



ECUMENICAL YOUTH COUNCIL
IN EUROPE
Rue du Champ de Mars 5
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 www.eyce.org

DATE: **Brussels, the 29th of October, 2007**
TO: **EYCE National Correspondents and Contacts**
RE: **Invitation to the EYCE Seminar December 2007**



"Monologue or Dialogue?"

Inter-religious Dialogue meets fundamentalism

9th - 16th December 2007, Volos, Greece

all different
all equal



PLEASE READ THE COMPLETE INVITATION LETTER CAREFULLY!

Dear Friends,

Greetings on behalf of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE)!
We are very happy to send you today the invitation to the upcoming EYCE seminar "Monologue or dialogue? Inter-religious dialogue meets fundamentalism", to be held in Volos, Greece. Please share this invitation as widely as possible in your network! We are looking forward to receive soon the nominations of your candidates for this event!



all different
all equal

1. INTRODUCTION

Isn't it normal for any religion to have values and convictions? Do these convictions not necessarily lead to mission? How can convictions and determinations go together with dialogue?

How does religious fundamentalism come about? Are the reasons economical? Or a question of education? How have religions influenced the development of common values? How can we engage in dialogue and be successful with it if we are faced with intolerance, fundamentalism and daily reports of extremists' killings?

To ignore this context could lead to a situation where a few organisations engage in dialogue yet their work represents only a small part of society, something that could be described as "the happy island of inter-religious dialogue". Dialogue takes place – but it needs to address a society that in many cases does not value religious or cultural diversity. Therefore EYCE tried to find partners who equally feel a strong need to organise a seminar that will try to answer the questions raised above. With the Federation of European Muslim Youth and student Organisations (FEMYSO) and the youth desk of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) we have found these partners with a common vision and understanding. We believe that inter-religious dialogue (IRD) is a key in creating a peaceful and respectful world. Yet we realise that actors in this dialogue face fundamentalism. It is crucial to understand the roots and causes of fundamentalism and to take serious the concerns of those who do not want to engage in dialogue. Understanding is needed in order to overcome obstacles posed by the desire for mission, differing values and the determination that the own position is the correct one.

Profile of participants:

The target group for this event are young people (18 to 30 years of age) and youth leaders from various backgrounds. They should be active in youth work and able to act as multipliers for the issue of inter-religious dialogue in their respective home countries and religious communities. In order to act as multipliers they should be ready to commit themselves to implement a small project in their home country that has the potential to increase dialogue and understanding among people of different faiths and cultures, be in a position to do that and report back to EYCE.

This seminar is aimed at young people who do not have professional knowledge on the theme. However, the participants should be interested in questions of intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and ready to contribute actively to the content of the training course.

EYCE is inviting participants from an academic and non academic background. Participants are expected to be open minded and willing to listen to others as well as able and ready to share their own experiences and backgrounds and to participate actively and fully in the programme.

Arrivals and Departures:

Sunday the 9th of December is the day of arrival

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Sunday the 16th of December is the day of departure.

As the seminar will be held in Volos, all participants are expected to come to either Athens or Thessaloniki. Local transport from these airports to the venue of the training course will be arranged. More detailed travel instructions will thus be available to the participants selected.

Please make sure to arrive/depart on these dates as the possibilities of arranging



accommodation in case of early arrival and late departure will be extremely limited. **EYCE cannot arrange extra night's accommodation** unless this is absolutely necessary for reasons of travelling schedule and **approved in advance** by the EYCE Treasurer.



2. BACKGROUND OF THE TRAINING COURSE

EYCE's General Meeting decided already in 1999 that EYCE should focus on inter-religious dialogue in its future work. Since then, many steps have been taken on this road and co-operation with youth from non-Christian background has been initiated. EYCE's first seminar on interfaith dialogue was held in 2000 with the support of the European Youth Foundation. The experiences that have been gathered even since have made the need to deepen the work in this field clearly visible. Relating to this, EYCE has established a Steering Committee for Inter-religious Dialogue which shapes EYCE's policies and themes on the topic. However, new initiatives take time, and expertise has to be acquired over a reasonable amount of time.

In recent years strong co-operation with the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) and faith-based member organisations of the European Youth Forum Jeunesse could be established. EYCE's first truly inter-religious training course on inter-religious dialogue in 2004 was jointly organised by EYCE and FEMYSO.

EYCE and the youth desk of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) are partners for more than 30 years through the youth work done jointly under the umbrella of the World Council of Churches, WCC. Therefore EYCE is pleased to partner with the youth desk of MECC and FEMYSO in this seminar and together face such a challenging issue.

This training course is run in the framework of the "All Different – All Equal" European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation (www.alldifferent-allequal.info).



3. THEMES OF THE SEMINAR

EYCE, MECC and FEMYSO will together explore the questions that fundamentalisms pose to inter-religious dialogue and to all the efforts to build peace and respect in our societies. The main aims of this seminar are to provide youth leaders and interested youth from the Middle East and Europe, from Muslim and Christian background with a forum to explore and discuss how to address fundamentalism, extremism and exclusive religious determination and how to promote a culture of peace and respect against violence and discrimination that is encouraged, legitimised or not prevented by religion.

