Refugees, Radicalisation, Racism?
Erasmus+ / Youth in Action and European Values

Input given to the Business Meeting of the Directors of the National Agencies of the Erasmus+ / Youth in Action Programme by Yael Ohana[1], October 14 2015, Luxembourg

Introduction

This paper is based on an input given to the Business Meeting of the Directors of National Agencies of Erasmus+/Youth in Action on 14 October in Luxembourg. The input was commissioned to help the national agency directors to develop their thinking around how to respond to the current situation in Europe concerning refugees, and considering the post-Charlie Hebdo agenda emerging in the European institutions.

The author was asked to prepare a provocative input on refugees, radicalisation, integration and European values and how these might relate to Erasmus+/Youth in Action, with a view to inspiring discussion and informing the already emerging agenda.

This paper follows the presentation given and can be considered its transcript. It includes several of the visual images presented in the presentation, and videos show are hyperlinked in footnotes.

The input made a series of interlinked arguments

- The community of practice around Erasmus+ / Youth in Action risks conflating 'refugees', 'radicalisation', 'integration' and 'European values', thereby, doing the work of the right-wingers (albeit involuntarily) who would rather see the refugees turned back;
- This is undermining the value of the programme for European citizenship education, which clearly has a role to play in the current political climate;
- While it is important and necessary for the programme to ask whether YiA has a role to play regarding this complex of issues, that role should not be preventing radicalism or teaching refugees European values;
- There are other things the programme could do, which are more appropriate and useful.

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Not everything presented in this presentation is scientifically provable, but that is not necessary. The input was supposed to get the participants of the meeting thinking and did not in any way claim to represent 'truth'. The language used was deliberately chosen to provoke and get participants out of their comfort zones. For example, the input did not use the term 'refugee crisis' because it creates the impression that the refugees are to blame for the crisis that Europe is experiencing in dealing with their arrival. Nevertheless, the input was based on a large variety of reference material - research and opinion based - all of which has been referenced in then footnotes and the bibliography.

The input was organised around a series of questions the author had as she was preparing. These were:

- Why do the National Agency Directors want to discuss these issues?
- Why do they want to discuss it now?
- What do we know about these issues?
- Why are these issues being discussed together?

Although interlinked and not easily answered separately, the input addressed each of these questions in some detail as a basis for the argument outlined above. These questions provided structure and logic to the input, which was rather broad and encompassing.

Why do the National Agency Directors want to discuss these issues? And why now?

No one needs reminding of the fact that Europe has experienced the most serious movement of refugees into and on the continent since World War II. With it has come much solidarity, but also a large measure of moral panic and hysteria.

We have heard a lot about 'the legitimate fears of the local populations', yet we have also seen an outpouring of solidarity on the part of those very populations. The reactions of governments in the different member states of the EU have necessarily raised the question of what European values are. There is an immense amount of talk in the European public sphere and in the media about how the fundamental principles of European integration are being put to the test. The arrival of the refugees has become another symbol for the multiple crises that Europe experiences, from finances to democracy to war on the continent to further integration and enlargement. However, the question remains why it is considered so important and has become such an enormous theme for elites and populations alike. In this author's opinion, it is because the refugee drama unfolding on and inside Europe's borders is happening to US, to Europeans, that people have come to be concerned with ideas about Europe as an aspirational political community. Basically, this situation is personal. And it is demanding intercultural learning of Europeans.

Rightly, our community of practice (that associated to Erasmus+/Youth in Action) wants to know what can it do to express its solidarity towards the arriving refugees, on the one hand, and to be a positive and constructive force in what has become a very divisive political climate, on the other. Furthermore, the Erasmus+/Youth in Action programme has European citizenship education objectives, and this kind of social development raises the question of how the programme can work on European citizenship meaningfully in times of change. As policy makers, programme executives and practitioners National Agency staff are aware of the need to build understandings of the contexts in which they and their target groups live and act, at the same time as building the policies, programmes and educational initiatives at the heart of and surrounding Erasmus+/Youth in Action.

What do we actually know about these issues?

This question gets into the real core of the conundrum around /Erasmus+Youth in Action and the theme of this paper. It appears that we do not know all that much about this complex of issues, and especially about radicalisation and its relationship to refugees. This seems also to be the case for other spheres of influence, notably political elites, media and policy makers. If anything, closer analysis shows us how much of what we (and here we can include the public at large, among them young people) consider to be 'knowledge' about these issues is mediated and driven by what we consume from the media coverage. When preparing the input, I realised that there is a lot of good quality scientific and opinion based work on this issue. However, it is rarely visible to 'ordinary people' because it is not present in the media. Furthermore, I realised that I had many automatic 'assumptions' when getting deeper into the material I found about these issues.

An aside: Considering the media coverage in a little more depth made me think about my own childhood, growing up in Western Europe during the Cold War and about propaganda. A quick show of hands indicated that several of the National Agency Directors were of the same generation and had also grown up in the West. I asked if people could remember the depressing images of the Soviet Bloc we used to see on the television – nameless countries, plagued by bad weather and even worse pollution, where grey

was the only perceptible colour and people were old and infirm before their time, poor and oppressed. Although I didn't know it then, that was also a form of propaganda. Many people in the former Soviet Bloc experienced life like that, but there were also other realities, and summer still happened once a year. In the Western media, it was the late 1980s when we first saw those other realities. That is what I am reminded of when I watch TV and see the way other media reports on the arrival of the refugees at the moment. There seems to be just one binary narrative.

Everyday images in the media and public discourse

Taking a closer look at everyday images is instructive for understanding what we do and do not know about these issues.

Consider each of the four key issues we are discussing - refugees, radicalisation, integration and European values.

Refugees

What do we see in the media about refugees? Do we see images of Muslim fundamentalists infiltrating Europe? Or do we see desperate victims of war fleeing bombs? Or do we see economic migrants here to claim benefits? Or do we see persecuted Roma?

Radicalisation

And when hear about radicalisation do we think about Islamic fundamentalism or right-wing radicals?

And when we hear discussions of European values, whose European values are being discussed? Those of Frau Angela Merkel? Or Mr. Victor Orban? Are we talking about a Europe of Racism, nationalism and exceptionalism, a Fortress Europe? Or do we discuss the Europe of solidarity and empathy and generosity?

