

Connecting Actions

European Symposium

Building a Coalition of Civil Society Organisations for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and Developing a Joint Agenda to Promote Co-Existence and Tolerance

Paris 6, 7, 8 December 2017

Civil society organisations promote citizen-based, interreligious and intercultural dialogue and have been working for many years to provide people with a safe space. These organisations provide a comprehensive process which allows groups and individuals to understand each other, build social bonds, work together to enhance their ability to coexist and enhance their tolerance. In the past couple of years, numerous initiatives have been created in the face of terrorist incidents. Many of these grass-roots initiatives are highly dependent on the enthusiasm of local activists and sometimes need to learn from organisations that have been around for a longer time. In general, dialogue organisations are often too isolated from each other resulting in a detached and isolated work environment providing them no opportunity to collaborate despite their common mission and shared interest.

The goal of Connecting Actions is to build a coalition bringing together these isolated actors which will provide a conduit for them to share best practices, improve the quality of their efforts, increase the visibility of their work and enhance their work's credibility to ordinary citizens, decision-makers and the media. Furthermore, it is hoped that during the symposium a common agenda can be agreed upon that will empower and widen the impact of local dialogue mechanisms so that the process impacts individuals outside of those directly involved in the dialogue. An agenda of this nature would focus on building a stronger, more united society in the face of hate speech, hate crime, intolerance and terrorism. The initial meeting of the core organizations in this coalition occurred in 2016, and this event will build upon that meeting with the further aim to mobilize additional organizations to participate in this process.

This symposium seeks to assemble the core organisations that attended the initial meeting of the coalition to promote co-existence and dialogue in 2016. Additionally, the symposium will welcome new organisations vetted by the network's members, based on the objective of mobilizing as many like-minded European organizations as possible. The symposium will gather around 20 European CSO representatives and actors in the field of citizen-based dialogue.

The objectives of the symposium are:

- To formulate a joint agenda that seeks to promote tolerance and coexistence.
- To discuss the next steps in setting up Connecting Actions as a “living coalition”
- To mobilize additional stakeholder organizations with common agendas to cooperate and join forces within the framework of Connecting Actions.

Format and preliminary agenda:

The symposium will be broken down into a two-day workshop for core participants and a third day to communicate with external stakeholders as a way to extend the visibility of the newly formed coalition to other organisations working on tolerance and combating racism.

The organisers of the two-day workshop will utilise the recommendations of the draft ODHIR “Coalition Building Toolkit to Promote Tolerance” and use proven techniques and methodologies utilised by the CSO’s themselves when structuring and facilitating the discussions.

Day 1

On the first day, participating organisations will deepen their knowledge of their core mission and the process in achieving it, while also learning about indispensable aspects of non-profit work. They will be invited to discuss the founding vision of the future coalition. During the breaks, a market place activity will encourage participants to share their respective ideas and projects and initiate joint initiatives

9.00 – 13.00:

- General presentation of attending organisations
- Situation and activity reports
- Presentation of Connecting Actions objectives

14.00 – 18.00:

- Dialogue on defining the coalition (1):
 - identity
 - focus
 - vision
- Reciprocal delivery of practical trainings (Participants will be invited to lead some of those workshops while external trainers will lead others)
 - dialogue methodologies and conflict resolution skills,
 - organisational development (volunteer management, professionalization),
 - media training,
 - fundraising,
 - political advocacy, etc.

Day 2

On the second day, participants will continue to lay the foundations of the future coalition and discuss elements of strategy and governance. Working groups will be set up to continue this work after the Symposium. During the breaks, a market place activity will encourage participants to share their respective ideas and projects and initiate joint initiatives.

9.00 – 13.00:

- Reflexions on Day 1
- Dialogue on defining the coalition (2):
strategy,
resources,
stakeholders,
governance and structure
- Sharing tasks, responsibilities and roles

14.00 – 18.00:

- Working groups
- Adhering to the coalition
- Next steps and preparing the last day
- Evaluation

Day 3

The third day will be dedicated to introducing the field of inter identity dialogue to external actors such as CSO's working for equal opportunity, tolerance, against discrimination and combatting racism, through means other than dialogue (advocacy, minority empowerment, legal support, community organising, etc) It will also enable participants to present some of the conclusions of the previous days' discussions and reaffirm their will to continue to strengthen their bonds through the building of a coalition for citizen dialogue.

9.30 – 13.00

- Introductions of all participants and invitees.
- Presentation of some of the programs developed by participating organisations.
- Market place.

Following these three days, there will be continued comprehensive engagement with the organisations and through the working groups to institutionalize and reinforce the emerging coalition.

Connecting Actions



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