Let´s talk about sexuality: 
The Explosive Power of Taboo Subjects

Report of the study session held by
Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe
and
World Student Christian Federation in Europe
in co-operation with the
European Youth Centre
of the Council of Europe

European Youth Centre Budapest
9th - 14th of May
2016

This report gives an account of various aspects of the study session. It has been produced by and is the responsibility of the educational team of the study session. It does not represent the official point of view of the Council of Europe.
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Acknowledgements
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1. Executive summary

32 participants representing 20 different countries spent a week together for the Study Session “Let’s talk about sexuality: The Explosive Power of Taboo Subjects” at the European Youth Centre in Budapest between 9th and 14th of May 2016. The Study Session gathered people from diverse backgrounds creating intercultural and ecumenical environment where everyone had a chance to express their opinion in a safe space. Creating a safe space had an important role as the topic was so sensitive.

Throughout the week the main issues were presented: what is a taboo subject? how to start unwrapping these topics? are there some taboos that should remain taboos? are we having troubles even saying the word sexuality? have we already started talking about marginalised groups, sexual orientation, etc? The non-formal education methodology used allowed participants on the one hand to participate more in their own learning by guiding their own discussions and introducing their own topics and on the other hand to enhance their own learning beyond cognitive.

The invited guests brought their own expertise to the discussion. Dr Konstantinos Kenanidis and Dr Renato Lings presented a biblical, theological and ecclesiological perspective approach on sexuality and sexual orientation during a panel discussion and representatives of local organisations from Budapest that deal with the topics related to the Study Session, Rena Katona and Daniel Holländer, familiarized the participants of the study session with the Hungarian context. Rena Katona from Ars Erotica led a workshop concerning sexual education and Daniel Holländer gave a talk about the Rainbow Foundation and Pride event in Budapest providing insights on governmental decisions in Hungary.

During the week participants discovered that there are different kinds of taboos for different people and what may be a taboo topic for some maybe a widely-accepted discussion/reality for others. For some, own community or church doesn’t want to talk about sexuality much, so even the word sexuality is more or less a taboo. For others, own community or church might be already talking about how to handle same-sex marriage. Recognising this as a challenge may open up for further discussions and offer more possibilities to initiate dialogue. Therefore, this Study Session succeeded in raising awareness of the topic of sexuality overall. Also, the Study Session offered a platform for open and honest discussion, mainly due to the safe space that was created in the European Youth Centre and it is still lasting in a Facebook group of the participants, where they share articles and other relevant material. During the final day, participants created their own action plans fitted to the needs of their own community or church.

The Study Session also fostered re-connection of the participants coming from various member organisations with the core structures (both WSCF-Europe and EYCE are umbrella organisations). The Study Session was a good platform to develop better understanding and cooperation between the two organisations as well as to foster personal connections between the staff members. The areas of expertise of the two organisations were expanded through involvement with the theme.
2. Introduction to the Study Session

EYCE and WSCF-E had been working together before around this topic and as previous trainings showed, the whole concept of gender and sexuality wasn’t clear to young people and there were some difficulties to talk about it freely. The needs of the young people in the ecumenical movement with regards to the theme were identified and the result was to have a training where, in a safe space, the participants could talk about taboo subjects.

EYCE and WSCF-E jointly organised a Study Session in 2012 called “Gender: Revised!”. The aim of that activity was to enhance the recognition and positive use of gender plurality among young people in order to further promote an inclusive view to all gender identities and to build gender partnerships in society and churches. Through the objectives and the thematic focus of the Study Session, participants explored and touched many aspects of a person’s life and discussed many different ways how gender is manifested within society.

The main aim for this Study Session was to empower young people to fully understand concepts of gender and sexuality in order for them to address these issues in their communities, towards inclusive and tolerant societies and churches.

The aim has been translated into objectives of the Study Session:

1. To train participants to create a safe environment where a young person can freely discuss their own sexuality/sexual identity.
2. To clarify terminology related to gender and sexuality and understand distinctions between them.
3. To analyse why sexuality is a taboo subject among people of faith.
4. To understand different mechanisms of discrimination around the topic and how to counteract them.
5. To equip young people with tools and methods on the issues of gender and sexuality in order to take action.

The main issues discussed were challenges related to sexuality and gender in the countries and churches as represented by the participants, gender roles and images (What is a “perfect” male/female like?) as well as gender identity and gender expressions, terminology and definitions related to gender, gender-based discrimination cases, different denominational (theological) perspectives on sexuality being a taboo, Hungarian practitioners’/activist’s views in the area of sexual education and LGBT+ rights, campaigning and advocacy, how to create a safe space, follow-up and action planning, Bible-based perspective on homosexuality, gender-focused hate speech/joke on Twitter, coming out and multiple discrimination.

As the preparing organisations are Christian faith based organisations, the daily schedule gave space for denominational and ecumenical prayers that were also planned according to the theme. Pastoral care was also available throughout the week. Home groups, led by one preparatory team member, were a way of giving feedback and sharing own feelings within a smaller group. Hope groups gathered together daily after official sessions to discuss the day.
Some of the program was based on volunteering participants. The evening program was prepared by Social Committee and prayers by Prayer Committee.

