

## 4<sup>th</sup> International ECPD Youth Forum Pula CULTURE OF PEACE: MIGRANT CRISIS AND THE YOUTH (23-25 September 2016, Pula, Croatia)

### CONCEPT NOTE AND PROMOTIONAL ALERT

The EUROPEAN CENTER for PEACE and DEVELOPMENT [ECPD], Belgrade, 1984, derives from the United Nations Charter following the Establishment of the University for Peace, San José, Costa Rica, 1980. In keeping with its mission, the ECPD promotes peace, fosters reconciliation, and supports both socio-economic development and international cooperation.

The Youth Forum [YF], 2013 was launched in close cooperation with the Association of European Border Regions, Finland, the Youth Association of Serbia and the Center for Local Regional Development. It is one of the ECPD'S intelligently promising products. Proceedings of the first two YF both held in Belgrade have been published in **Youth for maintaining peace: the role of knowledge** [ECPD, 2015].

In 2015, the reach of the Youth Forum was extended, to include the support and presence of Long Island University [LIU], Brooklyn where the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum will be held in 2017. This symbolizes international recognition that today's Youth is better informed and prepared than earlier generations as well as thirsty for knowledge, new experience and empowerment. We note that LIU and other American institutions have conducted several study tours in the Balkan region [2014, 5 and 6]. The ECPD is also making efforts to interact with other YF such as UNESCO.

Investing in Youth for a better future necessitates improved mobilization and as a pressure group with enhanced organizational competence and research. Informational, educational and training gaps must be reduced. State and societal discrimination must be better understood and the application of human security and reconciliation processes ensured. Investing in Youth for a better future must be framed within a well recognized vision supported by Europe and the political world of the Balkans. ECPD is currently investing in the development of programs in education for peace and tolerance, health and international diplomacy and human security and public health.

This year, 2016, Istria is host to the Youth Forum. It provides a useful platform for Youth to express opinions and take leadership roles on current issues facing the Balkans [SEE], which remains geopolitically sensitive and needs to catch up with Europe as for example in health and well being indicators. These issues include culture and peace as well as austerity, migration and terrorism. The Pula Forum will provide momentum for education and research activities and within ECPD programmes and projects and especially, **the Balkans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**, the ECPD provides Youth with an additional pathway for competence building, adaptability improvement, and for the sharpening of decision making abilities. Furthermore, cementing relations between ECPD and SEEHN can help improve health disaster management, strengthen schools of public health as well as add support for the strategies: WHO Health 2020 and Growth Strategy SEE 2020.

The European Center for Peace and Development represents a strong presence and constitutes a useful niche in which regional understanding can be cultivated. In that niche, it was realised that Youth lacks adequate role models and is in urgent need of special attention. From it the ECPD Youth Forum emerged. Its purpose is to bring Balkan Youth together and into the main stream. It is a means to encourage more balanced regional development and improved interregional relations. In parallel, it will prod Europe to better support the Balkan region. ECPD emphasizes cultures for peace, religious tolerance, respect of human rights and a society for all ages. It believes that it can take out some of the bumps on the **Road to Dignity by 2030** as outlined by the UN Secretary-General.

Transformation of the lives of Youth and the protection of the planet are vitally essential for unity and sustainability. One vital ingredient is an alternative for Youth to consumerism and materialism and a meaningful sense of hope in lieu of hopelessness with social and scientific tools for positive action.

Come to Pula! It will be a fun event, with camaraderie, cultural moments and inter-youth communication. Enjoy! Be inspired! Join in a better chance to transform lives and change society.

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