slowly strangulating themselves, migrants are used as scapegoats for almost every political failure of the past. For the sake of social cohesion we should not let us divide so easily. There is already enough evidence demonstrating how harmful racism is for the economy, especially in the labor market and the housing market. Let's act in solidarity and raise pressure on governments.

Solidarity of course fosters an exchange of ideas and sharing the struggle of daily life with each other. It is so wonderful that there are so many great projects that aim for that goal, fostering solidarity. Nonetheless the EVS project.

Racism is defined as views, practices and actions that reflect that humanity is divided into different biological groups called races and that members of a race share certain attributes that make them superior or inferior. Racism is the act in which one person discriminates against another because of his skin color and all the morphological traits that are linked to him. That's why, from the characteristics present in racism, what stands out most is the absolute aversion to a specific race that is seen as harmful or alien to the interests of the discriminator. Many theories describe the different causes of racism and all of them share that the history of racism begins from the division of civilization into different cultures, from the beginning of human history. Racism is closely linked with xenophobia, which according to the same encyclopedia is the aversion that refers to disgust or disgust towards foreigners. Another term that has much to do is the Semitism that is the contempt of the Jewish and Arab peoples.

But despite this gloomy picture, every year brave young volunteers around the world have embarked on the beautiful task of demonstrating to the world that intercultural coexistence between nations is possible. We have left our families in our countries of origin and initiated coexistence between races, countries and different customs, to provide new experiences, new challenges and new possibilities to improve our host communities and our communities of origin.

My personal experience has been very satisfactory so far. I have been in Tainan City, Taiwan since a month, and despite being in a totally different place and very far away from my country, I have felt welcome. I'm working as a volunteer at The Tobias Welfare Foundation of Tainan, which supports people with physical and mental disabilities.



I also have the pleasure of working with a diverse group of people, from young children, adolescents, young adults to adults, a complete experience. And at home, I have the opportunity to share with local people and another volunteer from Denmark; we get along very well as an intercultural family. I conclude with the ICYE principle of cultural exchange, which embodies the promotion of intercultural understanding, equality of opportunity and peace.

Volunteers Voices

As the new generations of young adults, we are called to stop the fear and indiscriminate racial hatred. The learning that comes with ICYE is that good examples and respect for different ways of thinking and customs leads to a healthy and respectful coexistence.

Learning by Experience

Kerstin Lintner (Austria)
Volunteer in Colombia

Racism – a word that nowadays is in every mouth, in every newspaper and every TV-show. In the last few years, people started to use it on a day to day basis, even though most of us, and with us, I mean Europeans, have never really been victims of it and are therefore talking without really knowing what it is about. But how can one change that?

ICYE is a programme that enables young people from all over the world to take part in voluntary activities, but more important it is a programme that offers an intercultural exchange to everybody willing to broaden their horizon, no matter if black or white, European or Asian, everybody can learn something.



I am staying in Cali right now. It is a city with around 35% of black people. However, apart from the children in my project, I didn't really come across any of them. So I started to ask and found out that this is because we are staying in the „good“ part of the city. The black people, however, belong to the poor people and therefore don't live in the centre but rather in the side districts of the city. But from my experience here I can tell that the people in my project are the most kind and generous people, they are more than patient with me and my Spanish and really bright if you take the time and talk to them. And that counts for everyone not just the adults. Last but not least, I would like to say that one should give less about the opinions of others but instead get to know people. I also think that due to this experience being the one that doesn't belong, the one that looks different and doesn't speak the language, I will never again judge people who are different from me, but rather accept them and appreciate them for whatever they are doing. Everybody is different and that's the way it is supposed to be.

Common Ground through Flexibility

David MacMurtrie (USA)
Volunteer in Indonesia

Catholicism is often stereotyped as a very strict religion. The image of a fearsome nun wielding a ruler before a seventh grade class is often a popular image that comes to mind. When compared to Catholicism, however, Islam seems even more stringent. The rules which require all consumed food to be Halal, prayer at five different times throughout the day, and, most infamously, a woman's head coverings seem excessive and rigid compared to a Catholic's obligation to attend church every Sunday, and to avoid meat on Fridays during Lent. Yet, people remain people, regardless of their beliefs, and now, more than any other time in history, the majority of people observe their religion more liberally than what the written laws of that faith may dictate. The idea of religion in the West, be it Christianity, Spiritualism, or anything in between, has become a more personal endeavor, rather than one dictated by a larger body. Many religious persons have their own level to which they choose to take their faith. As someone raised in a Catholic household, I have observed this throughout my life, and adjusted my own beliefs through a similar methodology. However, I never considered that this may not be strictly a western system of belief. Thus, I was unprepared for a surprising comparison.