3. The participants

Our Study Session brought together 32 participants, including the preparatory team, from 20 different countries. The participants were coming from the member organisations networks and beyond (there was an open online application form provided). The participants were mostly students (various fields) coming from different Christian denominations. All of them had either experience in the theme of sexuality or were interested in it. Three participants from non CoE member states were invited as well as two non-Europeans living in Europe.

Participants were selected by the preparatory team and they were balanced based on nationality, gender, age and denomination. Application form was provided to ask about motivation, how people would contribute, what would they like to learn and to bring participants’ previous knowledge visible.

The participants came from the following countries:

Armenia
Austria
China
Denmark
Egypt
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Italy
Kosovo
Lebanon
Malta
Norway
Romania
Russia
United Kingdom

The Study Session had two main participant profiles: there were participants with a general interest in the topic of sexuality and how to work with this topic and participants with a specific interest in discussing issues relating to LGBT+ and how to to work with these topics in their communities or churches.
**4. The Preparatory Team**

The following persons composed the Preparatory Team, which was in charge of planning and implementing the study session.

Satu Koikkalainen, EYCE, Czech Republic, EYCE Treasurer

Jakub Niewiadomski, EYCE, Poland, EYCE Volunteer

Pawel Pustelnik, EYCE, United Kingdom, EYCE Volunteer

Natia Tsintsadze, WSCF-E, Italy, WSCF-E Regional Secretary

Pavlina Manavska, WSCF-E, Germany, WSCF-E Co-opted Member

Pawel Cecha, WSCF-E, Belgium, WSCF-E Thematic Coordinator

Maria Koutatzi, senior trainer, educational advisor on behalf of CoE

Yuliya Stankevich, trainer, participated as an observer/rapporteur as a part of her job shadowing task in the CoE TRAYCE programme.

The team met each other once in EYCB and weekly through Skype meetings. All the plans were shared within online platform and the documents were editable by all. The whole planning process started after summer 2015 and the last members were called to the team by the end of the year 2015.

**5. Guests**

**dr Renato Lings**
Attended a panel discussion. He provided a protestant theological perspective of the issues related to homosexuality.

**dr Konstantinos Kenanidis**
Attended a panel discussion. He provided an orthodox theological perspective on homosexuality.

Both of the guest speakers first participated in a common panel discussion but afterwards had a separate Q&A session with participants.

**Daniel Holländer**
Provided insight on Rainbow Foundation, organiser of Budapest Pride events, and current and broad overview of the situation of LGBT+ people in Hungary.
Reka Katona
Hosted a local visit to Ars Erotica, organisation that offers sexual education. She gave a workshop showcasing the methods used in the sexual education in Hungary, also its challenges and opportunities.

6. Venue of the Study Session

The venue of the Study Session was the European Youth Center Budapest (EYCB, Zivatar utca 1-3, 1024 Budapest, Hungary)

The venue provided all places needed for individual reflection, group work and plenary sessions. Also informal activities, which helped form a working group and a safe space, were possible in EYCB. Disco room and sauna hosted many further discussions starting from official plenary sessions.

More information about the venue can be found at www.coe.int/youth.

7. Timetable and Day by Day Programme

Sunday, 8th May 2016

Arrival of participants
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Icebreakers

The evening session had welcome words from the organisers, and some name and ice-breaking games. The participants started some conversations during the speed-dating game, and continue taking afterwards, with non-formal time. Though it was an arrival day with travels during the day, approximately half of the group stayed longer in the common space, talking to each other. This also helped new people who arrived later to meet some of them and smoothly enter the group.

Speed-dating
Participants were divided into two lines, facing each other and forming pairs. Everyone was told to come up with some facts of themselves. The pairs had 30 seconds to tell the facts to each other. When time was up, one of the two lines moved one person to the left and 30 seconds started again.

Map
Everyone was told to take a place in the room, as the room was a one big map of Europe. After finding own place, the map was introduced country by country.

**Human bingo**
Bingo chart was made beforehand containing interesting facts about people, for example “this person has been to every continent, this person has a cat, this person has been to sauna”. The participants needed to discuss with each other and find the people who have done the mentioned things. When the chart was full, the person had a bingo and got a prize from the game leader.

**Monday, 9th May 2016**

09:00  Prayer
09:30  Opening with Introduction to Study Session,
Intro of aims & objectives of the Study Session/ Programme
(EYCE, WSCF-E, EYCB, CoE, European Youth Foundation, NHSM)
11:00  Break
11:30  Contract & fears and expectations
13:00  Lunch
15:00  Country & denominational situation
16:30  Break
17:00  Country & denominational situation
18:00  Home groups
19:00  Prayer
19:30  Dinner
21:00  International banquet

The whole preparatory team took part in the first two sessions where the participants played some ice-breaking games. Anca-Ruxandra Pandea, Educational Advisor, welcomed the group on behalf of CoE and organising EYCE and WSCF-E were introduced to the group.

Hopes and fears of the participants were collected and the main aim and objectives of the Study Session were presented.

Expectations, hopes and fears:
Participants were given coloured paper cut in the shape of T-shirts, pants and socks, each symbolizing their hopes, fears and expectations. They wrote down at least three on each of them, anonymously. Once they were done, they were hanged in a “laundry area” that was improvised in the back of the plenary room. At the end, they were invited to walk around and read what the others wrote. This “laundry area” was kept visible until the end of the study session.

