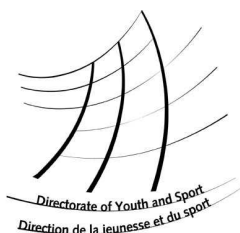




Towards a Sustainable Culture of Peace

Report of the study session held by
INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SOCIALIST YOUTH
in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Strasbourg
15th – 22nd of May 2005



This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For IUSY, Peace has always been one of the main political issues on which the fulfilment and realisation of all our principles of equality, justice and respect of human rights can be based. During the recent years we have realised numerous activities in different parts of the world that had Peace as their central subject and promotion of just political solutions to problems as the main goal. Many of IUSY member organisations have taken part in such activities of promoting, considering and demanding peaceful political solutions to conflicts.

The following activity represents one way of continuing our efforts and activities directed towards establishing a sustainable culture of peace. The invited participants were young political activists from our member and contact organisations whose main objective is to give practical tools to create and maintain a sustainable culture of peace in our environment and societies. One of the purposes was to learn how to multiply the message of maintaining peace and conflict resolution/prevention to grass root level of our organisations, make this work a natural part of our everyday political activism and raise the consciousness of what we can do as a youth organisation within our societies with the resources that we already have.

We made a special focus in the programme of this Study session on the issue of peace in the Middle East, one of the biggest political challenges for the world today. We approached the conflicts in this area from different perspectives and different points of view in order to consider sustainable solutions based on the principles that we are promoting within IUSY and within our member organisations.

One of the main priorities for IUSY for this Study Session was to invite participants from conflict areas. The aim was to use these participants as resource persons, but also to broaden their personal perspectives on armed conflicts and let them get to know other conflicts; such as causes to conflicts and possible solutions to conflicts. We managed to have people present from Balkan, Western Sahara, Middle East and Black Sea area.

The Study Session was constructed in the way that the participants got the possibility to analyze the concept of a conflict before starting the process of exploring the specific study cases. This kind of a method was useful and provided the participants with better capacities to understand the different conflicts and prepare themselves for the session which deals with the culture of peace. It was important to give the participants a wider perspective of the reality today, giving them the opportunity to see where in the global perspective, there is a lack of peace. Getting the geographic overview of the where conflicts exist today we had a good starting point for further analysis. We chose to define conflicts as “armed conflicts” and the term “conflict” will throughout this report be referred to according to this definition.

One of the main aims was to connect conflict to social-economic aspects which is one of the most important perspectives within IUSY, but also to understand religious and historical explanations to the existence of the conflicts.

We wanted to have a comprehensive and positive approach to the theme and it was therefore important to let the participants reflect upon possible solutions and actions to be taken on a personal level as well as on a national and international level.

Providing the participants with these tools we continued the session by exploring the socio-economic aspect of peace and the personal culture of peace. Following this topics we challenged the participants by letting them work on the practical level – dealing with the culture of peace on a personal, national and international level. To conclude the session we wanted to give the participants practical communication skills and conflict resolution skills.

IUSY chose to focus on three different case studies. The cases which we chose had all a different backgrounds and the conflicts were composed by various elements. We chose the conflict in Kosovo, in Western Sahara and in Middle-East.

The reason why we chose to focus on Kosovo is because it is a result of a post-conflict situation and an unsolved territory. Western Sahara was chosen because it is a forgotten conflict which has roots in the colonial period. Finally we also chose to focus on the conflict in Middle East first of all because IUSY with a lot of member organisations are engaged in the conflict, but also because it is a conflict composed by many elements.

The result of the study session was easily measured through the level of knowledge provided to the participants throughout the session. We managed to have an educational approach to a very political theme, which was a great achievement for IUSY because we need to strengthen our organisations on the comprehensive approach to peace. Furthermore the analytical approach to reach the understanding of a conflict was decisive in order to achieve a sustainable approach to the topics discussed.

IUSY feels that there is definitely a further need to discuss conflict prevention in order to create a continuous implementation of the concept “Culture of peace” in our societies. Although we had a week to explore this field, there is a constant need to bring up the discussion on how we create this culture, within our families, organisations and societies.