The year I spent in Indonesia was one of the most extraordinary years of my life, and I mean that in the most literal sense. Everything was out of the ordinary, or at least, my ordinary-- I experienced people, customs, food, cultural habits, technology, and even transportation methods I had never encountered before, all of which opened my eyes to a much larger world.

Indonesia is an innately religious country, 85% of which is Muslim. I had some interaction with Christians and Hindus; however, the people with whom I spent most of my time ate no pork, and fasted during Ramadan. I grew accustomed to hearing the Call to Prayer extolling from the nearby mosque, celebrating traditional Muslim holidays, and seeing women in hijab while hiking, at concerts, or at the beach. I had had no previous experience with anything remotely similar to these scenarios. And to be introduced at a time when the world is in an upheaval of mistrust, discrimination, and fear concerning individuals of that very religion proved to be, at the very least, enlightening.

My time in Indonesia was spent teaching in a special education school. Two of the other teachers spoke English, so I took full advantage of the opportunity to find out more about Islam. I learned that Indonesian Muslims consider themselves more liberal Muslims, at least compared to those in the Middle East. I questioned them about stories of Muslim historical characters, especially those that shared commonalities with the stories from the Bible I learned as a child. They tried to explain to me the

roles of women in the household, their own feelings about the acts of terrorism throughout the world, the reasoning behind the no-pork laws, and how much or little they actually followed the strict rules of the religion. In the midst of all of these discussions, I began to notice various similarities to Christians, and to Christianity.

I came to realize that Muslims, strict as the requirements may be, exercise their own methods of liberalism in the context of their faith. Some women choose to wear their hijab no matter what, as long as a visitor is present, even in their own home. Yet I have a Muslim friend abroad in Germany who rarely wears her hijab in her travels. One of my friends knew all the required words of the Quran, though they are in Arabic. I thought this an impressive feat, until he told me he does not know what they mean. Later, a teacher who was explaining to me some of the stories that intersected with the Bible could not remember vital parts of the story, nor could she explain why certain events happened.

I learned that Islam, like Christianity, has smaller sects, and that certain mosques throughout the city belong to those particular factions. They are not separate in their beliefs, but neither are they identical. The same can easily be said for Catholicism and any of the Protestant denominations.

I was surprised by these, and other instances, because I had never thought of Islam as a flexible religion. It was common for a Catholic to skip church on Sundays, or be unable to quote the New Testament, but my twenty-five-year-long impression of Islam pictured Muslims who were far more faithful, and far more diligent than the average Catholic, either by choice, or because they had no choice. Yet I had never considered the people belonging to that religion also celebrate birthdays, as we do in the West, value their weekends, as we do in the West, enjoy selfies, work to support their families, and post it all on Facebook, just as we do in the West. The fact that Indonesians may say "Praise God" more than the average American, or have access to a prayer room anywhere they go has little to do with what they fear, who they love, how they work, or with whom they choose to associate. Religion does not, and should not separate one people from another. If anything, it only contributes to the proof that we are more similar than we may first assume.



Racism in daily life of the Rainbow Nation

Christina Benkö (Germany)
Volunteer in South Africa



Unfortunately, racism is not unusual in daily life and I cannot sweep this problem under the carpet, because it progressively gains importance for me. I was often faced with this issue in Germany via social media or on the news around the refugee crisis. Now in South Africa, where I am doing my voluntary service for the Volunteer Centre Cape Town, it is a totally different story. It gives me a reality check and opens my eyes more and more towards how terrible it is to generalise and exclude people.