The opening sessions continued with introduction about intercultural dialogue and non-formal education. Practicalities and house rules were presented and based on those, the participants had a chance to create a group contract that they signed to follow the whole week (appendix 3).
Participants were introduced also to the Council of Europe and it’s Youth Department by Educational Advisor Maria Koutatzi.

Country & denominational situation
Participants were asked beforehand to prepare the presentations about the realities and experiences of their own countries and denominations in regard to the gender and sexuality issues. They were asked to focus on the main issues and problems young people face and to reflect about the reasons and causes of these problems. Participants were divided in groups to share the situations in their countries and denominations and later all groups presented their work. The following questions were given to the participants to help start the discussions.

How the differences between sexual identity, sexual expression and gender/sex is understood in your country / denomination?
What are the taboo issues in your countries and denominations?
What is the teaching of the Churches in regard to gender and sexuality in your country?
What you would like to know/hear from other realities?

Group 1
Norway and Denmark has both registered partnerships for people of same sex, it’s actually been 4 years that they introduced marriages
Bishops in Denmark introduces blessed partnerships for registered gay marriages, also
Germany and Norway
Lebanon and FYROM have none of these civil rights

Group 2
Austria/Greece, UK, Kosovo, Armenia
Armenia has 0 tolerance, and the UK is the most tolerant country of those mentioned towards sexual expression, Greece is moving this way.
Austria - Lutheran church accept same sex marriages
Kosovo: the east is more liberal, and the west is more conservative.
According to the Constitution in 2008 a norm allowing gay marriages was made, but no couple applied to marry so far (so the government made a reward for the 1st marriage)
Some of the groups mentioned dominance of men against women (especially Nigeria), also towards LGBTQ+ people, e.g. criminal prosecutions for being gay
Chech Republic: Religious minorities are in the same line as other minorities (10% of population)
In many couple’s queer people cannot receive any blessing, one cannot even pray for gay people.

Group 3
Armenia, Finland, Poland
The group took a few dimensions and located countries on the timeline on specific criteria:
(1) Education on sexuality and gender and (2): Gender roles from most traditional/conservative (Armenia, India, Romania), Poland and Italy in the middle, and progressive France and Finland.
Legislation (rights of LGBTQ people)
Armenia, India, Poland have not introduced any norms to ensure rights of LGBTQ people, Italy is in the middle. In France and Finland the legislation is ok regarding LGBT people, but not to trans people.
Taboo: India as the country with most taboo on sexuality issues, and Armenia close to the conservative part of the timeline, with Poland, Finland, France and Italy as less taboo issues.

Group 4
The attitudes of the church to sexuality and LGBTQ were discussed:
In most cases the church rejects LGBTQ people.
But there are some (reform church in Poland, Evangelical church in Italy), that are accepting people.
Gay marriages: Refused completely in Italy, Poland and India
Evangelical church in Italy and Mainland protestant church in France accept.
Finland – they can pray for people, but not for the union (couple)
Though the group stressed that those churches accepting LGBT(Q) people are very small, e.g.
reform church in Poland, France, Evangelical church in Italy and Finland. And the Armenian and Catholic in Italy are very influential.

Commonly shared point: there is a monopoly of men in churches, affecting women and LGBTQ+ people.

In the evening there was Intercultural banquet, which is commonly used in EYCE and WSCF-E events. All the participants were told to bring something to eat and drink from their countries.
The food and drinks were presented by locals and then all shared them. This is a very good way of starting to get to know other cultures.

**Tuesday, 10\(^{th}\) May 2016**

09:00  Prayer
09:30  Gender-in-a-box
11:00  Break
11:30  Defining terms & Genderbread
13:00  Lunch
15:00  Case studies (when sexuality is an issue)
16:30  Break
17:00  Individual contemplation
18:00  Home groups
18:30  Prayer
19:00  Dinner
21:00  Movie night (Sex and the Church, Roma Boys)

Gender-in-a-box
Participants were divided into two groups. Each group received materials (magazines, markers, flipchart paper). One group was brainstorming on woman’s, another on men's roles (on how “real woman” or “real man” should look and act like). Participants looked through the magazines and used them as illustrations. Facilitator told the participants they shouldn’t limit themselves to what they have found in the magazines, but think of their own childhood, school years or adolescence and contribute with the messages they have received about what men and women should be like. After this activity, explanation that collective name for the list of characteristics
that groups came up with is “gender roles” and that they are presented to us as “boxes” into which women and men are expected to fit in. A discussion followed around the main issues raised by the exercise using following questions as a guide:

- Is it easy to stay in the boxes? Why?
- In what ways are we motivated to stay in, or try to get into boxes?
- What is said to people who don’t want or can’t belong to the box? What is done to them?
- Looking at the boxes now, what kind of connections do you think exist between gender socialisation and gender-based violence?
- Does gender define our sexuality?
- Where do we learn the gender roles?

After this exercise, participants were able to see the pictures below throughout the week (Appendix 5).