Media discourse

The irony of the current public discourse is that it takes *Bild Zeitung* to point out the fact of the extent to which many of these depictions and associations are exaggerated falsely juxtaposed (!) and plain wrong. *Bild Zeitung* is the most notorious tabloid newspaper in Germany. Nevertheless, you can count on them to do their research and to get their facts right. For example, the following article published on the front page of Bild Zeitung (regional version for Mecklenburg Vorpommen, a region of Germany in the Northeast of the country) on the 27th of August 2015. This article pointed out seven common prejudices about refugees which are current in public sphere in Germany, as follows:

- Refugees take our jobs away
- Refugees are uneducated
- Refugees get more money than Hartz-IV[2] recipients
- Refugees come to Germany for the money
- Refugees are more likely to be engaged in criminal activity
- Refugees have better living conditions than many Germans
- Germany can't afford the costs involved in hosting the refugees

For each of these prejudices *Bild Zeitung* provided data showing these ideas are factually incorrect.

[2] Harz-IV refers to the social benefits that unemployed people and other social assistance beneficiaries in Germany receive from the state.

Refugees = Muslims = Radicals

There is a pervasive depiction in the public discourse that radicalisation is a Muslim (only) problem. By association refugees are a threat to social peace and 'life as we know it' here in Europe, being traditional and devout Muslims. The fact that a not-insignificant proportion fleeing the war and persecution in Syria and arriving in Europe are members of the Syrian intelligentsia and intellectual classes, and are secular while being Muslim, rarely gets an airing. This is problematic, on the one hand, because it is factually incorrect. On the other hand, we need to think about the reasons why 'they are educated, secular and members of the intelligentsia' is a justification for considering them more worthy of asylum / refugee status in Europe. Such ideas, along with the common stereotype and prejudice about traditional Muslims being potential radicals, is borne out of the common sense assumption that Islam is incompatible with Europe. However, Islam is as old as Europe.

Similar arguments are made about the economic utility of immigrants and how this could / should determine how migration policy is managed. Does the economic utility of migrants, or their status as members of the intelligentsia and as secular Muslims add to their humanity? Does it make them more worthy of protection? Furthermore, many of those arriving in Europe are not Syrian and are not even Muslim. Many are Roma from Kosovo and Albania, who experience persecution and mortal danger even in those countries classified as safe by the European Union, as well as poverty and deprivation. Or they are from Africa, and are fleeing other wars and forms of persecution. Nevertheless, the facts of who the refugees are and the situations that cause them to come to Europe seem not to be considered particularly relevant to how they are presented in the media.

Translation: *Auf den ersten blick scheint vieles unverständlich /* At first glance, many things seem difficult to understand.[3]

[3] http://www.dmb.at/de/news/etats/147-werbung-als-kunst-look-twice-kampagne-fuer-den-steirischen-herbst-in-der-aktuellen-brandschutz-mentalitaeten-der-intoleranz-ausstellung-in-jena

An aside: Let me tell you a story. My mother in law is German, and always has been. She was born in 'Ost-Preussen' in 1923, in what was Germany before WWII and today is Poland. Her mother, and herself and her 4 sisters were evacuated from Mazury to 'Germany proper' shortly before the Soviet troops arrived and ended up in a refugee camp in the Erzgebirge and then in Zeitz, which later became part of the GDR. Irmgard was a Gynaecologist for 45 years, in Erfurt, where she still lives today. She's impressively active at 83. In the last weeks several thousand Syrian refugees have arrived in Erfurt and are currently being housed in the 2 enormous halls of its Convention Centre, among them women and children. Irmgard volunteers at the Messe Halle once a week to do the pre-natal care for the pregnant women and post-natal care for the ones who have recently given birth. She does this in a tent in the middle of the hall where everyone lives together. Irmgard was surprised that only one of the women she consulted wore a head-scarf, and no single husband insisted on sitting in on the examination of their wife. Irmgard has treated women from all over the world in her long career and worried about the refugee women being oppressed by their husbands, because ever so often she met Muslim families, which demonstrated other gender roles than she was used to as a professional woman in the GDR of the 1960's to 2000'. But none of these Muslim women gave the impression of being oppressed. So while proving nothing at all, the moral of the story is that on both sides of the particular religious and cultural divide that is represented by Irmgard and her Syrian refugee patients in the Messe Halle in Erfurt, what you see is rarely what you get.

There are so many problems with these depictions and their underlying assumptions. The images themselves and the way they are put out into the world reveal an undercurrent of deep racism, because on the one hand they racialize[4] refugees and on the other hand they vilify[5] them. At one and the same time, these images associate Islam (or being of colour for that matter) with violence and criminality. Whereas whiteness is often associated with more positive attributes, or at least is not associated with negative ones.

A common social experiment conducted in many countries around the world exemplifies this. In the experiment, a white person, and then a black person, are filmed obviously trying to steal a bicycle in a park. Passersby react in different ways to the white person trying to steal the bike than to a black person trying to do the same, with the result that the majority of passersby assume the white person owns the bike or has a good reason for trying to crack the lock, and that the black person is a thief and should be stopped by the police (which they call). When questioned why the difference in attitude, most people refer to the common association of young black men with criminality.[6]

Furthermore, the current political and media climate has led to Muslims in particular feeling that they are expected to justify themselves to the rest of society for the behaviour of just a fringe of their number

[4] ' (…) Racialization describes the process by which racial meanings are attached to particular issues, often treated as social problems, and with the manner in which race, appears to be a, or often is, the key factor in the way they are defined or understood. Racialization is the lens or medium through which race thinking operates.' Murji and Solomos, 2005.

[5] To speak or write about something / someone / a group in an abusively disparaging manner.

[6] The following video posted on Facebook shows how this worked in the United States and was filmed by ABC: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge7i60GuNRg. The same experiment was conducted in the Netherlands in (Dutch only video) and uploaded to Facebook on 9 December 2014: https://www.facebook.com/lloydiman/videos/4927809849299/?pnref=story.

as a means of countering such public vilification. The September 2015 *Buzzfeed* video entitled 'I'm a Muslim, but I'm not …' is a case in point.[7]

A few days after the release of that video, a counter video was released to demonstrate the extent to which this kind of narrative is problematic for how Muslims are perceived, and how contrary to its intention, it is only reinforcing prejudice by propagating the idea that the onus is on all Muslims to apologise for what some Muslims (and people of other religious backgrounds, for that matter) do.[8] An even harder hitting example, and one which I personally find terrifying, is the Dutch 'Children Apologise for Terrorism' video that appeared on YouTube in February 2015, in which young children are prompted to think about similarities between themselves and well-known terrorists by adults (Breivik had blond hair; the bomber in Paris wore a hat) and then to apologise for terrorism conducted by people who were outwardly 'similar to them'. Even after 45 seconds one realises the extent to which this kind of collective guilt thinking has infiltrated our individual and collective consciousness, in public and in private.[9]