The objectives of the seminar are:

- to analyse the roots and causes of religious fundamentalism,
- to empower participants to break stereotypical thinking and attitudes,
- to debate the differences between missions and the right to own values,
- to help participants distinguish between needed determination and destructive fundamentalism,
- to find practical and practicable conclusions on how to pursue and promote IRD when faced with fundamentalist thinking and
- to actively contribute to diversity as the key for developing common values in Europe and beyond, determined but with respect and appreciation for diversity.

More information on the programme will be provided by the International Planning Committee and available for download from EYCE's website at www.eyce.org .



4. METHODS

This ambitious seminar will use a wide variety of methods: religion and region specific and inter-religious and inter-regional small group work, individual research, lectures, workshops, role games and creative drama presentation to understand and face fundamentalism and to build diverse and respectful societies.

Programme elements will include: analysis of fundamentalism from the perspective of sociology, economy, psychology, theology, media and history, critical analysis of practices and traditions of Christianity and Islam that promote fundamentalism, participation-advocacy for equal participation in policy and decision making of young Christian and Muslims, a tool day to teach practical and practicable ways to pursue and promote IRD when faced with fundamentalist thinking.



5. TIMETABLE

A draft timetable will be circulate right after the meeting of the International Planning Committee and will be equally available at EYCE's website www.eyce.org.



6. MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE (IPC)

The seminar will be prepared and implemented by a team of volunteers from EYCE, FEMYSO and MECC, who will meet from the 2nd to the 5th of November in Volos in order to finalise the programme.

The International Planning Committee for the training course is composed of the following

people:

1. Daniel Barton	daniel.barton@eyce.org	EYCE – Czech Republic
2. Razek Siriani	rsiriani@scs-net.org	MECC - Syria
3. Rania Flavie Touma	raniaflavie@hotmail.com	MECC - Syria
4. Ola Himmat	olahimmat@hotmail.com	FEMYSO - Switzerland
5. Ruth Bennett	rutharbennett@hotmail.com	FEMYSO – UK
6. Michel Charbonnier	general.secretary@eyce.org	EYCE - Belgium

If you want to get in contact with the members of the IPC please do not hesitate to contact them.



7. PARTICIPATION FEE

The participation fee for the training course will be **200 € (Euros)** including accommodation, meals, programme and excursion. Please note that this amount can only be offered because of the subsidies received from the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe, and subsidises the total cost of accommodation, meals, programme & excursion.

Subsidies for the participation fees are available in accordance with the reimbursement policies for travel subsidies mentioned under “8. Travel Subsidies”. Please search for your country there in order to identify if you are entitled to any subsidies.

Please note that the payment of a **cancellation fee** of 200 € (Euros) is expected from participants who cancel their participation in the event less than 2 weeks prior to commencement of the activity.



8. TRAVEL SUBSIDIES

Contributions:

Some participants of this training course are entitled to partial reimbursement of their travel expenses and participation fees. These expenses, however, are a heavy burden on EYCE's finances. Therefore, all participants are expected to contribute something to the travel costs and the participation fee of the training course they are attending. Please do also discover ways of finding subsidies yourself carefully – we have heard some very successful stories of individual fundraising at our past events. You may contact national aid agencies, your national EYCE member or your local congregation.

Least costly route:

Participants will be reimbursed on the basis of the shortest and least costly route between their place of residence and Volos. If participants start their journey from a place further away than their residence to the training course venue or the return journey is to a place further away than their place of residence, the extra costs will not be covered by EYCE. We also strongly recommend looking around for cheap tickets, e.g. using students' discount tickets or Internet booking as well as low cost airlines flying to Athens and Thessaloniki, such as EasyJet, Sterling, TUfly or AirBerlin.

Train or Plane?

If the distance between the participants' residence and the training course is less than 800 km, then the participant should travel by train second class. For distances greater than 800 km the participant should travel by either train or plane (whichever is least expensive). If the participant has travelled in a more expensive manner they will only get subsidised to the extent of the allowed method of travel according to the above guidelines.

Participation:

The participants should be present for the whole training course. Those who participate for less than 90% of the total duration of the activity will not be reimbursed.

Entitlements:

The standard EYCE policy concerning entitlements for travel subsidies and participation fees apply for this event for ALL participants. They are as follows:

Band One: 90% subsidy entitlement for the following countries:

Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Slovak Republic.

Band Two: 50% subsidy entitlement for the following countries:

Belgium, Iceland, Italy, Northern Ireland/ Eire, Malta, Portugal and Spain.

Band Three: Other countries:

You might come from a country not mentioned above. If you come from a country not mentioned but require assistance with travel and participation fee subsidies, then this should be noted in the Application Form, and the EYCE Treasurer Mr. Paul Welch should be contacted regarding the request (paul.welch@eyce.org).