South Africa is a country with a significant history of racism, like Germany. It is quite beyond me why racism in daily life continues to take place. I can feel the struggle and impact of the country and the people around my voluntary service, even now 23 years after the end of the apartheid system. The created districts for black, white and coloured people are still in existence, although segregation laws are no longer in place. I could see the differences in the areas, houses and residents just during a ride from the airport to the city centre of Cape Town, which is a distance of approximately 20 km. In the area of my host family, where I am staying, or when I visit projects in the suburbs and townships of Cape Town with my supervisor Nozuko, I felt a little bit uncomfortable at the beginning of my year abroad. Everybody was able to see that I am a foreigner; otherwise I would not have walked around or met and chatted with people in a "non-white area". This mentality, which still incorporates some of the old classification of the population and the prejudices that are in the minds of some people, make it difficult for me to move freely. I also try to challenge the old concept in my free-time as far as it is possible for me, because I really enjoy the beauty of a township and the creativity of an open-minded person, more so than the city centre and the beaches, where I cannot distinguish locals from tourists. It is crazy that depending on the recreational events, a vast majority of attendants are black, white or coloured. Coloured - another part which is adopted from the apartheid system in daily life.

Volunteers Voices

This word, which is a further tool of categorization for race, makes me sad and pensive. Even official documents of the government have a disclosure requirement of stating one's race. Everywhere and always I will be aware and mediated that social classes are dependent on skin colour. Therefore generalizing and excluding people in everyday life is not unusual in South Africa. But is that really how the general public would like to live in the future? I think NOT. A lot of tolerance, happiness and the wish for a better future for the children is noticeable. The potential of a peaceful nation, where different cultures meet and harmonise, is existing and present. Luckily, I can see this in so many projects of the Volunteer Centre and cooperating NGOs during my voluntary service. South Africa is the home of many different languages, religions and customs, which are all practised constantly. Therefore South Africa has a own public holiday - Heritage Day - to celebrate the individual culture. So I am sure, South Africa really has earned its title as a rainbow nation.

Breaking out of this vicious cycle and the racist ideology of the apartheid could work and the international volunteering exchange program is helpful to change the view of some people, promote peace, respect and equal rights.

About being dormant

Saskia Freitag (Germany)
Volunteer in Colombia

I grew up in a liberal country. My childhood was calm and mainly uneventful; my fellow students were German, Polish, Turkish, Vietnamese, Kenyan, and Portuguese. All together, we went to a liberal school with liberal teachers, we learned the values of democracy and we were very early taught that Nazism and racism were bad. They taught us something else, too: the terrible crimes of Hitler and, naturally, the history of the Holocaust, our teachers and grandparents constantly making it very clear that this part of our history was very far behind us. Looking back, these hate crimes seemed unreal, like horror stories children are told. Once, they only seemed like something that could never happen in real life. A nightmare which will never affect you personally, something you can afford to be unaware of.



Believing racism was a subject of the past, I grew up being naive. I saw my environment as a safe space, my friends and family as innocent and racism only in its most fatal form. Even then, racism would only ever make an appearance on the pages of my history text book. Time and again, reality peeked through. It was the occasional Nazi poster at my bus stop shortly before elections. It was seeing protestants in black, white and red* on television - or in the town next to mine. It was also one of my relatives using the n-word - which I excused as a minor political incorrectness.

In some ways, racism even manages to be at least some small part of my voluntary experience. It is not as much about how black people are treated - I can recognize that in my city, Cali, black people tend to make up a larger part of the working class, but I cannot fully assess race relations of a society I have only been part of for a short time, even though I'm slightly more aware now - as it is about how I am treated as a white person. Even in a country where I am a part of an ethnic minority, I am well represented. There are, frankly, quite a lot of white or light-skinned people who can be seen in the media, be it in entertainment or commercials. Suddenly, my light skin has become a beauty ideal - even though very few Colombians actually look like me.

I encourage you to take time and think about your past. Does my experience sound common to you? If not, congratulations, you probably mastered recognizing everyday racism. If so, you are most likely like me: a white person who was taught that racism is bad without being actually taught what racism IS, which happens to be an issue. It is much easier to overlook racism when you are part of the problem instead of affected by it. Becoming aware is hard, but let's be honest for once: you would most definitely prefer it from experiencing racism first-hand.

Sure, the government and your education bear some fault. Teaching children that racism is wrong is like warning them about fire, while teaching children how to fight racism is like offering them an actual fire extinguisher. This issue should be, of course, addressed and racism as a topic should be a bigger part of primary and secondary education. However, being badly educated is not an excuse for all mistakes. You might not be actively discriminating against someone. That does make you less guilty, but not innocent. Your being neutral protects yourself and the racist, not the victim.

After all, you are able to. Racism does not affect you and if you were a selfish, careless idiot, you could keep on being dormant. You could laugh off racist jokes. You could keep on being silent while your relatives complain about refugees "taking over" the country. You could remain still while family members are using racial slurs; you could keep on mistaking Nazism, racism and xenophobia as a faraway phenomenon when the next racist is standing right next to you - simply because you will never suffer from racism yourself. I urge you not to be this way.