This narrative is not only coming from the media, however. Political actors and policy makers are as much to blame, in fact one wonders if they are driving the media depictions that are so much part of the current pubic discourse. Yet, the question of the position of political parties is an interesting and complex one. No European political party with the exception of those openly on the far right is outwardly racist. In fact, they all proclaim to be against racism. So how do what seem to us to be patently racist attitudes co-exist with their professed concern for racism? Understanding race (racism) as a technology of power, helps us to see that part of what it does is to create categories such as deserving and undeserving, human and less than human. The deserving/human category can designate people of colour or Muslims or anyone else as 'legitimate' - citizens, secular, assimilated - as opposed to poor, religious, 'economic migrants', and 'bogus refugees'. This is how political parties of the mainstream are now dealing with

[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMQjyRc7eiY

[8] Watch the video and read a description about the reasons for making the video by the director here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lWVV-jBz2_E

[9] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYyN1I5IF8E

questions of migration (forced or otherwise) - some people are legitimate migrants, because they are useful to the European economy or come from compatible cultures. Some people are not legitimate, or illegal, because they are neither useful nor culturally compatible. And this despite the protections offered to those seeking asylum under the Geneva conventions.

Definition of radicalisation

It will not have escaped attention that until now I have not offered a definition of radicalisation. This was not an oversight. It is important to bring it in at this point.

> *'… Radicalisation is a noun that means political orientation of those favouring revolutionary change. In political science, the term radicalism is the belief that society needs to be changed, and that these changes are only possible through revolutionary means.'*[10]

Radicalisation, then, is both the process by which a person espouses radicalism, and becomes more extreme in doing so. What we realise when we think about these issues in more detail is that radicalisation is a generic process, which leads people of all different walks of life to espouse revolutionary struggle to achieve the change they want to see. We often think of that struggle as violent. Yet, nothing in the definition indicates that violence is an inherent characteristic of radicalism. concrete example can shed light: in a militarised society, a conscientious objector, by definition a pacifist because they refuse to take up arms, would be considered radical.

Yet, when we hear the terms radicalism and radicalisation, our collective mind's eye sees one religion, Islam, and its most violent and militant manifestation, Jihad.

This particular image was leaked as 'proof' that ISIS had infiltrated the Syrian refugees arriving in Europe, and, therefore, were a threat to security. As we now know, this was in fact a protest by local Muslims

[10] http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/radicalism

over a far right political group's announced plans to display caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad that took place in Germany in May 2012.

We are also aware of non-Islamic radicalism, and there is a parallel debate going on in many countries around Europe about right-left radicalisation. Even so, the discrepancy between the ways that mainstream media refer to Islamic and extremisms of other kinds is noteworthy. In US media, school shooters with right-wing motives and white supremacists who engage in violence are rarely referred to as terrorists. The religion of a non-Islamic terrorist will rarely be mentioned in European media. Yet, possibly even more worrying than anything the media is doing, is that violent neo-Nazi revolutionaries (by the above definition) are already in local government in some places in the European Union, and they are very popular with many young people.

Research

What about the people who really know about this stuff? What about research into radicalisation? I looked at authors and projects conducting radicalisation research in Europe (mostly UK) and the United States (because this is where most of it is being done). I also looked at authors who critique the lack of definitional clarity and ambiguity that abounds in radicalisation theory.

Much of this research shows that while radicalisation of young Muslims is absolutely real and is a threat, the size of the problem is often blown out of proportion, why they become radicalised is poorly understood, and that the theories that abound about how radicalisation comes about (and that inform anti-terrorism policies and programmes) are often based on spurious assumptions and a lack of rigour.

Here the work of Arun Kundnani[11] is particularly enlightening. In his book 'The Muslims are coming! – Islamophobia, Extremism and the Domestic War on Terror' (2014) he traces the history of radicalisation

[11] http://www.kundnani.org/

theory and its expression in domestic policies from the turn of the 20th century and colonialism through to the post-September 11 period. Based on his research, he makes the point that what approaches to that which constitutes radicalism and should be criminalised have in common is

> *'… an almost a wilful desire to (…) no to (…) care about the distinction between violence and non-violence (…) So, what seems to matter most of all is the political position that someone's taking. Whether they advocate for that position in a violent or non-violent way doesn't seem to matter that much.'*[12]

At the same time, contemporary radicalisation research tends to consider Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism over all else, with little or no reference to other forms of extremism and processes of radicalisation associated with other ideological positions, such as the radical right, which as anyone with two eyes and a television can tell you is home-grown in Europe, alive and kicking and lives just around the corner from you and I in a lot of upper middle class neighbourhoods in European cities. And, I am not talking about nasty neo-Nazis with skinheads. I am talking about Nipsters.[13] Kundnani points out that the disproportionate level of attention given to Islamic fundamentalism is certainly one consequence of the fact that in the post-2001 political and social climate, Islamic radicalisation research has become a money-spinner for a whole industry of think tanks and policy initiatives. To put it bluntly, the more demand there is for it, the more of it is being produced.

One way or another, this has the result of elevating superficial indicators, such as changes in the way young people dress or the fact that they grow facial hair, to the level of predictors of extremism, and is placing pressure on professions close to young people (including education) to engage in surveillance, even policing. However, we must question what the fact that a young Muslim changes their appearance (growing a beard, wearing traditional clothes) or prays more often tells us about them? Does radicalisation lie in their outward demonstration of devout Islam? As we well know, there are plenty of devout Muslim youth who never espouse violence or go off to fight for ISIS. Why should becoming more devout necessarily mean one becomes more inclined to violence? Would anyone assume that a Jewish young person or a Buddhist young person becoming more devout is a predictor for them acting violently or engaging in terrorism?

So, what does research say about the root causes of radicalisation of young people? What do we actually know about how the process is attractive to young people and the nature of the radicalisation experience? There is no consensus in the research community about the definitive causes. However, there is a lot of good research into the social and psychological characteristics of the young people themselves. In particular, biographical research is very important for understanding what is at play and there is a lot of research on entry into and exit from neo-Nazi groups, religious sects and Islamic youth groups, which is helpful for understanding the process of radicalisation. These stories help us to

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[12] Arun Kundnani, Open Society Fellow, Interview at the Brennan Centre for Justice, United States online at: https://youtu.be/d7hD_C78XXY

[13] *Nipster* is a slang term used in Germany to refer to young neo-Nazis who embrace aspects of hipster culture.

understand the individual path into and out of extremist thinking and behaviour, and what was important in getting to that point.