Defining terms and Genderbread (Appendix 1)
Participants were divided into pairs and all the pairs were given few definitions of words related to sexuality. Participants tried to connect right terms with their definition. Afterwards all the words were matched by the facilitator. Finally, Genderbread person was presented and the facilitator explained that most of the definitions used during the session can be displayed by continua (not binary).

Case studies (cases and solutions in Appendix 4)
The participants were split into groups of 5 and each group got one case with all the information. They discussed it in the small groups where they were given also some questions to reflect and explore more about the issue. In each group participants were told also focus on their individual reflections on the issue they were given. Plenary session followed where participants presented their cases and also shared their discussions, things they would have done differently or some different opinions if any.

**Wednesday, 11th May 2016**

09:00  Prayer
09:30  Panel discussion: “Is sexuality a taboo?” (Guests: Renato Lings, Konstantinos Kenanidis)
11:00 Break
11:30 Panel discussion: “Is sexuality a taboo?” with guests
13:00 Lunch
15:00 Role play
16:00 Break
17:00 Role play
18:00 Home groups
18:30 Prayer
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Cultural evening

Panel discussion
Konstantionos Kenanidis and Renato Lins first introduced themselves and their main ideas on the topic, followed by beforehand prepared questions from Pawel Pustelnik.

Questions from facilitator:
1. What are the reasons of tabooization? What is the power of the taboo subjects? Why do we talk relatively little about sexuality in the religious context? Are there differences between Christian denominations in approaching the topic of sexuality?

2. How have people learned about boundaries and meanings, celebrations and regulations, when it comes to sexuality? What was the role of churches in this learning processes?

3. Some religious organizations place different restrictions on people depending on their official roles within the organization, possibly (for example) requiring celibacy for clergy, or withholding ordination to anyone who engages in sexual behaviour outside of mixed-gender marriage, while simultaneously saying that members’ sexuality is a matter of conscience. Some organizations require their members to adhere to a strict code of sexual behaviour. Could you explain the roots of these rules? How these rules are affecting Churches and the faith communities? Finally, is it better to have a more relaxed rules pertaining to sexuality for ministers/clergy?

4. Some organizations will only bless mixed-gender relationships, some have separate ceremonies for mixed-gender and same-gender couples, and some treat mixed- and same-gender relationships equally. Would you be able to elaborate on these differences and the reasoning behind them?

5. One of the reasons that most religions so strongly disapprove of any form of sex outside marriage is that lust without love undermines religious belief itself. Would you agree with such statement?

The second session consisted of two sessions with questions and answers to/from each guest separately. The group was divided in two.

Issues raised by the participants:
- Discriminatory approach to LGBT+ people by the Orthodox church
- Lack of visibility of LGBT+ individuals in churches
- There is an urgent need to bring discussion on various expressions of sexuality to churches and faith-based organisations
- The relatively passive role churches in sexual education.

Role play (Appendix 6)
All the participants were a given a role in a situation that a student was expelled from school based on sexuality but officially due to other reasons. Participants had a moment to get into their roles, then they discovered each other’s roles by discussing. After knowing all the participating roles, the plenary activity part started and lasted approx. one hour. Reflection followed in plenary.
**Thursday, 12th May 2016**

09:00  Prayer  
09:30  Local visits (Rainbow Foundation & Ars Erotica)  
13:00  Packed lunch  
15:00  Free afternoon  
19:00  Dinner in town

Local visits  
Representatives of local organisations from Budapest that deal with the topics related to the Study Session, Rena Katona and Daniel Holländer, familiarized the participants of the study session with the Hungarian context. Rena Katona from Ars Erotica led a workshop concerning sexual education and Daniel Holländer gave a talk about the Rainbow Foundation and Pride event in Budapest providing insights on governmental decisions in Hungary.

Rainbow Foundation:  
Daniel Holländer told about their experience of organizing the Pride in Hungary, coalition needs of LGBTQ+ people, challenges of work in the field because of homophobic attitudes and policies from the government, also towards other marginalized groups and minorities (e.g. Roma). The discussion tackled possible relationship with faith-based organisations (there is no cooperation so far, but the Rainbow Foundation tried to establish some partnership), actions of the government and human rights violations. Monitoring of Human Rights violation run by CoE was mentioned. Rainbow Foundation, with coalition with other organizations from other groups (Roma, migrants, people with disabilities), tackles attitudes and multidiscrimination issues, campaigns on promoting anti-discrimination (also in countryside). In the future there are plans for organizing campaigns for homeless and LGBTQ+ people. Important people are “movable middle”, who are neutral, don’t support LGBTQ+ community, but are against discrimination in general. It’s important to approach these people, but it’s important to give them arguments why LGBTQ+ discrimination affects them, too.

