

The 7th Conference on Global Citizen Education

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On October 11th 2016 WFWPI (Women's Federation for World Peace International) UN Vienna Office; WFWP Austria with ACUNS (Academic Council on the United Nations System), invited representatives of the Diplomatic Community, civil society, political leaders, international NGOs and educators to the 7th Conference on Global Citizen Education: "New Paths to Social Inclusion for Safer Cities".

Mr. Georg Pfeifer, Directorate-General for Communication and Information at the Office in Austria of the European Parliament opened the conference expressing his thanks to the organizers for preparing this timely conference, briefly mentioning EU instruments that aim at safer cities, this being the 14th European Week of Regions and Cities, where important projects and innovative approaches to cities and regions have been showcased in Brussels.

Mr. Othmar Karas, Member of the European Parliament gave a Video message and expressed his gratitude to the organizers for launching the conference as it aims at seeking practical solutions to crucial challenges modern cities face, due to globalization and migration movements. For European cities to attain a more inclusive world and thus contribute to global solutions, it should be in our

interest to work on a rules-based world order that is rooted in multilateralism.

"Social Inclusion for Safer Cities" set the tone for the conference as the first panel took stock of the present situation. This panel being eloquently chaired by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the German Mission to the UN, **Mr. Roland Seegar**.

Dr. Hannes Swoboda, President of the International Institute for Peace, Former MEP, leader of the Socialist Faction in Brussels and City Counsellor for Urban Planning in Vienna, identified three central tasks that need to be considered in order to ensure social inclusion in cities: Firstly, to provide housing conducive to health and children's education; secondly, to ensure equal opportunities in school education; and lastly, to facilitate job opportunities for newcomers.

Adding a further dimension to the question of social inclusion **Dr. Yvonne Franz**, representing the Institute for Urban and Regional Research of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, emphasized the need of collecting empirical data on the areas of place attachment, social embeddedness ("sense of belonging") and compensation spaces outside immediate neighborhoods. She presented concrete results of her team's research project that were conducted in cooperation with municipal authorities of "super-diverse" cities such as Amsterdam, Stockholm and Vienna. *"Social inclusion is achieved when every*

human being in its individuality is accepted in society and able to participate in society as a fully accepted member".

Dipl.-Ing.in Shams Asadi confirmed that social inclusion is a multilayered process that requires the development of new networks. As the head of the Human Rights Office of the City of Vienna she gave a short overview of concrete actions aimed at integrating 40.000 newcomers; providing jobs and combatting radicalization and Anti-Semitism.

Ms. Anika Holterhof, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), analyzed the challenge of urbanization from the angle of crime and violence. After identifying the root causes of urban crime such as income inequality, unemployment, lack of youth inclusion and public services, financial crises, pointing out the paramount importance of prevention strategies. These specific strategies are targeted at a long-term safety governance approach that will ensure public resilience.

Dr. Michael Platzer, Academic Council on the UN System and Former Chief Operations UN Habitat, Nairobi elaborated further on the new problems arising with growing cities worldwide: "We are approaching a world where 5 billion people are living in cities." Dr. Platzer explained that cultural diversity is a matter of fact in large cities and is something we can learn to appreciate



by enabling minority groups to be represented in decision making bodies. Such minorities not only encompass ethnic and religious groups, but also include mothers, children and the elderly. The first panel was rounded up by an engaging Q+A session where the panelists replied to questions from the audience on immigration, the relationship between the academia and politics and the war on drugs.

At the end of the first session there was a Picture Presentation Donation by Vivien Kabar with the UNESCO City Club Vienna. This picture represents "the children who being lost in the system" Mag Pfeiffer received this picture on behalf of the EU House in Vienna. ("Art Against Violence" 2014 Awarded by the Interior Ministry and the Criminal Investigation Department Austria)

Children's Choir, European School Goldschlaggasse gave a colourful musical start to the second panel on "Global Citizen Education as a Multicultural Tool for Peaceful and Inclusive Cities".

Mr. Peter Zoehrer, founder of the Forum for Religious Freedom Europe opened Panel 2 by naming education a most powerful tool, emphasizing the need for very young children to be part of the integration- where friendships have no boundaries. Inclusion and tolerance is then a natural relationship for classmates early on in life, developing invaluable social skills towards welcoming other cultures.