For example, the inimitable Gary Younge,[14] a UK journalist and writer who has done biographical research with radicalised youth in the United Kingdom, points to their social exclusion, political disenfranchisement, ubiquitous stigmatisation in the public discourse and criminalisation by institutions of state and society as key factors in driving young people into the hands of extremists and to violence. In his book 'Who are we – and should it matter in the 21st century?' (2010), he describes the dire consequences of 'integration' policies and the 'enemies within' discourse for young citizens from minority backgrounds and of colour in the UK.[15]

Thankfully, the research community acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' model that explains radicalisation is not viable and there is growing concern that the enormous attention received by the radicalisation of young Muslims is crowding out knowledge from other parts of the ideological spectrum, and paying lip service to the threat represented by other forms of radicalism especially on the radical right. Surprisingly, there seems to be rather little research comparing right-wing radicalisation and Islamic radicalisation of youth, and it is not entirely clear which lessons have been learned by one strand of radicalisation research from the other. After all, interest in right-wing radicalisation of young people goes back further than interest in Muslim youth radicalisation, at least in Europe.

One briefing paper discusses what can be learned about Muslim radicalisation from researching religious cults and sects and how they recruit and engage their members. It suggests that many aspects are similar in the 'conversion process', but even so modelling is risky because

- the personal and individual pathways to radicalism are so different, had they been experienced by another person in the same circumstances they may have led to different results;
- in hindsight, which is the perspective from which we can read stories of radicalisation, whether they end in exit or the perpetration of violence / terrorism, so much has changed and is rationalised away.[16]

It is possible, however, to say that several aspects of radicalisation are the same or similar irrespective of which ideological position those being radicalised take.

> *'… Current research suggests that subscribing to a particular ideology does not in itself make someone more susceptible to radicalisation, but instead that external events contribute to people selecting more radical ideas. (However,) extreme ideologies, and their non-negotiable or sacred beliefs and values, are important in decisions to act violently'.*[17]

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[14] http://www.theguardian.com/profile/garyyounge

[15] Gary Younge, Who are we - and should it matter in the 21st Century?, Chapter 7: The enemy within: identities don't make sense unless understood within the context of power, specifically the story of Latif, pp. 170 - 200.

[16] http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/debate/van-eck-cult-members/

[17] Podcast entitled: Does ideology really contribute to radicalisation? Part of the 'What have we learned about radicalisation?' briefing series (July, 2015) online at http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/debate/francis-ideology-radicalisation/

The 2010 Racism Monitor produced by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam[18] dealt explicitly with right wing radicalisation entry and exit processes. It reviews research from different parts of Europe conducted until that point in time and confirms these perspectives, pointing to key socio-psychological and developmental psychological factors that are specific to young people that are relevant including

- perceptions of interethnic competition;
- acceptability of regarding other social groups with hostility;
- feelings of not being socially accepted;
- high levels of conflict in social life;
- problems in relationships in school and with peers from immigrant backgrounds;
- poorly developed skills (e.g. self-reflection, empathy, conflict management, self-esteem and the ability to defer gratification);
- issues with substance use;
- few ties with community institutions;
- strong influence of the media.

The same piece on what we can learn from researching cults gives us some insight into possible entry points for youth work and programmes like Erasmus+/Youth in Action.

> *"… You can (…) try to engage with them and ask them about their new beliefs, the new lifestyle, try to understand what the attraction is – and as you create a relationship of communication and trust, you can question or even challenge some of the new beliefs. (This) will challenge the isolation and them/us boundaries (…), and give them another option should they ever seek one. (But) some who leave have very little to go back to, and may need structural support as well'.*[19]

The juxtaposition with the more superficial approach outlined above is more than clear.

For our community of practice, which includes youth workers and people responsible for developing youth programmes in which young people from all kinds of backgrounds participate, this context demands that we remain vigilant about two things:

- the push to control young people who demonstrate certain outward changes in their appearance or attitudes because of preconceived notions about what predicts extremism and
- the pull of zoning in on one form of radicalisation, when we know that there are more forms of radicalisation of young people across the political and religious spectrum, and that these

[18] http://www.annefrank.org/en/Education/Monitor-Homepage/Racism-monitor/With-help-right-wing-extremists-pull-out-sooner/

[19] http://www.radicalisationresearch.org/debate/van-eck-cult-members/

potentially pose just as much of a threat to 'our way of life' in Europe as Islamic fundamentalism.

Why are these issues being discussed together?

So, this brings me to the last of my four questions. It intrigues me that in response to growing concerns about refugees and radicalisation, and the debates and polemics these have kicked off, poorly informed as they are, ideas about European values and integration are so 'automatically' proposed.

I wondered why that is. When I was thinking about it the first thing that came to my mind was the idea of *Leitkultur*. This German language term was first introduced in 1998 by the German-Arab sociologist Bassam Tibi.[20] It can be translated as 'guiding culture' or 'leading culture'.

I think a lot of what people in Europe think of as 'European values' in relation to refugees, but also in relation to anyone who is not immediately identifiable as 'of the tribe' (so anyone who is not white, and Christian or maybe Jewish) can be understood in terms of *Leitkultur*.

Bassam Tibi first suggested a *Leitkultur* in his 1998 book *Europa ohne Identität* (Europe without identity). He defined it in terms of what are commonly called Western values, and spoke of a European rather than a German *Leitkultur*.

> *'The values needed for a core culture are those of modernity: democracy, secularism, the Enlightenment, human rights and civil society.'*[21]

These core values are similar to those of the 'liberal-democratic basic order' (*Freiheitlich-demokratische Grundordnung*). Tibi advocated for a cultural pluralism based on a value consensus, rather than mono-culturalism. However, he also opposed a value-blind multiculturalism, and the development of parallel societies where immigrant minorities live and work, isolated from the western society around them. Tibi advocated a structured immigration policy, and opposed illegal immigration into Germany.

Tibi saw *Leikultur* as a form of multiculturalism, but from 2000, the term figured prominently in the national political debate in Germany about national identity and immigration. The term then became associated with a monocultural vision of German society, with ideas of European cultural superiority, and with policies of compulsory cultural assimilation.