INTRODUCTION

Aims

- ✚ To broaden views of the participants on the political armed conflicts, to understand roots and causes, to learn about historic events and developments, about similarities between different conflicts and global patterns, to analyze the actions taken so far
- ✚ To develop better understanding of specific cases
- ✚ To explore possible solutions and action proposals, to develop specific and concrete action proposals
- ✚ To gain practical skills to work as multipliers on grass-root level in own organizations

Objectives

- To present a global overview of the situation of conflicts today in the world
- To go deeper into some cases
- To explore the concept of conflict in theory
- To discuss the possible consequences
- To discuss the possibilities for interventions

- To discuss the concept of peace, the ways to reach it and maintain it and how to deal with post-conflict situations
- To discuss the socio-economic aspect of conflicts, equality within and between societies
- To explore the concept of the personal culture of peace
- To discuss possibilities of action in order to contribute to the culture of peace on personal, national/organizational and international/IUSY levels
- To make an overview of possible actions in order to formulate action proposals

- To learn and achieve different conflict resolution methods in own environment, within the organization and through the organization towards the society, party, government and intergovernmental institutions – i.e. to provide training on conflict resolution methods
- To learn and achieve different methods for promotion of the culture of peace as defined in the previous part of the Study session in own environment, within the organization and through the organization towards the society, party, government and intergovernmental institutions – i.e. to provide training on communication skills such as campaigning, presentation and media work, negotiations and lobbying, intercultural dialogue, networking, empowerment

Profile of the participants

The participants were mostly young activist with a shorter organizational experience. The main priority in the selection of the participants were their motivation for dealing with the theme “Culture of Peace” and their ability to use the knowledge they gained in their organizational work.

The second important criteria were the age limit. We wanted to have a high participation of young activists that could multiply their knowledge to the regional branches of their organizations. We wanted to avoid older and more experienced participants since this was training were the aim was to gain more knowledge and broaden the views and not discuss political points of view.

The following criteria were used for selection of participants

- Age 17-22
- Gender balance
- Grass-root – no high position in the organization
- Previous experience is not necessary
- Motivation letter for participation
- Motivation for continuing activities of similar kind within their organization and within IUSY

After the first day it has been obvious that the group was not exactly as expected and that the profile of the participants was not exactly the one described in the invitation and chosen by the team. This happened due to the fact that many organisations have changed their participants in the last moment, so the participants varied between highly experienced and grass-root level. This made it harder to adjust the programme and methods to all.



Structure and content of the programme

- ❖ To broaden the views of the participants regarding the conflicts and conflict prevention/resolution

- ❖ To provide the participants with specific tools that they will be able to use in the work of their organizations and in their activities on all levels; to make this knowledge multipliable
- ❖ To point out that there are no unsolvable conflicts, but that we have witnessed numerous non-efficient/negative/prosper-less approaches to solution
- ❖ To learn the basic principles of negotiation; why is it most important to always respect and apply the values of our movement in negotiations and how to implement them

a) **To give a good introduction – overview of the “world conflicts map” (goal 1):**

- Historical overview – introduction on background and possible reasons
- Geographical distribution – introduction on background and possible reasons
- Similarities between different conflict situations
- Prospective – possible predictions of future developments for some of the conflict situations
- What has been done so far on conflict prevention and resolution
- Our suggestions + suggestions on possible IUSY/IUSY member organizations actions

b) **To discuss on the subject of intervening in conflict situations (goal 1):**

- Interventions from inside
- Interventions from abroad – the international community
- In principle are the interventions from abroad a positive and useful / efficient approach?
- Where it has been done so far and what were the results
- Possible ways to intervene in conflict situations
- The role of UN. How efficient has it been so far? Do we trust their ways of intervention? How do we think their work could be improved?

c) **To focus on several conflicts in the world today (goal 1/3):**

- Form focus groups, each on a different conflict
- Group members are not from the area of the conflict the focus is on (but could be from both or all sides of another conflict discussed in another group)
- Looking for possible solutions and prevention of future worsening
- Looking for ways to reach these solutions
- What we as IUSY/IUSY member organizations can do to help reaching these solutions
- Look for a positive and objective approach