ICYE General Assembly



The 30th ICYE Federation General Assembly took place in Næstved, Denmark, from 23rd - 28th October 2017. Attended by around 60 participants from 40 countries around the world, the 6-day programme comprised enriching discussions on the growth and development of the Federation, on developing an ethical for our programmes and activities, a market place for negotiations, and a sightseeing trip around Copenhagen. The ICYE General Assembly also accepted three new members into the Federation: Subir al Sur/Fundación SES, Argentina, Association Joint, Italy, and GIED – Global Initiative for Exchange and Development Inc., the Philippines. We are pleased to have them on board and look forward to intensifying cooperation with them for the ICYE long and short term programmes.

Are we there yet? How much longer will the dehumanisation of refugees last before the fake news bubble bursts?

Caroline Alabi, former ICYE UK Board Member

Participating in the Erasmus+ training “Youth Work can Unite: Merging Parallel Realities in Europe” training session in Graz, Austria in February this year on behalf of ICYE UK (Inter-Cultural Youth Exchange UK) was an honour and an experience that has continually challenged my thinking regarding how to tackle hate speech aimed at refugees in the media. It was during the training session that I decided that I would write my dissertation on the dehumanisation of refugees.

There were four aims and objectives lined out for the week long training session, one of which was: Share ideas and best practice on challenging populist discourse and media narrative on refugees and migrants.

It is no secret that media coverage of refugees, specifically in the UK, is often negative, and laced with biased language and messages that paint refugees in a negative light. Such media coverage suggests that refugees are economic migrants, benefits scroungers or chancers. Examples of this were used in a training session on day one titled “Danger of Words”. This

training session involved being divided into groups and asked to discuss article headlines which included words deemed dangerous. Article titles were taken from newspapers across Europe and included: “ISIS terrorists using fake passports to sneak into Europe and attack UK”; “4 out of 5 migrants are NOT from Syria”; “Migrants REFUSE to claim asylum in Denmark”; “Visegrad group against refugee quotas: Polish minister”; “MORE AND MORE REFUGEES: Serbia will soon be Islamised by migrants”.

These headlines speak exactly to the area of contention that I mentioned earlier; dehumanising language used to describe refugees suggesting that refugees were migrants rather than refugees, headlines stating that refugees/asylum seekers didn’t want to claim asylum and headlines linking refugees to terrorism and extremism. Being able to remove myself from the situation and react from a less emotive point of view is an advantage that I felt I could and would act on, which led to my dissertation question; “There’s no smoke without fire: Are the British media responsible for the dehumanisation of refugees? If so to what extent?”

As a Masters Student studying MSc International Development at the University of Edinburgh, I had studied modules such as “Displacement and Development” and “International Human Rights Law”. Both of which had provided me with a deeper understanding of obstacles and barriers that asylum seekers and refugees faced on a regular basis. I then decided to undertake a student-led dissertation placement with Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, a Church of Scotland organisation which supports refugees and refugee organisations in Scotland. This placement involved undertaking the role of UK National Coordinator of a refugee media monitoring project, set up by Refugee Reporting. This media monitoring project was a European-wide initiative involving eight countries involved in monitoring media coverage of refugees in newspapers, online and on twitter on three separate dates during May and June. All eight countries monitored media coverage of refugees simultaneously, using both quantitative and qualitative media monitoring methods.

The report “MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN EUROPE” due for release on 16th November will include the media monitoring results of all eight countries. However for the purpose of my dissertation due in August, I collected and analysed the UK results, 141 articles. The results were shocking but not for the reasons I expected, I had expected the language to be negative and biased, but what I hadn’t expected to find were the other forms of dehumanisation that I hadn’t even considered. This led to my theory of dehumanisation existing in six different forms: Homogenisation, Invisibility, Objectification, Double Marginalisation, Refugee Hierarchies, and Politics of Fear.