One only has to take a look at TV in Germany to get the sense of how this idea of *Leitkultur* has penetrated the public consciousness. Six times a week there are late night talk shows with politicians and celebrities who all think the refugees need to learn or be taught our 'European values' (I watched a bunch of them to prepare for this input). Prominently, Sigmar Gabrielle, the social democrat (SPD) Vice Chancellor, feels it necessary to remind anyone coming to Germany that they need to abide by the constitution. His one concession to intercultural dialogue is to ensure that the leaflets the SPD has produced to explain Germany's *Grundgesetz* to refugees are printed in Arabic. The assumption that THEY

[20] http://www.bassamtibi.de/english/

[21] Bassam Tibi, *Europa ohne Identität*, p. 154.

would not understand it as necessary to abide by the constitution the same way WE do is hardly veiled at all.

And this is not to single out Germany. All European nation states have an implicit idea of their own *Leitkultur,* although to differing degrees and with differing emphases and consequences. The current positions of various governments in Central and Eastern Europe on the refugees are a case in point.[22]

And there are countless other examples of European nation-states attempting to force so-called 'European values' on people that they see as 'outsiders' and not of Europe (not rarely even those who were born and raised on this continent and nowhere else).

Notable are the various attempts at 'Pinkwashing' that abound,[23] including the notorious example from the Netherlands in which would-be migrants are forced watch a video of two men kissing as a'test' of their tolerance. This is particularly interesting considering that homosexuality was only criminalised in many countries outside Europe when the British colonised them (for example, India, Jamaica). Recent research in Germany by Jin Haritaworn and Jennifer Petzen points to the way young migrant-background men (usually of Turkish origin) are vilified as homophobic under the assumption that they could not be gay (which would make them potential victims of homophobia).[24] The ideas of multiple discrimination[25]

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[22] https://www.facebook.com/gerald.knaus/media_set?set=a.10153572009968758.1073741916.620483757&type=3&pnref=story

[23] The promotion of the gay-friendliness of a corporate or political entity in an attempt to downplay or soften other of its aspects considered negative, i.e. racism, etc.

[24] For example, Jin Haritaworn in her talk on 'Queer Lovers and Hateful Others' from an event on 'Critical Race Theory, Europe', 2013 on https://vimeo.com/66962710.

[25] Multiple discrimination is discrimination against one person on the basis of more than one ground. A black disabled woman may, for instance, experience discrimination on the grounds of her disability, her race and her gender.

and of intersectionality[26] have not yet penetrated mainstream political and social institutions in most member states of the EU, despite the fact that the European Commission has explicitly addressed both in different activities of the legal, employment, social affairs and gender equality agendas since the mid-2000s.[27]

Many people in Europe are convinced that racism is a thing of the past. The Shoah, segregation and civil rights in the south of the United States, apartheid South Africa: these forms of racism based on biological ideas about the superiority of one race over another have mostly been done away with. The extermination associated with these regimes is openly rejected by most people who consider themselves 'right' (as in correct) thinking. We live in an era in which we think of our societies as 'post-racial'.

> *'…The discrediting of the category of race in post-war European societies did not abolish racism: officially endorsed cultural relativism perpetuated Eurocentricism while dismissing racism as the pathology of the individual'.*[28]

However, the only difference between then and now in Europe is that we have culturalised race. Basically, our definition of culture is racially informed, and the idea of *Leitkultur* is an expression of that.

And where do the refugees who have just arrived and are still coming, come into picture? Well, they are here and as we know hope dies last of all, so they will keep coming. They are not going to be deterred by advertising aimed at putting them off (even in Arabic), because where they come from it is so much worse than even in Keleti station in Budapest, and whether we like to admit to it or not, that is partly our (political leaders) fault.

Let us be clear, European politics around people who do not conform to the *Leitkultur* (whatever that is in the given context) is stoking fear and prejudice. So, if we are serious about European values we need to work on this political climate at the same time as dealing with the objective logistical and organisational challenges of housing, clothing, processing and 'integrating' refugees.

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[26] The study of intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination.

[27] Just two examples of reports on these issues from the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=776&langId=en and http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/multiplediscriminationfinal7september2009_en.pdf

[28] Dr. Alana Lentin, University of Western Sydney, 2011 online at: http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2011-11-24-lentin-en.html.

Implications for Erasmus+/Youth in Action

At the 2015 evaluation of the No Hate Speech Campaign of the Council of Europe[29], an esteemed colleague and friend of the youth sector, Gavan Titley, said about the current political climate in Europe:

'WE have been here before!'

I think he is right. And, not only in relation to the political climate. Also as regards the role of youth work and programmes for European citizenship education.

Our community of practice must pause to think about the political and social climate that the current public discourse around these issues is producing and pushing, and both the consequence it is having for and the effect it is having on young people in Europe. At one and the same time it is influencing the way they think and act in relation to Europe, values and social / political realities, and it is alienating them. And, here I am not only talking about young refugees or immigrants, but about all young citizens of the European Union, migrant background or not.

I believe it to be self-evident that the Erasmus+/Youth in Action programme is and has always been a distilled expression of what the European political community wants young people in Europe to learn as European citizenship. The refugee drama unfolding inside Europe and on its borders demands that we critically re-examine not only our concept of European citizenship education, but also its practice, such that it does not explicitly or implicitly promote ideas about a European *Leitkultur* which is exclusive and exceptionalist, demeaning and objectifying the refugees arriving in Europe, those who seek asylum or anyone else considered 'other' in our societies. These 'facts of life' in Europe need to be part of the way education for European citizenship is conducted with young people (among others).

The question here is what Erasmus+/Youth in Action is actually about. Supporting young people in Europe to be happy and shiny, and to have a good time during mobility activities? Or personal and professional development? Charity towards non-Europeans? Dealing with our guilt for Europe's past?

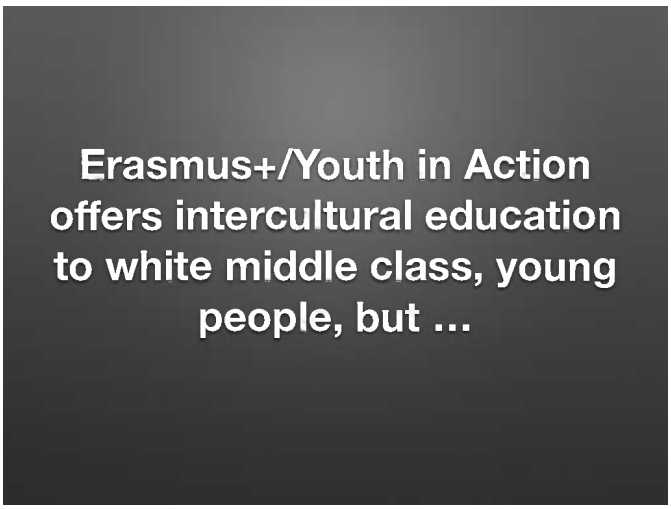
[29] http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org

Or is Erasmus+/Youth in Action about young Europeans developing a common understanding of what they want their European political community to be about and for? If the answer is yes, then the programme has to provide young people with the opportunity to work on that, and it has to provide them with opportunities to communicate their ideas, concerns and issues to those who can actually change something about how Europe is developing in relation to this particular social and political challenge, but also in relation to many others. And, it has to do that in a way which is responsive to real time developments.