d) **To discuss the offered solutions with the whole group (goal 3):**

- Presentation of results and discussion
 - Possibility to adopt some future action plan for IUSY/IUSY member organizations
- e) **To inform on the development of conflicts in general (goal 2):**
- Levels of conflicts
 - Actors
 - Mechanisms
 - Sources
 - Roles in conflicts – sociological, archetypical
- f) **To put the participants in concrete conflict situations to look for their solutions (goal 2):**
- Theatre play with audience, guided roles and set situation with own solutions
 - Discussion in plenary, more suggestions for solutions
- g) **To identify/list and discuss progressive/degrading, constructive/destructive ways to behave in a conflict situation (goal 2)**
- h) **To put the participants in concrete conflict situations and detect if they are following the suggestions from the +/- behavior (goal2):**
- Theatre plays with audience, guided roles and set situation with own (re)solutions
 - Audience closely following the behavior
 - Discussion and evaluation in plenary
- i) **Negotiation in conflict resolution**
- Principles of negotiation, principles that we as an organization and a movement are following, that are based on our values and that we should always defend in negotiations
 - Behavior in negotiations, making a compromise
 - Exercise in concrete situations for negotiation

PROGRAMME – INPUTS AND DISCUSSIONS

DAY 1

The day started with a thorough introduction of the participants. Everybody made a short profile of themselves which was posted on the wall with a picture in order for everybody to easier get to know each other.

Following this the programme was introduced and explained. The educational advisor made an introduction to the Youth Center and to CoE.

Finally the introduction session was completed with a brief introduction of IUSY.



The first introduction on the topic was made by an invited speaker from the Norwegian Center for Human Rights, Ms. Cecilie Hellestveit. Her intervention on the concept of conflicts founded the base for the later discussions on peace and conflict prevention. Following are the structure of the presentation made by the speaker:

I) *Global Trends of Armed Conflict during the Last Century and Challenges Facing the 21st Century*

- Evolving patterns of armed conflict in modern history
- Today's categorization of armed conflict
- Recent (and future) challenges to established notions of war

II) *The Dynamics of Armed Conflict*

a. *Causes and consequences of war*

- a. Initiating/underlying causes of armed conflict
- b. Mechanisms prolonging armed strife
- c. Common factors preventing resolution of armed conflict

b. *Challenges to resolution of armed conflict*

- Geopolitical
- Political
- Economic
- Social
- Legal

Dilemmas that will be touched upon:

- The desire and need to address underlying causes and grievances of an armed conflict is often incompatible with the conditions that must be created in order to bring the armed conflict to an end.
- The problem of spoilers.
- The risk of compromising principles of justice, impunity and basic human rights for a durable solution.
- The three 'R's of conflict-resolution

III) Addressing the Challenges of Armed Conflict

International institutions and the prevention, alleviation and resolution of armed conflict.

Structural deficiencies of the international system.

Alternative resolution mechanisms.

DAY 2

The second day was reserved to be concentrated on the different study cases. The three conflicts selected were; Western Sahara, Kosovo and Middle East. Ms. Hellestveit made a brief introduction to each conflict. Already during the presentation of the conflict in Middle East we had interventions from the participants. The discussion was mostly directed on to the historical events after the state of Israel was founded. However there was no room for a long discussion so this was postponed to be reopened at a later stage throughout the study session. The introduction to the study cases were founded on the following points:

- a. short historical introduction to the conflict
- b. main parties to the conflict and their positions
- c. some 'failed' attempts at resolution
- d. major challenges to solve the conflict



The rest of the day was reserved for working groups where the participants were split in groups according to their interest in one of the conflicts presented in the plenary. Participants who were from either, Western Sahara, Kosovo or Middle East had to choose a conflict area that they were not familiar with. The working groups were lead by two team members in each group. The result of the working groups was presented in the plenary in the afternoon.

The interest for this way of working and the chosen conflict areas was very high. The participation was high as well as the learning level.

DAY 3

Considering the two previous days as building the basis for the further discussions on the culture of peace, the participants were well prepared for day three which dealt with the culture of peace, the socio-economic aspect of peace and the personal culture of peace.

Socio-economic aspects of peace are a topic that is especially related to the socialist views on how to reach and maintain a sustainable culture of peace. Therefore was this session essential to the outcome of the study session.



DAY 4

In order to get a better impression of the CoE initiatives to deal with human rights we invited the participants to a visit to the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The group was presented to the Court itself and to the principles and working methods of the Court.

The interest of the participants was real high, and the visit was extended because of a high number of questions from the participants.



