**First Intercultural Citizenship Education Virtual Exchange**

April 15, 2020 – 11:00 am to 12:45 am CET Time

**Attendees:**

* ALF trainers: Laura Dewitte (Portugal), Noureddine Erradi (Belgium), Zeina Dbouk (Lebanon)
* Educators: Quentin De Behault (Belgium); Ivona Čelebičić (Bosnia); Maja Vejzovic-Voloder (Bosnia); Nageh Hosni Ali Khalifa (Egypt); Nathalie Schoenberger (Germany); Aspasia Protogerou (Greece); Indraja Vaitkunaite (Lituania); Lahcen Tighoula (Morocco); Ghifar Wachofi (Morocco); Iman Al Heresh (Palestine); Monica Salas Corrigan (Portugal); Maria Cristina Santinho (Portugal); Tuula Jääskeläinen (Finland); Jacopo Cimmino (Turkey);

**Chair of the meeting:** Eleonora Insalaco - Head of Operations and Intercultural Research **Moderator**: Aissam Benaissa - Virtual Exchange Capacity Building Expert

**Rapporteurs:** Johannes Jauhianen, Haitham Samy, Racha Omeyri

**Background of the meeting:**

The First Intercultural Citizenship Education Virtual Exchange brings together a group of educators in the formal and non-formal education sector who participated to the Regional Training for Trainers on Intercultural Citizenship Education organised by the Anna Lindh Foundation in November 2019 in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The Virtual Exchange offers educators from different Euro-Mediterranean countries a space to discuss and reflect on how the current pandemic affected their work, and how the pandemic’s negative consequences on intercultural exchanges/dialogue can be minimized.

This meeting built on the experience gathered by the ALF in developing and implementing technology-based virtual exchange activities for youth. This pilot will indicate the possibility of organising similar virtual meetings in the near future.

**Guiding questions for discussion:**

Whilst in breakout rooms, the discussion among the educators was initiated with the following questions:

1. How is the pandemic affecting your work as an educator?
2. In which way do you think the pandemic is impacting on mutual perceptions and relations in the Euro-Mediterranean region?
3. What education activities could be organised to minimize the negative consequences of the pandemic on intercultural relations?
4. What role can virtual exchange play in sustaining dialogue work in the Euro-Mediterranean region?

**The meeting:**

The meeting started with an icebreaker during which each educator was asked to share, in 30 seconds, an overview of the challenges they face throughout the current health crisis.

Following the icebreaker, participants were divided into five separate breakout rooms, each led by a rapporteur. The following observations and points of view, were raised in the breakout rooms:

* Breakout room #1 (Nageh, Quentin and Tuula):

Participants reported having organized virtual workshops targeting youth and young Scouts on safety issues whilst volunteering in response to the Covid-19 pandemic(Belgium and Egypt). Also, teaching in the field of arts is being carried out remotely by some in the group (Finland) underlining that organizing virtual activities is quite challenging for art teachers.

* Breakout room #2 (Lahcen, Cristina and Laura):

Some participants stated that they face difficulties adjusting to online learning due to unequal online access among disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as refugees (Morocco). Some in the group see that virtuallearning could be used as a complement to, rather than a substitute for face-to-face encounters particularly in the field of non-formal education (Portugal). Another participant shared his experience of a successful virtual exchange carried out in April, involving 20 persons for a 2-day event in Morocco, as a follow-up to the training for trainers in Nicosia. He stressed the importance of rethinking intercultural citizenship education in the time of Covid-19 and that it should gain momentum among policy-makers, as the virus does not differentiate between borders, ethnicities, age, gender, etc..

The group also acknowledged some positive aspects emerging from the current. For example, that the lockdown allowed people to reach out to others, stepping up to help and to inspire personal creativity.

* Breakout room #3 (Jacopo, Ivona, Indraja and Ghifar):

Participants underlined the difficulty of reaching certain target groups through digital learning, such as the lack of access to technology or good internet connection for disadvantaged people. Moreover, difficulties were raised in funding and developing online training and interactive sessions within an unpredictable timeframe (Lithuania, Morocco, Turkey and Bosnia).

Particular concerns were flagged regarding incitement to racial hatred and discrimination towards Italians during the health crisis.

Despite physical distancing, participants underlined that the health crisis fosters support and solidarity among people. They also emphasized that this first virtual exchange would be a valuable tool to exchange experiences, good practices and intitiatives among peers.

* Breakout room #4 (Iman, Maja and Zeina):

Participants working in the formal education sector reported some difficulties with keeping track of their daily schedule and not being able to respond to all students’ queries particularly those who have limited access to technology and internet connectivity (Lebanon). Others shared their experiences about raising awareness through social media to reach students in the formal education sector (Palestine).

Educators working in the non-formal education sector stated that e-learning could not be an alternative to face-to-face learning, particularly in the field of intercultural education (Bosnia and Palestine).

* Breakout room #5 (Aspa, Monica, Nathalie and Nouredine):

Covid-19 affected all of the participants to the group, some had to cancel events, some are using this time for planning and preparatory activities for the future and others had taken their educational activities online. On a personal level, some in the group raised the issue of digging deep into themselves and their identity during this time of isolation.

For many in the group the isolation brought on by Covid-19 presents itself as a threat and an opportunity. On the one hand, it encourages everyone to be creative and to develop new ways to reach people through virtual exchanges, but on the other hand, it brings about a number of challenges.

With regards to negative stereotypes and mutual perceptions brought on by the pandemic, some participants in the groups raised the issue of discrimination of Italians and Spaniards.