Thanks to the work of RAY[30] we have some information that is relevant to reflecting on how to address the challenge that the current political climate poses for European citizenship education. The following five statements sum up the opportunities and risks I see for Erasmus+/Youth in Action to engage.

In May 2015, I was asked to speak to the RAY Triangular Summit[31] about the implications of the RAY transnational studies' findings for 'practice' in the Erasmus+/Youth in Action programme. The paper that resulted is without a doubt incomplete and partial and, admittedly, I am not intimately enough acquainted with the details of the evaluations of every programme country, and cannot claim to know the quality of what is being done in each programme or each project supported or organised within Erasmus+/Youth in Action.

However, some of the issues that paper raised are significant and can help us to better understand what should and should not be the priority for youth work interventions such Erasmus+/Youth in Action in response to both the arrival of the refugees and the political climate.



[30] http://www.researchyouth.net

[31] http://www.researchyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Report_RAY_Triangular-Summit.pdf

The data available from the RAY transitional studies show that de facto

- the majority of participants of the programme dis not face obstacles to participation in society / politics and can be considered in a 'favourable position';[32]
- and while a proportion of participants in YiA came from minority background, but irrespective of background the kind of participant that usually takes part in the programme has a higher level of social capital (as shown through e.g. results for highest educational attainment of the mother).

Among other considerations, this raises the question of the extent to which structures of privilege are being reproduced in the programme, and the extent to which the programme ends up working against its own objectives regarding social inclusion and the valuation of diversity.[33] Yet, in the current context, this does not have to be a problem. The programme could take measures to mobilise those young people and use their privilege to the advantage of those worst affected by social and political developments such as the arrival of the refugees. Privilege is not mutually exclusive with solidarity and active participation.

However, to be able to engage meaningfully, this means the Erasmus+/Youth in Action community of practice must

- acknowledge that this is a weakness of the programme;
- understand better the demographics of both the participants of the programme, and of those who do not participate in the programme (who are the young people who participate, who are the young people who don't, why is the programme not attractive to or known to them, and what barriers to participation do they face);
- develop explicit measures that compensate for the lack of participation of young people from minority and immigrant background, in addition to those in place to improve the participation of youth with fewer opportunities;
- consider the formal conditions through which young refugees just arriving could be engaged in activities within the programme as participants, and the kind of support mechanisms that would be needed to ensure their participation (language, financial, mentoring, etc);
- and work more explicitly with political intercultural educational approaches to improve the European citizenship and civic/social/political initiative of the participants, such that those approaches avoid *Leitkultur* thinking and acting.

Doing this has far-reaching political, technical, organisational, educational, and several other dimensions. It requires the wide ranging reconsideration of many different practices within the programme, at European level and at the level of each national programme, not only the actual educational practice.

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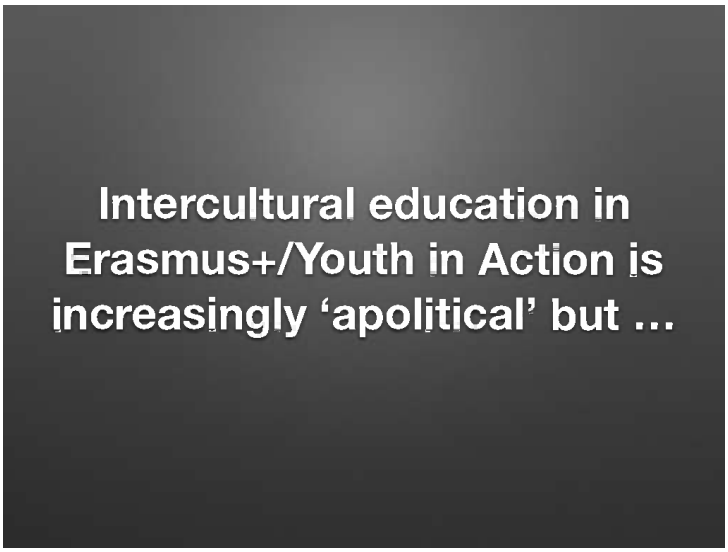
[32] RAY transnational analysis 2011, tables 15, 18, 19, 26, 27, 31, 34, 35, 37, 39, 40, 43, 47, see p. 25.

[33] http://www.researchyouth.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Report_RAY_Triangular-Summit.pdf



Unfortunately, RAY has not been able to deliver a lot of information about the nature and quality of the intercultural and European citizenship education actually being practiced in Erasmus+/Youth in Action projects until now. This is hopefully something that future RAY studies will be able to develop upon, as it would provide nuance and substance to ideas about how to make the programme work better regarding 'integration' objectives and as a response to such contemporary social and political developments.

Nevertheless, we have a lot of clues about the nature of the 'intercultural' in the programme. A cursory look at the advertising done by project carriers using social media and intra-community networks online for their projects is one source of relevant information.[34] Another are the the educational materials being developed, shared and disseminated by the Erasmus+/Youth in Action community of practice engaged in non-formal, intercultural and European citizenship education.