DAY 5

On the second last day we wanted the participants to work more practically on the topic culture of peace. There were three levels of discussion on the topic culture of peace – the personal level, national level and international level. All of the groups developed strategies of how we can create a culture of peace.



The afternoon session was concentrated on communication skills. To get a good input on communication we had invited Mr. Tom Rottinghuis (International Secretary in JS in de PvdA) which is a skilled trainer on communication methods.

DAY 6

The programme continued from the last day focusing on communication skills. However, the methods were changed on Saturday. We organized a Bazaar of communication and the participants got the opportunity to choose among the different topics: campaigning, use of media, lobbying/negotiation techniques, intercultural dialogue, networking and empowerment.



The last educational part of the Study session was conflict resolution training, where the participants were given a general introduction to the different methods of conflict resolution.

The Study session was concluded by an oral evaluation by the participants.

General methods used

Plenary

- input and interactive input
- discussions
- role plays
- role plays with clear division between “actors” and “audience/commentators”
- all energizers and introduction activities

Small groups

- focus groups brainstorming
- the peace café



Other activities

- social and intercultural evenings
- exhibitions and other activities for presentation of participants
- film projections
- the Bazaar
- outdoor exercises
- Excursions



MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY SESSION

Organizational

IUSY has strengthened its competence on the topic “Culture of Peace”. We have widened the perspective of the organization with regards to methods applied and the value of non-formal education.

IUSY have already received reports from member organizations that many of the participants already have started multiplying their knowledge gained in the Study Session in their respective organizations.

We can easily measure that the interest of peace building and conflict resolution has risen within our member organizations after the conclusion of the Study Session 2005.

Individual

It was clear to the team members after the final evaluation that the participants had gained a high level of knowledge. The knowledge consisted of both actual facts about conflicts in general and countries in specific. Furthermore the participants communicated to us that the educational methods used were crucial in order to keep up the interest and to easier understand the message.

Having participants from different conflict areas has also resulted in development of good relations between participants that are from countries that today are in conflicts with each other. Intercultural understanding and individual bonds are important to start relations with societies across borders.

Evaluation methods

Every night a reflection group was convened. The reflection groups consisted of five different participants each night selected on a voluntary basis and lead by one of the team members. The issues discussed in the reflection groups were:

- The content of the day's programme
- The conduct of the programme
- The learning points
- The interest of the topics
- The group dynamics
- AOB

The reflection group dealt with most of the challenges of the group and it was a successful way to evaluate the Study Session. The team member reported to the team about the most important issues raised in the reflection group. The team evaluated these issues and found possible solutions and made necessary changes in the programme according to the requests of the participants.

Every night a team meeting was convened. The team member who held the reflection group reported to the team. The team also evaluated themselves and planned the following day in detail. The system of the reflection groups and team meetings worked very well and is recommended to other Study Session teams in the future.

FOLLOW – UP

Organizational

There was a proposal from the participants that IUSY should form a permanent group that should deal with the issue “Culture of Peace”. The aim of the group should be to find strategies of how IUSY member organizations can work towards the society in order to build a culture of peace. The group should also plan activities which deal with this topic as well as be a resource for the IUSY member organizations in relation to provide information and expertise on the topic.

Activities

IUSY is planning to organize a tent on the upcoming IUSY festival in 2006 which will be named after a famous political person who contributed to promote the culture of peace. The tent will arrange various activities which will focus on conflict resolution, intercultural communication, and panels with invited politicians that deal with conflicts.

Publicity

The groups dealing with the different case studies produced articles that were published in the IUSY newsletter. The newsletter is attached.

Politically

The participants adopted a resolution on “Sustainable Culture of Peace” which will be sent to the next IUSY congress for adoption.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First of all it is important to mention that we never would have completed such a good Study Session with a successful result without the outstanding support from CoE and the EYC, especially the staff of EYC.

The educational advisor signed up for us contributed very well to the team and he had ideas and perspectives which were vital for the team in order to complete a study session with good educational methods.

IUSY is always very satisfied with the support from CoE and EYC. It helps IUSY to develop a good level of non-formal education and to strengthen our member organizations.

IUSY has since the organization was founded dealt with the topic “Peace”. However, this has always been on a political level. It was therefore very essential to IUSY that we could have the opportunity to organize a week long educational seminar on how to develop and maintain the a sustainable culture of peace within our organizations and societies.