ICYE Programme News

Of the six theories I'd presented, my results supported the notion that three of the six forms of dehumanisation were present in the media; politics of fear, invisibility and double marginalisation. There were some interesting findings of the 141 media articles:

1. Only 46 of the 141 articles included refugees (Invisibility)
2. "Crime or terrorism committed by refugees" was the third main topic in the news (Politics of Fear)
3. Male refugees (37) were five times more likely than female refugees (7) to be referenced in the news (Double Marginalisation)
4. Main "occupation of refugee" was unknown (17) cases (Invisibility, Objectification)
5. 38 (majority) refugees occupied the role of "subjects" rather than spokespeople or giving personal accounts (Objectification)
6. 96 (majority) articles referred to refugees as groups rather than individuals (Homogenisation)

The release of the "MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN EUROPE" report may demonstrate similar findings in the other European countries. My hope is that the findings across Europe will demonstrate a change towards more positive and accurate media coverage of refugees, as utopian and ideological as it sounds it's still possible. However in the event that the findings demonstrate negative and biased media coverage, I think this will be ammunition to demand change, demand real news vs fake news, demand that refugees are humanised and individualised and demand that accurate coverage of refugees becomes the norm. Ideological and utopian, yes, but not impossible.



Caroline Alabi at the training in Graz, second from the right

Mentoring for Change

Anna Ortner, Lisa Seiringer, Verena Stierschneider,
Grenzenlos – ICYE Austria

As an association for Intercultural Exchange – not only abroad, but also closer to home – Grenzenlos has made efforts and developed programmes that enable people from diverse backgrounds and cultures to meet and learn from each other over several decades. Fighting racism and supporting intercultural understanding have always been major objectives of all these programmes. Austria being one of the countries that has received the largest number of refugees per capita in the recent years, it was clear that a project to support these "newcomers" was not only in accordance with our objectives and values, but rather a necessity. Therefore, Grenzenlos created "Zusammen Leben" – a mentoring program for refugees – together with a local institution working with refugees – Interface – and government of Vienna- MA 17.

Upon the foundation of Grenzenlos' subsidiary "Grenzenlos Graz" in the south of Austria, it was clear that this mentoring program should be implemented in other areas of Austria as well. One and a half years later Grenzenlos Graz is again looking for mentors and mentees (especially participants from the region of Styria) for its fourth round. The programme aims to connect asylum seekers and refugees with Austrians and to foster intercultural friendships. That way the mentees receive practical support or can practice German with their mentors, as well as get to know different aspects of Austrian daily life and free time. Certainly, the learning experience goes both ways and also the mentors benefit strongly from the programme: they can learn about foreign cultures and customs, improve their language skills and savor delicious dishes from countries like Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan on a quite regular basis.

At the beginning of each round, once sufficient mentors and mentees have been found, they gather and get to know each other. Mentors and mentees are matched by Grenzenlos Graz staff and meet regularly over the course of approximately 4 months. The participants are free to choose any activity that they are interested in. From having coffee together, going to the museum or events up to short day trips, anything is possible. At the same time, there are regular group activities as well, and both mentors and mentees can consult the staff members at any time with questions or in case problems occur. So far, 58 mentors and mentees have been matched, and we are proud to say that some meaningful friendships have developed. Some "pairs" still meet up even after the official end of their programme.

This mentoring project was also presented during the training "*Youth Workers Can Unite: Merging Parallel Realities in Europe*" which was organized by Grenzenlos Graz in cooperation with the ICYE International Office. In the course of the workshops, strategies for improved promotion of the programme were developed. As a result, Grenzenlos Graz has created a Facebook page which aims to attract future mentors and mentees, and to ensure the visibility of the programme. Grenzenlos Graz hosted a "Living Library" to create an opportunity for the citizens of Graz to meet asylum seekers and refugees and

SAWA means „Collectively, together“

Federal Voluntary Service (BFD) with refugees
Christiane Brückner, Manager for SAWA, ICJA – ICYE
Germany

How do you settle into a foreign country, where you are literally forced to be or stranded, the language of which you don't speak, the customs of which you aren't familiar with, and where your acquired skills and qualifications are not used or recognised? To make a small contribution to help settle in those who fled their country, and to find a way for them to come together with the people who have lived in Germany since long and in relative prosperity. That's what the project SAWA of ICJA Freiwilligenaustausch would like to achieve. We are particularly keen on encouraging curiosity and learning amongst each other.

Everything began in the course of the refugee protests in 2014, when refugees organised hunger strikes and demonstrations throughout the country and a number of them lived in tents at the Oranienplatz in Berlin Kreuzberg in order to create awareness of their situation. That is when the association began to think about the feasibility of creating a voluntary service for refugees. We talked with interested persons, looked into the legalities with advisory centres and into financing options. For the most part, we received the reply: "Refugees? Not part of our funding programme".