Ars Erotica:  
The local visit was held in a type of workshop, consisting of the following parts:  

1. Introduction and demonstration of the practice (exercises they use in sex education with groups, with debriefing). Exercises included smelling and touching people, so it was important to have a trust within the group. Still the exercises brought all kinds of feedback.  
2. Sex education for different stakeholders/dimensions: working with society; partners; teachers; young people 6-12 years old, young people 12-18 years old; European level and research. In small groups participants discussed the key aspects regarding every stakeholder group, with questions and comments from ARS Erotica.  
3. Input from ARS Erotica on their work as sex educators in Hungary.
Friday, 13th May 2016

09:00  Prayer  
09:30  Workshops (Hate Speech online NHSM, Advocacy, Methods, Safe space)  
11:00  Break  
11:30  Workshops  
13:00  Lunch  
15:00  Hyde Park activity  
16:30  Break  
17:00  Home groups  
17:30  Prayer  
18:00  Meeting with WSCF-Europe Senior Friends  
19:00  Dinner  
21:00  Free evening

Workshops

No Hate Speech Movement and hate speech online was presented with a NHSM official presentation (Appendix 1), activity “Saying it worse” from Bookmarks (Appendix 1), ideas how to get involved, experiences from a Finnish activist and finally showing 8 stages of genocide, which could be the worst case scenario for hate speech and hate crimes.

Successful campaigning workshop gave tools how to start own campaign. The main points below.

1) Identify a problem, issue, conflict, puzzle – try to find as much evidence as possible to justify that there is action needed. What will be the CHANGE you want to do?  
2) Who are you working with? Who is your target? Has somebody else done something similar somewhere else? Gather contacts, expertise, network!  
3) Set clear objectives

For example:
- to raise awareness of ecological issues in Europe and beyond;  
- to study and analyse the developments from the conferences in Kyoto and Copenhagen;  
- to explore the relation between ecology, economy and politics, including reviewing ecology issues as basis for numerous conflicts;  
- to empower the organisations and/or individuals to tackle issues connected to ecological justice;  
- to enable the organisations and individuals to lobby for a greener Europe;  
- to provide practical advice and tips for ecologically responsible lifestyles;  
- to develop a policy paper on ecological justice to be presented at EYCE's General Meeting in 2013, which would entail implementing results of the Campaign as an integral part of the running of the Council.

4) Organize yourself: what resources you have? what are you missing?  
5) Who do you want to cooperate with?  
6) DRAFT A PLAN!
Safe space workshop was to help participants create one themselves in their own context. It started with brainstorming on the subject of 'staying safe’, followed by discussion based on the following questions:

1. Are the lists of threats representative of the actual dangers boys and girls, men and women face in their daily lives. Why? Why not?
2. If not, what dangers are missing from the list?
3. Why do you think they did not appear in the discussion and are therefore missing?
4. Can you identify any of the dangers in your local/denominational/private life context? If so, do you think the precautions for staying safe suggested by the groups are relevant or effective?
5. Whose job is it or should it be to inform young people and children about violence and precautions for staying safe?
6. How could you or your organisation/church contribute to making a change in this respect?

In the first part of Council of Europe sexuality-related methodology workshop participants were shown the tools and methods CoE uses in their work on the field of human rights particularly concerning the topic of sexuality. The activity: “where do you stand?” (Compass, appendix 1) was also used during the workshop to give an example of how a similar method can facilitate (or not) discussions on the related topics to sexuality. The following statements were used for the specific exercise.

- men are more privileged than women
- any surgery is a violation of beauty created by God
- sex without relationship is not acceptable
- abortion is the best answer to unplanned pregnancy
- 13-year old girl is not able to decide on her
- consent for sex in a married couple is not always necessary
- sex education can promote non-straight sexuality

The workshop ended with a presentation of diverse available material printed and/or online of the CoE youth department relating to the topic of sexuality, and more specifically:

- Compassito
- Gender Matters,
- Education Pack All Equal All Different,
- Bookmarks,
- Pestalozzi programme
- Study session reports (e.g. ANSO, IGLYO, ENIL, etc. http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Training/Study_sessions/Study_sessions_reports_en.asp #TopOfPage)

Finally, there was a presentation of the CoE gender equality department work and priorities as well as relevant publications e.g. “Combating gender stereotypes and sexism at school”, “Combating gender stereotypes and sexism in the media”, etc. and the CoE "gender identity and gender orientation" programme.

Hyde Park
A Speakers’ Corner is an area where open-air public speaking, debate and discussion are allowed. The original and most noted is in the northeast corner of Hyde Park in London. During the Study
Session the Hyde Park was our conference room and the lobby area in front of the conference room. Speakers in those places were able to talk on any subject, related to the theme of the seminar. 6 different presentations/discussions were displayed by the participants. The themes, time and the space were announced on a table to participants.

Themes:
- There is absolutely no difference between men and women
- Perfect partner survey- a short look at the data collected during the week
- “When did you come out as straight? – discussion about own sexuality/sexualities
- Can hate speech ever be funny? The case of mean tweets
- Queer Bible study (reformed perspective)
- Bug chasing – HIV as a gift (contracting HIV deliberately)

**Saturday 14th May 2016**

09:00  Prayer
09:30 Individual reflection on follow-up
11:00 Break
11:30 Action planning
13:00 Lunch
15:00 Action presentations, commitment statements
16:30 Break
17:00 Evaluation
18:00 Prayer
19:00 Dinner
21:00 Eurovision farewell party

At this stage, participants were invited to answer the following questions individually in order to start a process of self-reflection regarding the impact of the Study Session and the tackled themes at a personal level:

*What did I learn during the Study Session about sexuality and gender issues?*
*What I found problematic?*
*How can I deal with that problematic issue?*
*Is sexuality/gender issues a taboo for me? How?*
*Did the Study Session change my opinions?*
*How did the Study Session change my opinions?*
*What are my strengths and weaknesses?*
*How can I make a difference within my community?*

In plenary, participants were asked to share only the answer to the last question, as an idea they wanted to achieve in their own communities. They put the papers on the floor and had time to go through all of them by discussing and presenting. The participants discovered some mutual goals and those people formed groups for the next session.
Participants worked individually and in groups according to their goals. They shared from previous session some things they could be willing and able to do in their communities. Discussions about what people could do as a community. Each group had to come up with action plan for their church/organisation (appendix 2).