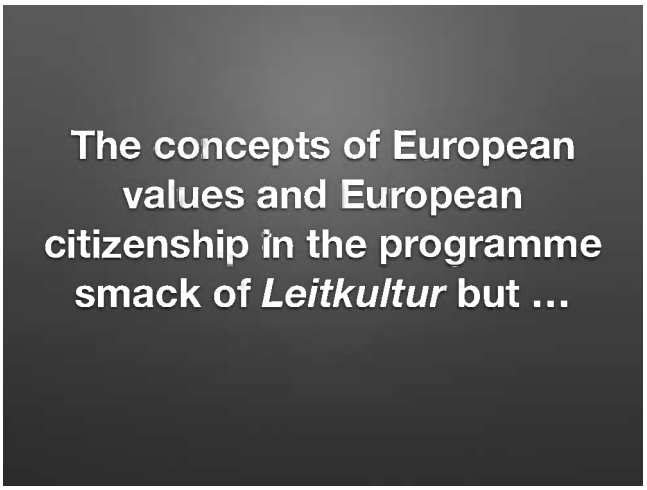
Clearly, I have not been in a position to do a comprehensive or sound review of such advertising and materials in preparation of this input, but I have been observing this closely for some time. My gut feeling about this is that the majority of educational work that is described as 'intercultural' still functions at the level of 'meetings of young people from different countries in Europe' and that there continues to be a strong focus on changing individual attitudes and behaviours. Much less common are encounters that engage young people in intercultural learning with other youth from the diverse backgrounds and senses of belonging that are necessarily present within one country, city or even neighbourhood. And, much less common are also activities that emphasise the change of social and political structures. In other words, the emphasis of the educational work has become less political, if not a-political. That certainly has a lot to do with the progressive change of orientation of the programme towards labour market objectives and away from political intercultural education.

[34] Some examples include: www.facebook.com/groups/ErasmusGeeks, https://www.facebook.com/groups/OtlasYouthPartner/

At the same time, there are also opportunities to be explored here, especially within the European citizenship dimension of the programme. Sometimes the fact that donors drive demand for project funding with their priorities can be useful. In the first place, there is mileage in thinking about how to effectively re-politicise Erasmus+/Youth in Action intercultural education and projects. Such opportunities could take many forms including, for the sake of argument,

- a reorientation of project criteria to include themes and issues and forms of work that aim at new approaches to 'integration' through intercultural political education, including work on intercultural learning between people living in the same country;
- a reorientation of project criteria towards more structural issues of social and political inequality, disenfranchisement, alienation, etc, such that the desperate social reality of many young people living in Europe is acknowledged as one of the root causes of radicalisation;
- the establishment of new budget lines for rapid reaction social projects that support young people taking initiatives to help the refugees or young refugees taking initiatives to help themselves and others;
- symbolic initiatives, like opening all training activities to refugees that can communicate in English or the language of the course (as has been done by some Universities in Europe, etc) and the provision of YouthPass to those young people.

However, and in the end, the important thing here is not the money. The important thing is what the programme can and does facilitate, and the stance it takes in doing so - a pro-active stance, a stance that demonstrates solidarity, one that does not degenerate into charity, an ethical stance.



Again, we do not have a lot of empirical data that can substantiate this, but as in the case intercultural education, there are clues as to the way in which European values and European citizenship are being discussed and developed in the programme.

For me, and I readily admit this may be a personal bias, the fact that the programme juxtaposes relationship building between young people inside Europe and their mobility inside the EU, against the contact of young Europeans with young people around the rest of the world is part of the package of *Leitkultur* thinking. While it may not be intentional, there is a dimension of 'us' and 'them' to this way of seeing relations between young people around the world, and European responsibility towards the world. The question boils down to: how can we develop an idea of European citizenship through Erasmus+/Youth in Action that is not inward looking, that does not put itself in juxtaposition to global citizenship?

Rather, my gut feeling is that European values and European citizenship are most often discussed in terms of what makes us European in contradistinction to non-Europeans. And even if these 'values' are important - human rights, gender equality, no death penalty are of course important - the question remains how we avoid objectifying refugees and people with non-European backgrounds living in Europe, as well as people living in other parts of the world, as backward because in the places where they live there are other practices.

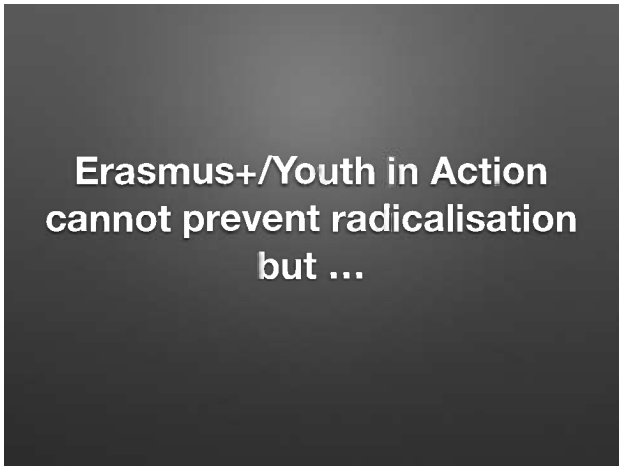
This is challenging, but discussing it and considering ways to approach this within European citizenship education and within the programme dimension 'Youth in the World' would be a first step.

In the short term, I have my doubts that Erasmus+/Youth in Action can act directly with young refugees that have just arrived, given the legal rules and procedures around asylum and acquiring refugee status in the member states of the EU. There is nevertheless much that the National Agencies can do to support the arrival process with volunteers and solidarity actions.

In a longer term perspective, the opportunities of the programme and individual National Agencies to develop the approach to European citizenship and European values so that it considers the lived reality of the diversity, pluralism and complexity of European society, including the dimension of immigration and the 'culture of welcome', should be explored in more depth (from both the political perspective and methodological perspectives). A key issue to explore would be how refugee participants themselves could develop programmes within preexisting structures. There are many interesting pilot initiatives around Europe that could be learned from. I am thinking in particular about one Danish newspaper, *Dagbladet*, that in October 2009, invited 12 refugees (all of them professional journalists seeking refuge in Denmark) to act as the editorial team. Admittedly, this was for a day and a once-off, but that kind of symbolic action could have longer term perspectives, in that it could be developed into a longer term programme of citizen journalism, beneficial to refugees, the journalism community and the public discourse.[35]

Irrespective of the perspective, short or long term, we must remain vigilant that while taking upon us the responsibility to act, we act in a way that respects the human dignity of young refugees and does not emasculate them. By that I mean that we should do things for and to them, but we should develop processes by which they can, with our support, autonomously act on their own behalf.