VdN Dipl.-Päd. Doris Berki Uhlir, Director of the European Primary School Vienna delivered her subject: *"Transmitting Values of Openness to Foreign Cultures, Immigrants and Pluralism: A Vienna School as an Example"*. This educational model builds upon four pillars of (1) Europe, (2) language, (3) diversity, and (4) health. "Monolingualism is easy to cure", Mrs. Uhlir said as she explained

how the language programs offered at her school provide an environment of appreciating the diversity of European cultures. Then a short video was shown on a diversity project saying *"how nice that you are here"* presenting all the languages taught, at the European School.

Dr. jur. habil. Slawomir Redo, Senior Adviser at the Academic Council on the United Nations System in Vienna contrasted the concept of "the right to the city" to the idea of the right to sustainable development: *"Kids' Stuff? Justice Education in a Multicultural City"*. He emphasized that a universal sense of justice can be attained not only theoretically but also practically through urban policies that facilitate caring for a city's public and green spaces, and kindergartens. Emphasizing that a city's space is the 'space' for the United Nations sustainable development ecumenical concept, invoking 'shared responsibility' where Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) together with NGOs, Schools and Community leaders cooperate on safety and numerable social justice priorities with the City community at large. Urban participatory risk assessment tools, and local safety audits may be an instrument facilitating this. Citing the example of Zürich (Switzerland) Dr. Redo pointed out the positive educational impact green spaces can have on the social inclusion of migrant youths.

Dr. Amer Albayati, Islam and Terror Expert, and President of the Initiative Liberaler Muslime Österreich (ILMÖ): *"Looking for New Inroads into Making Culturally Inclusive Cities: Vienna as a Case in Point"*. Mentioning his own migration background, Dr. Albayati emphasized the importance of immigrants to respect the traditions of their new homelands. His appeal to citizens with migration background was to get engaged in

direct, open dialogue and to actively promote peaceful co-existence and harmony in diversity.

Mr. Hannes Kolar, Director of the Psychological Service of the Office of Youth and Family in Vienna, addressed the issue of trauma education for young people. *"Use of Technology for Traumatized Children"* and showed a video clip that introduces an emergency program that aims to help children and youth who have been severely affected by traumatic war experiences. His videos explain how professional psychological support can be obtained and are offered online in German language as well as Arabic and Farsi (see [link](#)).

Prof. Dr. Rita Haverkamp, Endowed Professor of Crime Prevention and Risk Management at the Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen/Germany, spoke about pre-school education in Munich kindergartens. *"Pre-school Education in the Munich Kindergartens"* While providing a whole range of statistical data on kindergartens and daycare centers, she emphasized that in Munich already 21.000 children below the age of three have a migration background (meaning that at least one parent is from a foreign country) compared to 17.000 children without migration background. This makes Munich more multicultural than Berlin. As Munich's number of inhabitants rises, the demand for kindergartens and daycare centers increases, thus more staff with systematic intercultural Teacher Training is needed she concluded.

Mr Peter Haider, Universal Peace Federation Austria, Director a four-fold father and grandfather, opened Panel 3 as chair: *"Safe Cities, the Role of Parents towards Social Inclusion and a Healthy Society"*, by stating that historically we can see that cities thrived and expanded when they took an inclusive approach.

Stella A. Attakpah, MSc. Managing Director, Opportunity and Risk Management Institute, Ghana : *"Self-development, an important factor in achieving sustainable development"*. Ms. Attakpah suggested the integration of meditation practice into the school system to enable students to find power and knowledge within. This would balance the education system, which focuses on the acquisition of knowledge to achieve grades. Meditation practice can overcome the sense of failure or panic resulting from fighting problems. She suggested that incorporating meditation practice could assist the health and education systems in achieving long-term sustainable development goals.



Mag. Josef Missethon Msc Med, Managing Director of Institute for Talent Development : *“Young unaccompanied refugees: No parents – no chance? How stability, values and goals can create a safe society. Experiences from practice”* Mag Missethon introduced the model boarding school project as a solution to the problem of unaccompanied refugee minors. The youth receive education in the German language, computing and IT skills, Austrian values and traditions. Local companies offer them apprenticeships to prepare them for professional life. The goal is to achieve well integrated young people who can contribute to society. The speaker concluded on a positive and hopeful note for the future.