Helping questions:
What is the final outcome and the goal of our work?
Which smaller goals we could have?
How we can reach our goals?
What kind of help we need?
What kind of risks we might have?
What is our time frame?

Evaluation

Evaluation was composed of 3 parts: one part consisted of an evaluation form (see "Evaluation" for summary of the results); the second part was a meeting in the home groups, to favour an appropriate ending to this group work that had as a function through the whole week to offer space for self-evaluation and debriefing; and the third part was organised in plenary with the whole group where every participant was invited to share anything with the group as long as a matchstick was burning.

Questions for home groups:
1. What really struck you as interesting, new, provocative or meaningful during the study session?
2. Did you discover something new about yourself? If you want you can share it?
3. What part of the study session should be changed/ improved?

Sunday 15th May 2016

Departure of participant

8. Main outcomes

The main outcomes were:

1. Raising awareness with regards to sexuality, LGBT+ rights, gender issues by stressing the importance of various expressions of the above.
2. Fostering realization of what a taboo is, especially in the context of faith-based organisations and churches.
3. Overcoming the tabooization of issues related to sexuality in general.
4. Recognizing the importance of sex education in the school curricula, in the families and churches (hence including both formal and informal contexts of the participants).
5. Acknowledgement of the different viewpoints/beliefs/narratives/outlooks/understandings of the same issues (still related to gender and sexuality) under different religious, cultural and national circumstances.

6. Development of skills related to creating safe spaces and ability to discuss issues pertaining to the theme of the session.

7. Provision of empowerment and motivation for participants to be agents of change.

8. Provision of competencies (soft skills) such as ability to discuss in an intercultural/international/interdenominational context issues that may be considered contentious for some contexts, understand better different beliefs/viewpoints, provision of tools and mechanisms that can be used to tackling the problems encountered in the local contexts.

9. Enhancing the understanding and employment of non-formal education methodologies.

10. Increasing social media involvement via Twitter and Facebook (new likes, followers, retweets).

Action plans were developed by the participants, who worked in subgroups and individually on the initiatives they would like to develop in their contexts and beyond after the study session.

**9. Evaluation and follow up**

The evaluation was conducted daily via home groups and at the end of the session through evaluation forms, reflective groups and sharing in the plenary. According to the final evaluation, the participants were delighted with the composition and the feel of the group that has been welcoming, caring, accepting, tolerant and open-minded. The participants appreciated the work of the preparatory team and at various occasions expressed their satisfaction. They also appreciated the length, the structure and the flow of the programme as well as the variety of methods employed were positively stressed. The input of the speakers was appreciated and found useful as a theological addition to the topic. The social programme was considered enriching, providing more space for relevant discussions and fostering intercultural understanding. The local visits (Rainbow Foundation and Ars Erotica) were considered useful and relevant to the topic. The facilities of the EYCB were appreciated, however there have been some critical remarks regarding catering. There were some comments suggesting that there was not enough free time, but at the same time not enough time for discussions.

Participants stated in the evaluation forms that they will bring home:

- open discussions to topics related to sexuality
- raising awareness
- new experience
- motivation
- good ideas
- courage and readiness to act
- campaigns
• trainings
• knowledge

Regarding the follow up, the organisers will provide expertise and on-going support for participants who are aiming at implementing their action plans. The participants themselves will be implementing their action plans (appendix 2), which were made during the last day of the Study Session.

Mozaik, the WSCF-Europe Ecumenical Journal, will be published by the end of 2016. It will offer insights by the participants on the issues considered during the study session. WSCF-Europe will also write a Report in a form of a blogpost including testimonies and reflections. Also EYCE will write a report on their website.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1
List of resources

Internet resources
• www.eyce.org
• www.wscf-europe.org
• www.coe.int
• http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/
• www.nohatespeechmovement.org
• http://nohate.ext.coe.int/
• http://nohate.ext.coe.int/Campaign-Tools-and-Materials
• http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2012/01/the-genderbread-person/
• http://budapestpride.com/
• http://arserotica.hu/home/

CoE Resources
• Compass
Appendix 2
Action plans

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B6gB9nZ6-0NrdmXSSGJDUWJ4REE

Group 1: Pierre, Philip, Claudia, Jakob
Dialunch (in churches)
  - want to bring communion and awareness
  - to give a chance for dialogue and for people to enjoy each others company
  - to create a space where the dialogue can be done.
  - to create a series of lunches during the year (every 2 months), 3-10 people
  - to launch a pilot lunch, so someone can bring their own (cultural) food. And of the participants is cooking and serving the lunch.

