

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are young Christian activists from different churches around the world who are committed to the principles of tolerance, diversity, integration of the minorities, human rights and inclusion. Our main goal is to enhance youth involvement in the current discussions on painful and difficult topics for our societies, which are faced worldwide.

We believe that **tolerance** is nurtured by mutual respect and acceptance. It is important to pay serious attention to the voices of those involved in intolerant dynamics instead of assuming that one's own background is enough in order to build a proper opinion on thorny issues.

We believe that **social diversity** is a richness for both the church and our countries. Instead of trying to shape social uniformity, a much healthier attitude is to acknowledge our differences and to encourage people to express their opinions with respect and don't fear to get a negative reaction from our opponents. These social differences provide strength to a society which refuses to treat minorities as less-worthy and does not exclude them. In order to perform successful dialogues much more attention should be paid to common values, hopes, fears and desires. It is extremely important to overcome a social state of negation regarding the existences of social, sexual, political, religious or national minorities in modern multi-cultural societies. An approach that is based on human empathy and sincerity is a required tool for integrating minorities.

Finally, we believe that **youth involvement** regarding leadership is an important tool towards providing a youth-friendly and future-orientated environment.

The topics mentioned above, which were discussed in the Lingua Franca Leadership Training (organized by WSCF-E and funded by Otto per Mille), are relevant to the realities that our churches are experiencing, considering that inclusion and ecumenism and also gender rights are a crucial part of the challenges that not just youth faces in nowadays churches in different denominations.

We believe that it is our role as youth, to not remain silent, as we are the future of our churches and are the guarantee of the ongoing faith and of the glorification of the name of our Lord. We believe that nowadays the world needs the church more than ever, because it is facing difficult and crucial challenges regarding freedom, immigration, acceptance and experiences war, famines, hate speech and crimes. The church could take the role of the leader by giving a positive example on how the world should live in unity for the church by being the harbinger of the kingdom of God on earth.

But this will never happen without unity within and between the church, without solidarity and tolerance between the churches of different traditions, and we will never reach that goal without having real discussions, shaped by acceptance, honesty and equality, and real integration and inclusion of the youth and off all the minority groups also on a decision-making level.

Diversity never means division, diversity is richness.

“UNOS PRO OMNIBUS, OMNES PRO UNO “

Church also plays an important role in modern society, because still for a lot of people in different contexts church may resemble a moral and spiritual authority, and its position is being held important.

We must always remember that the church is the light that guides to God, it fulfills the role of a moral compass of the society and its role is to give whatever the society is lacking in the contemporary time and cure the wounds the society is experiencing for example through acts of hate, through intolerance and discrimination.

The last thing to mention is, that the church division affects the very identity of the church as “the one body of our Lord Jesus Christ”; as the representative of love and forgiveness, as the mother that bears her children in love regardless of their positions, race, gender or faith... Therefore, we ask the church leaders to take steps towards each other, to work on ecumenism and on breaking down the barriers that separate us. That separation doesn't just harm the internal perception of church, but also the outsider's perspective, which might be a reason for decreasing numbers of members and ebbing influence in secular questions.

We discussed a lot and collected concrete suggestions for churches, national movements and international and ecumenical organizations. We identified the main topics, which are ecumenism, youth involvement and minority integration which can be achieved through applying the concept of a safe space. After our talks and discussions, we think that it is important to unite on common values and ideas. After our discussions we think that diplomatic relations between churches are the basis for ecumenism and the main goal of ecumenism in modern society is to promote mutual respect and acceptance.

We learned during the training, what it means to create a safe space, which is a concept that can be a useful tool in minority integration, but also helpful in any sensitive dialogue. It is important for everyone to speak openly about needs and thoughts and feelings. Giving you one example, we suggest that it is crucial to ask of the very beginning of every meeting to each participant which pronoun(s) this person prefers. This helps people with a different gender identity to feel accepted and it avoids discrimination. It should also be a common understanding that everything that had been shared in the group should stay in the group and is not be shared outside the safe space. During a meeting or an event, we are speaking a lot. That's why language is important. Try to use not discriminating, gender neutral language or include female examples. Talking about sexual harassment should not be a taboo topic, but we should talk about it openly. Also letting everyone agree to respect personal space can help avoiding intercultural misunderstandings. It is also important to define hate language and don't keep silent when somebody is using it. A group can explain each other, why this is harmful and find a better way together to talk about something.

As youth is the future of every country, it is important to involve it in our churches. The first way to do so, is to create a platform for youth engagement (for example events, conferences, youth organizations....) Second by giving them the possibility to take real decisions. They will feel that they have real responsibility in churches' life.

Finally, we believe that including youth representatives in church boards or councils will provide the possibility for young people to participate in churches decision making processes, which will promote a much more inter-generational leadership that could have positive impact on society in long term perspective.

We are looking forward to receiving your answers and comments, do not hesitate to consult us in any questions and concerns. We are looking forward to being involved with you!