During the course of 2015, we came to realise the need to create opportunities for encounter and for employment and to provide funding for this. Thus in November, 10,000 "Bufdi" (Federal Voluntary Service) placements were made available for a 3 year period for refugees and for people who work with refugees. In February 2016, ICJA began the first Bufdi-placement with a young Iranian, who began her voluntary service in a Berlin family centre. Within a short span of time, her reaction was: "Everything here is super, and I'm so happy about it." This evaluation was to last until the end of the 15 month voluntary service.

The head of the host placement said: "She is exemplary! So creative and has so many good ideas!" In the meantime, almost 40 people from 5 countries aged between 25 and 65 years work as "Bufdis" in diverse projects all over Berlin. Until the start of the year, we strived to publicise the possibility of SAWA-BFD among refugees and to recruit participants. In the meantime, the hoped for snowball effect has set in. Every so often people unexpectedly appear at our office and say: "I want to work here!" Even interested host placements contact us directly. Both make us very happy.

Learning a language requires communication opportunities

SAWA is designed such that volunteers work half days in the host placements and also attend a language course according to their level of proficiency. Both are important as despite attending language courses, often people learn only a little German. This is because they have hardly any contact with German speakers.

combat prejudice through personal contact and discourse. Visitors were invited to sit down with different participants of the Grenzenlos programs, including mentors and mentees, and could listen to a brief story about the participants' life. This event took place as part of a local street festival, and plenty of good and long conversations between people of all ages, genders and cultural backgrounds evolved. A large number of people obtained more information about the mentoring programme, and with the new fourth mentoring round starting within a few weeks, we will soon see the results of our event.

In any case, one major goal was certainly reached, and that was to bring different people together, to enable them to engage in conversations and to take a small step towards a better understanding of each other's stories. We believe that personal contact and becoming aware of individual, personal stories are necessary to combat racism, and by people meeting, engaging and learning from each other, thanks to our mentoring program, we are contributing a small share to a better Austria, a better Europe and a better world free of racism.

Participants of the mentoring program:



People engaging with each other during the Living Library



ICYE Programme News

The combination of language course and working together increases the probability of mastering the German language thoroughly and quickly. Moreover, they learn terminology which could be useful in their future education or employment contexts. In the words of a participant: "It's a little like a trial work period for me." Through voluntary work within the framework of the BFD, the volunteers receive an insight into the work contexts and cultures in Germany. Friendships and social networks are formed, which last beyond the duration of the voluntary service. The first two Bufdis have already been confirmed small jobs in their projects after their service.

„All real life is encounter“ (Martin Buber)

No group of ICJA volunteers is as heterogeneous as the participants of SAWA: Country of origin, language, customs, level of education, vocational training, religious, cultural, worldview and political stance. Some of them arrived with their family members, others really suffer as their family is still home or in a transit country. Those who have arrived in Germany are hoping for a speedy approval of their application for asylum so their families can join them and there is an end to the daily fear for their lives. The only common element in the group of SAWA participants is that they were all forced to leave their countries, even if for different reasons.

Consequently, some of them are not comfortable with the classification and the reduction of the group to "refugees". They want to be seen as Reyhan, Mohammad, Arwa and Hassan, with their stories and competences and the wish to build a new life here for a short time or if need be even forever. They want to be part of society and contribute. How we can succeed within the framework of the BFD at enabling them to take on the necessary official and formal hurdles is what we working on.



Photograph Copyright @Katharina Hohaus

Visibility Evaluation

18 – 22 September 2017, Paris, France

The Erasmus+ project **Calling Youth to Action in a Global Visibility Drive** came to close with the final evaluation meeting, the Visibility Evaluation, hosted by Jeunesse et Reconstruction in Paris this September. The project aiming at greater visibility and promotion of volunteering and non-formal learning involved 21 ICYE member countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. From January to July 2017, 21 organisations organised local campaigns to create greater visibility and recognition for ICYE's long-term volunteering programme.

Ten of the best campaigns were selected and their communication officers invited to attend the Visibility Evaluation in Paris to present their campaign in-depth and to develop an ICYE Guide to Visibility and Promotion. Access the guide here: <http://www.icye.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ICYE-Guide-to-Visibility-and-Promotion.pdf>

The project also served to organise the global campaign **#VolunteeringMadeMe** on the occasion of the International Volunteer Day – 5th December 2017! See here for more information and to join the global campaign: <http://www.icye.org/event/volunteeringmademe/>



Skills and Competences for a Global World

The new Erasmus+ Key Action 2 project **Skills and Competences for a Global World**, centrally coordinated by the ICYE International Office, has been approved by the European Commission.