Group 2: Michael, Ramy, Paschalis, Antranik
“Sexuality – the way forward”
  - To describe the situation in communities in Greece, Germany, Egypt, Lebanon.
  - The lack of awareness on sexuality among migrants in Greece and Germany (it’s a taboo in the countries where they are coming from
  - To inform them about gender-based values and equality
  - To prevent conflicts and promote tolerance
  - To organize encountering activities

Group 3: Matthias, Miriam, Natalie
Gender Story books for Dummies
  - Daily life of LGBTQ people
  - First to publish it online, and then see if they find money to publish

Group 4: Knut, Amelia
ACM pride
  - 2-part action in 3 week during the Pride, a workshop “Socialistic Jesus using Christianity working for the rights of minorities
  - To ask as many Christian groups as possible to join the action in the Pride.
5. Niels (individual plan)
Previously on “Queer”...
- Raising awareness in Denmark about intersex and transgender people
- I want to initiate it in my organization YMCA and LGBTQI, other youth groups, and try to raise awareness (leaflets, etc). First I need to know more what is going on and investigate the situation more. Focus on universities.
- Help from Association of Nordic Students Organisation (queer organization, came out of IGLIO), who can provide you information and materials. The organization focuses specifically on universities.

6. Immanuel
Project in India (August 2016), when Immanuel will go back to India, to find a person (expert) to make workshop for college and universities on sexuality.

Group 7: Krista, Matleena
Toolkit for youth workers in church
- Confirmation camps by church that have both theological, but at the same time sexuality issues. So we decided to make a toolkit for workers from these churches so they can organise the camps better.
- So this toolkit will be specific for the confirmation 90% of the age group, so it’s a very good coverage. And youth workers often lack tools, so there is a lot for conversation going on, but there is no practical toolkit.
- Opportunity to apply for EYF as international activity
- As “Gender matters” will be revised, an invitation to be contacted

Group 8: Natallia, Yulia
Toolkit for Orthodox students and youth.
- As there not many Christian toolkits, but in many cases they are far from Orthodox mentality, so it will be for Orthodox people.
- Leaders to start conversation about sexuality and LGBTQ issues.
- The focus will be on people who are interested
- Personal testimonies from Orthodox who are open about how they practice their spirituality, how they found (or did not found) their way of community
- To create a list of Orthodox bishops in US, Europe and India, to make them points of reference
- To show female nuns and priests
- To publish them and make in Orthodox languages: Russian, Greek
- As a next step we will contact Orthodox desk on European Youth Forum – as they have a lot of theological material on the topic
- It’s important to publish this took kit not by LGBTQ-lobby organization (otherwise it may immediately be considered as lobby)
Group 9: Visar, Hripsime, Stevo and Zivanka

Sexual education and religious teaching in schools

- Sexual education for Armenia and Macedonia, and in Kosovo
- Make people more liberal and open-minded
- Agenda setting theory – trying to promote it in video, then (2) public agenda, (3) political agenda – a public debate with members of parliament, (4) the policy response – whether the policy has been accepted

**Appendix 3**

Group Contract

Numbering isn’t in an order of priority.

1. Respect each other
2. Do not interrupt/share speaking time
3. Be polite/ do not shout
4. Create a safe space for shy people
5. Avoid pointing at people
6. Be open and be ready to learn
7. Use sauna and gym in your free time
8. Always give chance to clarify
9. Switching mobiles to silent mode
10. Raise your hand for your turn to speak
11. Respect the time
12. A sign when we agree/disagree with opinion (proposal, not a rule)
13. If you raise your hand, you have a new opinion, but if to add/comment, you raise your finger
14. «Silent fox» sign to tell that room is too noisy
15. If toilet break is needed, take it without asking
16. Treat the others as you would like to be treated
17. Questions are welcome
18. Use English

**Appendix 4**

Case studies

Case 1: Mark

Mark was born to a conservative Catholic family in rural area of Ireland. His father serves as an organist in a local church while his mum is heading the parish choir where the family belongs.
Mark has two siblings: an older brother, working as a truck driver and a twin sister, with whom he is very close.

Being 16 Mark uncovers that he feels that he is not heterosexual as he falls in love with a fellow scout Josh. Josh is out and his family doesn't have any issues against it. He reciprocates Josh’s love. Josh talks to his sister and comes out. She is worried as she has heard that gay people go to hell. Mark also shares with his mum, who decides to bring him to the local parish priest. The priest is concerned and he tells Mark that the Catholic Church is not against being gay, however it is sinful to have gay sex. The priest quotes the Catechism of the Catholic Church “‘homosexual acts’ as "contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity”. Mark is deeply concerned as he cannot understand how the Church understands his orientation. He also doesn’t want to hurt Josh, who is not religious.

Case 2: Stella

Somewhere, far, far away, lives a beautiful girl Stella. She loves handsome Vitali who lives on the other side of the river. In early spring a terrible flood destroyed all the bridges across the river, and has left only one boat afloat. Stella asks Ralf, the owner of the boat, to take her to the other side of the river. Ralf agrees, but with one pre-condition: he insists that Stella has sex with him. Stella is confused. She does not know what to do and runs to her mother to ask for advice.