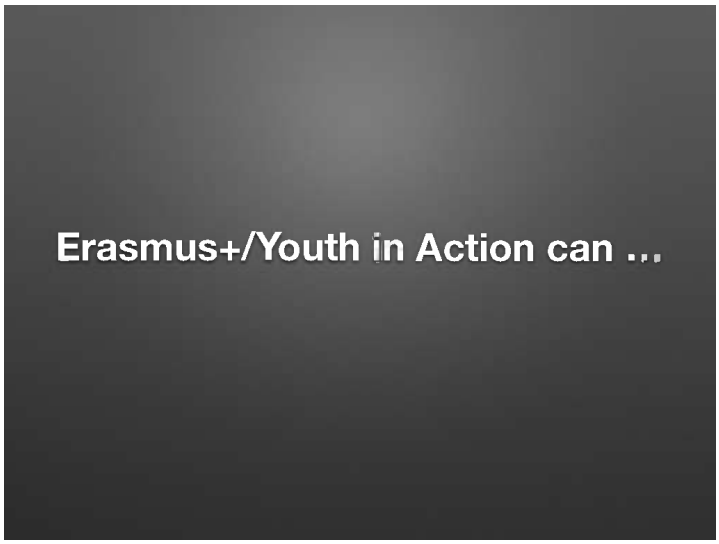
[35] http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/09/refugees-take-charge-danish-newspaper-dagbladet-information



My take on this is certainly quite clear from what has been outlined above. I do not believe Erasmus+/ Youth in Action can prevent radicalisation and I do not think it should be asked to do so. The little we do know about the process of radicalisation shows that the forms of work and interventions possible under Erasmus+/Youth in Action are simply not appropriate to preventing young people who are already on that path from taking it to the logical conclusion they have identified as important for themselves.

In fact, this demand assumes that the programme includes young people that are susceptible to radicalisation and I do not believe that that assumption can be borne out by what we know about the demographics of the programme (which is relatively little in the end).

But, that does not mean that Erasmus+/Youth in Action cannot do anything at all. It can, Through a multiplicity of different actions which take a positive approach to the lived diversity and pluralism of European societies (that seeks to avoid the clichés of eating diverse food and enjoying the company of a few people of colour) and by promoting a more overtly political approach to intercultural education and European within the programme, it can seek to engage with some of the alienation of young people, that starts them down the path to more extreme forms of behaviour. We will never be able to tell if that engagement or YiA interventions prevented a bombing or a knife attack, but a sense of inclusion and investment in the society where one lives seems to be the common missing factor binding the different experiences of radicalisation we know about together and differentiating them from those who have exited.



I am sometimes too focussed on things things that do not work as well as they should and that need to be improved, so before concluding I also want to look at what Erasmus+/Youth in Action can do.

Most important of all is taking time and creating space for reflection on the instruments and means available to National Agencies to engage with the immediate challenges using the programme, acting in line with professed programme values, in other words in solidarity with arriving refugees. And the programme has more than just money at its disposal. To begin with, the programme represents an enormous human resource: just think of the number of individual volunteers involved in EVS and the youth organisations and initiatives that every single National Agency has in its database of funded projects. The programme could start with mobilising these in solidarity with immediate relief efforts.

We can also acknowledge that doing this requires some flexibility in how the programme behaves and acts. It is clear that it is complicated for the programme to act locally and nationally, given the funding regulations. However, extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures and sometimes it is possible to act swiftly and do something exceptional. Rapid reaction grants for direct benefit to refugee youth, a strong social and traditional media presence with a clear stance, symbolic actions demonstrating youth solidarity with refugees at the border crossings / stations / reception centres, the mobilisation of volunteers and grantee organisations in large numbers, and even throwing open the programme to refugee youth who have the language skills to participate (like has been done in several universities around Europe) would all be good steps in the right direction.

In the medium term, the creation of mechanisms and space for reflection on what the most appropriate forms of engagement and potential priorities will be important. This is certainly on its way with the recent Slovenian initiative to gather willing National Agencies and engage the European Commission. As raised earlier, we are aware of the need to build our understandings as we build our programme. These spaces and mechanisms should be assisted by research, practice and policy actors (from inside and outside the spheres of reference of the Erasmus+/Youth in Action programme) with relevant experience and information, engaged in on the ground research or working directly in communities dealing with the challenges of life and inclusion in diverse communities in Europe. Taking a closer look at the practices of the migrant and refugee communities themselves, and inviting them to discuss what they find interesting, relevant or attractive about the programme, will be informative for what the programme should and should not attempt to do. The results may be surprising. As alluded to above, my gut feeling

about this is that there are gains to be made in a more affirmative approach to extending the benefits of the programme to youth of migrant and refugee background, to a more politically and socially aware (i.e. intercultural) approach to the criteria for funding projects, including more attention to the composition of the groups, the content they want to address the and pedagogical approaches and methods they propose to use.

In the long term, the programme needs to think in more depth about its European citizenship dimension, what it is for and how it is being done. More in depth research needs to be undertaken to understand the intercultural and European citizenship content and approaches being educated with inside the programme, and conclusions for competence development of grantees and educational staff (paid or voluntary), and on the demographics of the young people participating and not participating in the programme. This information needs to be used to develop more adequate measures for the outreach to young people from diverse backgrounds, and to ensure their access to and inclusion in the programme. All intercultural education conducted, and the materials developed for European citizenship education within the programme, need to be re-examined for *Leitkultur* and even, race-thinking, and appropriately revised and re-worked. And, finally the youth workers and trainers active in the programme need to be supported to conduct political intercultural education and European citizenship education within and using the programme.

Conclusion

'Stories make empathy and empathy is the arch enemy of nationalism' said a young Hungarian author interviewed by *Deutschlandfunk* in October 2015, when asked about the possible role of artists and cultural operators in the current political situation in his country and Central Europe in regard of the refugees. This got me to thinking about another question as I was working on the presentation. And that is 'Why me?'. Why was I asked to make this input? Of course, I would like to think it is because I am an expert and have something interesting to say. That might indeed be the case, although I am not how much of what I did say met the approval of its audience such that I will be considered an expert in the future. However, my narcissism aside, the further question implied by this reflection is incredibly important for how the Erasmus+/Youth in Action engages with such issues. Young people from migrant, minority religious, other 'non-national' backgrounds and young people of colour, are far better able to describe how the programme should be dealing with these issues and what would be meaningful for their engagement with the programme than a white, upper middle class, soon to be middle-aged, privileged person, even if she is a woman and even if she is an ally and advocate. Their voices continue to be the ingredient that is missing, even in our very well intentioned efforts to be more inclusive and take a constructive approach. *'Never about us without us!'* used to be the watch-word of European youth work (not so long ago, most of those attending the meeting remember the 1990s). And as much as I was thrilled to have been asked to speak to the National Agencies in Luxembourg on the occasion of their business meeting, I believe it is important ask the young people themselves next time. Whether through research, direct implication in the planning of the programme or any other channel, their input is essential. Maybe next time the business meeting could consider inviting young refugees to tell their own stories in person.

Yael Ohana
Berlin, 22 October 2015

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