

Capacity Building – Spring 2016

According to UNESCO, Global Citizenship Education nurtures respect for all, builds a sense of belonging to a common humanity and fosters a sense of responsibility to become active global citizens. It aims to empower learners to assume active roles to face and resolve global challenges and to proactively contribute to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world. (See: <http://en.unesco.org/gced>). Keeping the recent developments on the global and local level, Living Together especially in inclusive societies becomes a challenge and a goal.

The 7th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) was held on 26 April in Baku, Azerbaijan. During this meeting, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Education Mr. Qian Tang, emphasized "the immense need for social cohesion and intercultural dialogue in these turbulent times", highlighting UNESCO's work on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Of particular interest is Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on education, that is, promoting inclusive and quality education for all as well as life-long learning. He further underlined that Global Citizenship Education "nurtures respect for all, a sense of belonging to a common humanity and helps learners become responsible global citizens in a diverse and increasingly complex world". (See: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/living_together_in_inclusive_societies_a_challenge_and_a_goal/#.V06-lvI96M8)

How can we understand this? Learning to Live Together, as necessary for the survival of humanity, is highly dependent on Learning HOW to live together, beginning by understanding and accepting other people's histories, cultures, traditions and values. The challenge is difficult since people often have the tendency to overestimate their own abilities, or those of the group to which they belong, and entertain prejudices against those who are different than themselves. Furthermore, the general climate of competition that prevails in both national and international economies tends to turn competitiveness and personal success into modern values to be achieved at all costs. Hence, how can we overcome the negative sides to these tendencies and 'learn to live together'?

During the second semester, the P(IEC) students, who participated in the course Capacity Building and Innovation answered this question by designing and developing four projects that aimed at discovering and building the capacity of the other through the heart of education: the pillar Learning to Live Together.

Within the framework of this pillar, two projects explored different paradigms of cooperation by exploring some contemporary theories of learning, researching some aspects of the context, content and mechanics. Furthermore, they combined core subject teaching with intercultural education for learning to live together. They identified innovative pedagogies and tools, promoted innovative practices in intercultural education with the aim to enhance the professional development of teachers.

The next two projects touched upon integration and well-being as well as the promotion of mutual understanding and peaceful exchanges which encourage peaceful resolution of conflicts. The projects aimed to empower students from different cultures in order to bridge differences. Through the organization of an event, the students attempted to overcome the prejudices and stigmas surrounding international students and bridge the gap between themselves and the local Belgian students. Finally, a Free Hug Campaign took place in the city center of Leuven. The students envisioned a world where peace and harmony are freely shared between all people and can thereby lead to a global community of love. Their campaign aimed at enhancing community spirit and cohesion as well as encouraged positive gestures and attitudes. Free Hugs Campaign video: in attachment.