Synthesis of the main challenges and issues:

The following issues and challenges identified in the meeting are among the most noteworthy:

* Challenges prevail with regards to how to reach target groups and adjusting to online learning, due to an unequal access to technology and internet among disadvantaged and marginalized groups such as refugees
* Virtuallearning could be used as a complement to, rather than a substitute for face-to-face encounters particularly in the field of non-formal education;
* The importance of rethinking intercultural citizenship education in the time of Covid-19, should gain momentum among policy-makers;
* Particular concerns were flagged regarding negative stereotypes, particularly, incitement to racial hatred and discrimination towards Italians during the crisis.

Questions for further reflection:

The meeting was concluded by encouraging participants to reflect on two questions: what is your feeling about today’s meeting and what would you take away from today’s exchange?

Attendees considered the virtual exchange to have been a valuable tool to exchange experiences, good practices and intitiatives among each other. An online evaluation questionnaire was shared among participants for further feedback.

**Follow-up:**

Building on the analysis of the evaluation questionnaire, the ALF will examine 3 possibilities:

* Organizing regular virtual exchange sessions with the ALF intercultural citizenship educators;
* Organizing a training session on how to organize virtual exchanges on intercultural citizenship education;
* Organizing a training session dedicated to sharing technical aspects of virtual exchange.

**Annex I: Press Release**

At times characterised by social distancing, the Anna Lindh Foundation organises the first Intercultural Citizenship Education Virtual Exchange, on the 15th of April from 11-12:30 CET.

The Virtual Exchange brings together a group of educators in the formal and non-formal education sector who participated to the Regional Training for Trainers on Intercultural Citizenship Education organised by the ALF in November 2019 in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The Virtual Exchange sets out to offer educators from different Euro-Mediterranean countries  a space to encourage discussion and reflection on how the current pandemic has affected the work of and to share ideas on how the pandemic’s consequences on intercultural exchanges/dialogue can be minimized.

The meeting builds on the experience gathered by the ALF in developing and implementing technology-based virtual exchange activities for youth and this pilot will indicate the possibility of organising similar virtual meetings in the near future.

**About the Anna Lindh Foundation Intercultural Learning and Cities Programme**

The Intercultural Learning and Cities Programme is the fruit of a consultative and participatory process which started in 2010 with the main partners of the ALF such as educators and experts in the field of education. These stakeholders agreed on the need to conceive a regional education programme to prepare people of the region, and youth in particular, to live and be active within multi-cultural societies.

Following a series of expert meetings and conventions, the ALF, in consultation with over 300 educators, published the Anna Lindh Education Handbook on Intercultural Citizenship Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region as the first tool to support regional capacity-buildings, education activities on the ground and orientate education policies.

For more information: <https://www.annalindhfoundation.org/citizenship-handbook>

**Annex II: Agenda of the meeting**

**April 15, 2020 - 11:00 am to 12:30 am CET Time**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Time CEST** | **Item** |
| 11:00 | Welcoming, ice breaker |
| 11:20 | Rules and creation of the breakout rooms |
| 11:25 | Start of the group discussions in the breakout rooms |
| 11:45 | Presentations and discussion in the plenary room |
| 12:15 | Reflection and evaluation |
| 12:30 | End of the session |

**Annex III: Post-Exchange Questionnaire - Intercultural Citizenship Education Virtual Exchange**

Thank you for your participation in the first intercultural Citizenship Education Virtual Exchange organised by the ALF.

Your answers to this survey can help us to develop further virtual exchanges, identify ways we can work together for the promotion of intercultural citizenship education and intercultural dialogue within the current challenges posed by Covid19 pandemic.
Your opinion is important to us.

\* Required

**Participant name (optional)**

Your answer

**Country of residence/ALF Network of reference \***

Your answer

**How would you rate your satisfaction with the first Intercultural Citizenship Education Virtual Exchange (15 April session). \***

1 2 3 4 5

Very Low Very High

**Which aspect of the virtual exchange did you appreciate the most? \***

Your answer

**Which aspect of the virtual exchange do you consider could be improved? \***

Your answer

**Have you learnt/heard during today's Virtual Exchange about any education practice that can be implemented during the current Covid19? \***

Yes

No

Please elaborate

Your answer

**After the virtual exchange, do you have any new ideas or strengthened existing ideas for education activities you could implement during the current Covid19 or afterwards to mitigate its consequences? \***

Yes

No

Please elaborate

Your answer

**Virtual Exchange can help sustaining intercultural education across the region? \***

Yes

No

Maybe

Please describe

Your answer

**In which way do you think COVID-19 crisis has impacted on intercultural relations in the EuroMed region? \***

Positively

Negatively

Not impacted

Please elaborate

Your answer

**In which way has Covid19 impacted on your education work? \***

Positively

Negatively

Not impacted

Please elaborate

Your answer

**Do you have any suggestion for the ALF to support intercultural dialogue work in consideration of the current situation? \***

Yes

No

Please elaborate

Your answer

**I am interested in having further virtual exchange sessions with the ALF intercultural citizenship educators \***

Yes

No

**If you are interested, please select how often:**

On a bi-monthly basis

on a monthly basis

**Which topics would you would like to be discussed in potential future virtual exchanges? \***

Your answer

Thank you for your time and thoughts!

If you have any questions regarding your participation in this Virtual Exchange or any other queries, do not hesitate to contact eleonora.insalaco@annalindhfoundation.org and aissam.benaissa@annalindhfoundation.org