The project aims at fostering skills and competences of volunteers by improving intercultural learning training and support practices of ICYE members around the world. The main elements of the project include an international Training for Trainers in Indonesia in March 2018, followed by European Voluntary Service for 13 young people from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as a study testing the impact of the volunteering experience on the volunteers in terms of skills and competences gained. The study will also enable the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of participating in volunteer management, intercultural learning training and support. Participating countries include: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Poland, Slovakia, UK, Kenya, Nigeria, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Youth Delegates raise their voices at the UN General Assembly



<https://youtu.be/3WFQSulsulk>

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are often heralded as the new social contract between the world's leaders and the people they represent. But given the 15-year time span of the 2030 Agenda, it is also a unique agreement across time.

"I see Sustainable Development Goals as a contract between generations," said Clara Halvorsen who represents Denmark as Youth Delegate to the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly. "Two years ago, the world leaders decided on a plan for how the world should look like in 2030. And in 2030, it will be us, the young people who take over. That's why we should be incorporated in the implementation of the Agenda 2030." [More](#).



ILO: Skills for the Future of Work

World Youth Skills Day was celebrated on 17 July 2017 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The event theme focused on "Skills for the future of work". The International Labour Organization (ILO) called for joint work and highlighted the [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) as a platform for action. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) presented the [Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth Campaign](#) recently launched [together with the ILO](#) under the aegis of the Global Initiative. The newly appointed UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, [Jayathma Wickramanayake](#) reiterated the commitment contained in the 2030 Agenda to substantially increase the number of youth who have relevant skills. [More](#)

Youth Development Links to Sustainable Development

The Secretary General's report (SG report) is produced bi-annually in response to the General Assembly's resolution on Youth. The new SG report on "Youth development links to sustainable development" provides an analysis of the linkages and complementarities on youth issues between the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Read more [here](#).



UNESCO: Rethinking Youth Engagement with UNESCO at the 10th UNESCO Youth Forum



The UNESCO Youth Forum brought together 65 exceptional young leaders from all over the world to its Headquarters in Paris on 25 to 26 October 2017. The young men and women participated in the 10th anniversary of the Youth Forum and had a voice at the global discussion table. A new pilot version focused on 'Rethinking Youth Engagement with UNESCO' - an internal look at how the organization could further improve its engagement with youth. The other objective was to explore ways to treat youth as actors and partners, and not just as beneficiaries of the organization's work. For more similar opportunities, join the UNESCO Youth Community on social media [here](#) and get involved. [More](#) .

How Skills-based Volunteering can help you succeed in the age of robots



Top 10 skills

in 2020

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgment and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility

in 2015

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Coordinating with Others
3. People Management
4. Critical Thinking
5. Negotiation
6. Quality Control
7. Service Orientation
8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Active Listening
10. Creativity



Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum

If we imagine the future job market as an ecosystem, it will be one populated by both workers and robots. Jobs are evolving rapidly and almost half of them are susceptible to automation. Particularly at risk are not only occupations involving routine, and in manufacturing, which are easily replicable by computer algorithms, but also non-routine tasks. These include a wide range of jobs, from legal writing, and sales, to car driving, and medical diagnoses. This has been seen as a threat to employment in the future, and has stoked fears of a jobless growth economy. [Read more here.](#)

Youth Economic Opportunities



At the 2017 UN Youth Assembly at the United Nations Headquarters held on the 11 August, the International Youth Foundation (IYF) and Hilton previewed the [2017 Global Youth Wellbeing Index](#). As the Index executive summary makes clear, too many young people continue to be disconnected from vital skills and economic opportunities. Together with the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the panel explored the role of tourism role in creating jobs and furthering entrepreneurship. The session also underscored the need to elevate youth voices and recognize their role in advancing the SDGs. More than 350 youth between 16 to 28 ages from around the world participated in the event. [More](#)

6 Fundraising tips for small NGOs



GlobalGiving has supported hundreds of nonprofits from 170 countries to diversify their fundraising streams and build stronger organisations. They have put together top tips for small NGOs to improve their fundraising. [More.](#)