

## Peace in Europe

World War I brought a high level of destruction and suffering in Europe and all over the world. Even in 2018, a hundred years after the end of World War I, we are still facing conflicts, wars, hate and injustice. In many European countries, these problems seem to be far away or not even occurring. The increasing frequency and intensity of the acts of violence against migrants, refugees and other minorities are the top of the iceberg. Discrimination, stereotypes and intolerance have always been present under the surface. However, MIJARC Europe stands for another vision: a world without violence, in which human beings respect each other's rights, preserve creation and live in respectful coexistence. We believe in peace!

In MIJARC Europe we believe, that the absence of war alone is not enough to have peace. Many other aspects are necessary for a real state of peace. For us, peace is when people are able to resolve their conflicts without violence, and, can work together to improve the quality of their lives.

Peace<sup>1</sup> is when:

- Everyone lives in safety, without fear or threat of violence, and no form of violence is tolerated in law or in practice;
- Everyone is equal before the law, the systems for justice are trusted, and fair and effective laws protect people's rights;
- Everyone is able to participate in shaping political decisions and the government is accountable to the people;

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<sup>1</sup> The definition is taken from Mrs. Rita Carneiro's (from the UN? – the position needs to be added) presentation on "Peace, Migrations, Refugees & Us: are we at war?", Ribamar, Portugal, 05/07/2018

- Everyone has fair and equal access to the basic needs for their wellbeing – such as food, clean water, shelter, education, healthcare and a decent living environment;
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to work and make a living, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physical integrity or any other aspect of identity.

This peaceful world is not a utopia for us! We want our creative power to be a role model for people of all generations, even for those who have moved away from this vision of peace or can no longer believe in it. With this plea, we want to reach out those who want to work with us for the goal of achieving peace - in politics and the church, globally, within society and privately. We do this in the awareness and with the concern that even today, we still live in a time in which we must be vigilant.

Which politics, which economy, which way of dealing with nature and which way of dealing with each other do we want to live so that we reach a real state of peace?

### **What can we do as MIJARC Europe?**

The topic of conflicts and peace continues to represent a challenge. In order to reach peace in Europe, MIJARC Europe as a network for rural and catholic youth in Europe, which unites two hundred thousand youngsters, has tried to organize activities and create spaces where intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding are the foundation of peace. In reaction to the raise of the extremism and violent radicalization in the last years<sup>2</sup> and the needs to reach peace in Europe, the General Assembly of MIJARC Europe took the decision to dedicate the work programme of 2018 to promote cooperation with our neighbors and within Europe, and, to build a peaceful vision towards the others and the world. The work programme involves youth in local, national and European levels and has the following activities:

<sup>2</sup> Consult the Position Paper of MIJARC Europe on Extremism in Europe:

[https://mijarceuropeblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/position-paper-on-extremism\\_mijarc-europe\\_final-version.pdf](https://mijarceuropeblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/05/position-paper-on-extremism_mijarc-europe_final-version.pdf)

- The local activity “If Only”, where the members of MIJARC Europe from Europe and Armenia wrote articles about the causes/effects of the conflict and the lessons to be learned;
- The Youth Peace Camp “ A call for peace for all” – The emphasis was set on the participants' personal relation to peace and conflict and on equipping them with intercultural competencies;
- International simulation: “Messages from the future” - a unconventional activity taking the participants to a meeting in 2068, to look at what went wrong in the past and why global peace is still not achieved;
- Traveling exhibition - educational exhibition including materials from previous activities and traveling from all over Europe. The exhibition will be part of the Peace Festival organized by two member organizations of MIJARC Europe, KLJB-Germany and MRJC-France. The peace festival called "Rendezvous - International Festival for Peace" will take place in Besancon, France, between the 2nd - 5th August 2018. The festival will gather about 2000 young people from Europe and other continents.

We believe that the peacebuilding process needs time and contribution from different groups of society. That is why the “European vision towards interconnected world” Commission together with the European Board of MIJARC Europe and its Member Organizations will continue to campaign for peacebuilding in Europe.

- Supporting the priorities of the Council of Europe and the European Commission to have an inclusive and peaceful society and using non-formal educational methods, MIJARC Europe will implement online and offline projects (such as International Seminars, Training Courses, Youth Exchanges, Study Visits, Study Sessions etc.) in order to strengthen the peacebuilding process.

- Organize awareness rising European campaigns in order to promote peace and intercultural dialog.
- Integrate intercultural training courses and lessons on how to reduce the stereotypes against the minorities and prepare educational materials.
- Organize advocacy campaigns on human rights and citizenship education in order to make policy reforms.
- In our group-lessons and activities, we will convey content on topics such as group-based hostility to humanity, international solidarity to empower and encourage the participants to raise their voice against injustice.
- We will acquire and pass on media competence so that we recognize fake news, stereotype-based news, and conspiracy theories and filter bubbles as such and acquire knowledge about reliable sources.
- Through different educational programs, we will prepare our members to have strong arguments against racism and to raise their participation in civic life.
- MIJARC Europe will support its Member Organizations to plan bilateral cooperation and fight for peace in their countries and regions, implementing short-term and long-term activities.

Because peace does not come by itself, but must be actively tackled, we will also in the future:

- Seek dialogue with other denominations and religions,
- Living partnership work with rural youth groups from all continents and aiming at inter-cultural learning and cooperation at eye level,
- Initiate projects with and for refugees and working for global understanding,
- Take action when social peace is threatened in our communities,

- Raise our concerns in discussions with politicians and church representatives and representatives of economy and society,
- Participate in non-violent protests, petitions and demonstrations or make use of our right of resistance when other means of political influence are not enough or the moment demands our civil courage.

Because peace efforts must be implemented at the political level, we emphasize our central demands, we need:

- Prevention instead of intervention,
- Massive expansion of civil conflict management while at the same time reducing the budget resources for the defense budget. We need worldwide disarmament and abandonment of the deterrence politics, taking special account of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, the consistent implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at all levels as a guarantee for peaceful coexistence,

A hundred years after the First World War, we continue to learn lessons from the war and the peace building process. At that time the question "What endangers peace?" came too briefly, however, today we continue to ask ourselves how to use resources, how to deal with other sovereign countries, how to arrange our society, but not sufficiently.

The memory of the end of the First World War is an appeal to responsibility: we must consider the consequences of our actions, calculate them, weigh them up and finally draw the right conclusions that aim

at the well-being of our fellow human beings and our planet. Only if we really want peace in all its facets, for all people and all times, it will become possible.

As Christians, we must not see this as excessive demands and shrink from utopia. We must do our part, our own little contribution, and, never stop advocating because the faith in the fulfilment of this dream does not diminish, but increases every day.

We want peace! We believe that peace can be realized! We are ready to make our contribution and inspire others with this great vision!

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<sup>i</sup> The Position Paper is written by the participants of “A call for Peace for all” Youth Peace Camp coming from the member organizations of MIJARC Europe. This Position Paper is based on the Position Paper of KLJB, member organization of MIJARC Europe from Germany.

The Position Paper has been approved by the General Assembly -2018 of MIJARC Europe.