Dr. Belinda Mikosz, retired Director of Psychology Service, Office of Youth and Family, City of Vienna : *“Different ways to provide quality education”* Dr. Belinda Mikosz focused on the importance of parents in the child’s development and the limitations despite parents’ best intentions. When in stress, parents need to be open for support and feedback; they need to be involved in their children’s education and the local community. Dr Mikosz set up a seven-week educational programme on parenting to explain types of misbehaviour and the reasons behind and the need for children to be listened to and encouraged.

Mag. Hannes Kolar, Director of Psychology Service, Office of Youth and Family, City of Vienna : *„Exbärte“ – Video guide for parents* „, Mag Kolar noticed young people’s inability to communicate about their mental and emotional suffering resulting from war experiences. Thus he created a series of videos made available through a free downloadable app. ‘The expert’ in the video – a cartoon bear – shows role models and methods of interaction with the child / youth in difficulty. The contents, which

help youth to understand difficult emotional situations, encourage them to communicate and seek help.

Panel 4 **“Core Value Pillars: Education of Heart, Enabling a Healthy Lifestyle, Best Practices”** chaired by Elisabeth Riedl, WFWPI UN Office Vienna, Director

Dr. Maria Riehl, Founder WFWP Austria: *“Four Pillars of Love in a Family”*. Dr. Riehl is a mother of five children and a grandmother of three grandchildren. She spoke about the importance of parental care for a child, since in contrary to animals, humans are completely helpless, when they are born. We owe our life to our parents. By the love and guidance of our parents we mature to become husband and wife, creating a family on our own. Nurturing and caring responds to the natural ability of women – giving guidance to the nature of men. Both capacities are needed and complement each other. Love is invisible but we see the results of it. *“The time has come to change the world not through the logic of power, but through the logic of love.”* Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, founder WFWPI.

Mag. Richard Veres, Educator in Bratislava, Slovakia *„Healthy Character Education at school”* “ carries out a program at schools for the prevention of risky behaviour. There is a 50% divorce rate in Slovakia. The youngsters often sense that something doesn’t function in the right way in the family. 50% of the parents don’t keep their promise to remain faithful to each other. In order to stop the vicious circle of family break up, it takes interventions on all levels: children, teenagers and adults. The children and teenagers need support in preparing for a loving, lasting marriage relationship by abstaining from premature sexual activities. *“Parents who educate their children, enable them to educate their own children in future”*.

Zita Kiedler, BEd Teacher at NMS Anton-Sattler-Gasse, Vienna; *„Peer Mediation, a Project in Junior High School”* This school has 450 students from many countries. The teachers, too, are from different countries. Being from diverse cultural backgrounds, the students often fight. The teachers don’t want to get involved in settling the conflicts among their students. This is the reason for starting a peer mediation program. This program teaches the kids how to solve their problems as: rumours and gossip; dissolution of friendship; provocations; minor quarrels; cheating on schoolwork. It takes three requirements for a successful mediation: ongoing relationship between parties, interest in resolving dispute and agreement to work with mediator.

Mrs. Fran E. Wright, Programme Director of UNESCO Club Vienna and Ms. Foteini Kanatsouli: *“Peace lies in our Hands”* They presented their diversity programme by showing a video and talked about the value of Art education for children, in order to process their experiences from fleeing the country and war type situations. These children have migration backgrounds and are underprivileged. Issues those children are dealing with, are mobbing and clothing. Art Education in a group provides a way of expression with each other on canvas towards integration and inclusion. Visions Towards Peace. According to Mrs. Wright the weapon industry is the real problem. *“Who is behind the weapon fabrication and the destabilization of certain areas?”*

Rounding up the conference Dr. **Slawomir Redo** gave closing remarks, promoting soft education tools, thanked Elisabeth Riedl for the organisation of the event, and expressed hope that the government can look more at NGO work. 70 participants were present during the day.

Dr. Michael Platzer invited the presenters and organizers of the conference to come on stage, accompanied by the rap song: “Peace lies in our hands”, produced by UNESCO City Club.

A message of thanks to the House of the European Union, members of the Diplomatic community and the United Nations Missions, all the Presenters and also The UNESCO City Club and Vivian Kabar for the Donation of the picture from the award winning series “Sinking Dreams”.