Copy of tickets:

Travel expenses are only reimbursed upon the presentation of a copy of all travel documents and receipts. **Please prepare these copies beforehand.** Participants travelling with e-tickets need to provide the boarding cards of their journey TO Greece. Please do not throw them away.

If you can pay more than required:

It might also be the case that participants can afford to pay more than what is asked. We kindly ask these participants to pay what they can afford since this means that more funds are available to subsidise others... and this is what teamwork and solidarity is all about!

Authorisation:

The participants requesting financial assistance need to have the subsidy amount authorised in writing by EYCE Office. The amounts indicated in the Application Form will be the starting point for agreements, but the binding reference point for reimbursement will be the amount authorised in writing by EYCE Office. For selected participants EYCE will provide a subsidy request form together with the letter of acceptance.

Any participants, staying in Greece either before or after the training course will need to be responsible for all their own costs, unless a prior agreement is arranged with the Office due to travel schedules.

Enclosed is the application form where we ask you to indicate your need for a travel subsidy. No subsidies will be paid without prior agreement. Please also note that **health insurance is arranged by EYCE** and will not therefore be reimbursed to participants opting for their own policy unless health insurance is required for the Visa application at the embassy.

Please ensure bookings are made at the best fare but do not buy any tickets prior to confirmation of your participation, agreement with EYCE Office and visa acknowledgement (if applicable).



9. VENUE OF THE TRAINING COURSE

More information about the venue will be available for participants later on.



10. CONTACT Greece (for visa enquiries)

Some of the participants will need a visa to enter Greece. Please check immediately with the Greek embassy or consulate in your country whether you need a visa to enter Greece. Please note that participants needing visa have to apply for the seminar as soon as possible in order to avoid any troubles in getting a visa.

If needed, an official “Letter of invitation” issued by an organisation registered in Greece will be sent to the selected participants as soon as they are selected. Please **do not go ahead** applying for a visa prior to receiving the letter of acceptance to the training course. Please note that EYCE as an organisation registered in Belgium will under no circumstance be able to help participants obtaining a Visa for Greece. Therefore, selected participants will be instructed carefully whom to address in order to obtain documents needed.

Please be very careful. Be sure that you ask exact details of the documents needed. Some of you might not need a visa but a proof that you will be insured and taken care of during your stay in Greece. In any case please let us know as soon as possible, so we can ensure that all participants get the documents on time. More detailed information will be given in the letter of acceptance.



11. LANGUAGES

The language of the training course will be English. It will be essential for all the participants to understand and speak English in order to take full advantage out of the activity. Translation into one other language could maybe be organised if requested. If you wish translation please indicate this clearly in the application form.



12. DEADLINE FOR APPLYING/ SELECTION CRITERIA

Please send all your application form to the EYCE Office (address above) as soon as possible. The absolutely latest deadline for receiving applications will be

18th of November 2007, 16:00 C.E.T.

We kindly ask that the enclosed application is filled in using a computer or typewriter and returned to the EYCE Office via email and / or fax. (The form will be available also on the EYCE website at www.eyce.org).

Sending incomplete forms, filling them in unreadable handwriting or sending them too late might mean that applications are **not** processed. If you fear that the application will not reach the office in time, please give the EYCE Office a call or send a fax/email to notify the secretariat.

Up to 50 participants will be selected by the International Planning Committee to attend the event. This selection will try to ensure a geographical, denominational and gender balance.

In addition, sending the application forms early increases the chances of being selected, while sending them the very last minute might disadvantage your application. The deadline for applications is less than two months prior to the event. Therefore we are forced to select participants immediately after the deadline, thus ensuring a smooth implementation of the training course and reasonably priced tickets. Right after selecting participants, those selected will receive more detailed information about the seminar programme. Also note that participants are only accepted if they have received a written confirmation from EYCE (email). Please keep in mind that selected participants will have to agree on travel costs with the EYCE Office **within one week** after having received the letter of acceptance. Therefore they are kindly requested to ensure **email access between the 19th and the 26th of November**.



13. PREPERATORY DOCUMENTS

Please share this letter, the accompanying documents and the information included with the persons you will nominate to the event.

The selected participants will receive more detailed information after the selection and documents to prepare themselves for the training course.

EYCE is working on an entirely ecumenical basis; furthermore, the event will have a strong inter-religious dimension. Therefore, participants will come from many denominations and religions. Everyone should be thus ready to welcome and respect others. All participants will

have to discuss together how to value the traditions of the other. It may be that ideas and behaviours one person takes for granted are not easy to understand for someone else. Intercultural, ecumenical and inter-religious Dialogue is a challenge – and the entire Planning Team is looking forward to experiencing this challenge with many committed participants.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

With my very best wishes and on behalf of International Planning Committee,

Michel Charbonnier
EYCE Chairperson

Enclosed:

- Application Form including Motivation Questionnaire