Her mother tells her that she does not want to interfere with Stella’s private business. In desperation Stella has sex with Ralf who, afterwards, takes her across the river. Stella runs to Vitali to embrace him happily, and tells him everything that has happened. Vitali pushes her away roughly and Stella runs away, bursting into tears. Not far from Vitali’s house, Stella meets Goran, Vitali’s best friend. She tells him everything that has happened. Goran hits Vitali for what he has done to Stella and walks away with her...

Case 3: Alice

Alice is 13-years old and for some time has been feeling divided between her love for her family and her need to feel more integrated with her school peers. Alice’s family is a devout Christian family, attending all Sunday church services and other church-related events, observing prayers and fasting. At the same time there is a deep feeling of love and respect among all members of the family. Since Alice joined secondary school, she has been feeling increasingly uncomfortable with the comments and attitude of her peers. She has known her peers for ages but the situation becomes very difficult for her. In the beginning there were small laughs, or nodding of the head, and then they became comments relating to her conservative “oldy” look or her wrong options for entertainment. She wants to feel included still does know how to address the issue with her parents.

Case 4: Briana
Briana, a newborn baby was born with two sexual organs. Intersex baby or androgyne is the official term. The parents were told by the doctors they got a baby girl. However, they were not expecting a girl with female and male organs. As shocked as they were, the doctors suggested that they need to make a decision about removing the male parts in order for Briana to have a normal, happy and heterosexual life. They also used an argument that thanks to the surgery, their daughter will be able to bring them grandchildren. Briana spent most of her childhood and young adult life extremely unhappy, feeling different from her peers though unsure how. The time came when the parents revealed the truth to her and explained about the decision they made. Briana feels like she was robbed not only her genital tissue but also his opportunity to decide what should happen to her own body.

Case 5: Anna

Anna is 14-year-old girl. She felt in love with her schoolmate Serge. They started seeing each other, and in a couple of weeks Serge insisted they make love, so Anna can prove her feeling to him. Anna could never say “no” to the one she loves.

In a few months after they started to sleep with each other, Serge started to care less about her. Moreover, Anna is worried it might be something wrong with her, as she did not have the period since then. She feels desperate and doesn’t know whom to speak to about the situation. Anna’s parents are people of faith and they are very strict. Her mother has never discussed with her any issues related to sexual life. Anna is afraid to go to the doctor, too. And most of all Anna is worried about the fact sinned by having premarital sex. She wants to go to confess to a priest, but she feels too ashamed to talk about the situation at all.

Questions to the group:

1. What are your feelings towards the people involved?
2. What would you do if you were the main character of the story above?
3. In your opinion how common is the case like this in your own country/context? Do you know any similar cases?
4. What are the causes of the cases like this? What could have been done to prevent such cases? Should we prevent them at all?

Plenary sharing from groups

Mark:
The group stressed importance of education. (As some people still believe it’s an illness and can be treated). As there is a fear, so if people would be open and meet people with different orientation, they would have to re-think, and there would be more acceptances from the community.
Religious dominance in some countries: Egypt, Nigeria and Georgia – as there is a church dominance, the things would go as the church say. This could be tackled as human rights violation, so this could be an argument.

Stella:
The group emphasized the responsibility of the mother to inform about the consequences. The group stressed the situation illustrates gender-based violence and victim blaming. Young people are not well-informed as it’s human right to make reasonable choices.

Alice:
Alice cannot be blamed, as she is the one who needs help, so we cannot expect her to act towards those who bully. There should be someone from her environment who can support her. So participants would rather expect people who are outside of the situation to get involved and advocate for a victim, as it’s not the right way to expect the victim to act him/herself. The group has discussed their own experiences of being excluded. These are possible strategies based on participants’ own strategies:
1. to speak with people: Alice could talk to people from her close circle, e.g. to parents, so they try to help and advice her, and also help to create a protective environment seek help of other students, their parents, teachers,
2. Lady Gaga strategy -to make it cool. To invite Lady Gaga, or some other celebrity person from the same denomination to come and somehow to support/promote the kid.
3. School authorities/Ministry of education: to develop the strategy against bullying to overcome these situations. So not to deal with separate cases, but to solve the problem on the level of the policy
4. Cutting out the oppressors – usually there 2-3 people who are acting in bulling, but the rest are don’t having a choice and following. So the strategy would be taking the bulling children for a talk. In these kind of situations, it’s not only one person as a victim, but the whole community is a victim of the situation, and solving situation will heal the whole community

Briana:
Mixed strong feeling (empathy towards all participants, some thought that doctors were in power position, and acted not professionally).
The group had a discussion if having both organs is a disability or not, what would be the chances of the child to integrate into the society without the surgery.
Some of the points the group could agree were that it should not be decided on the spot. So the family could go home, talk to the people affected with similar situation, etc., and only then they make an informed decision.
This case lead to a hot discussion in the small group, as there were people with different views (on sexuality and androgyny people). In most of the countries this subject is a taboo and is not discussed in media at all (apart of Finland, where such cases are discussed and society is becoming more open)
There was no agreement if the surgery is a solution. The discussion was about if having two organs as the same time is a problem for a person, or it’s imposed by social norms.
The group made links to the rights of the child - it is covered by children’s rights.
Anna:
Feelings of compassion: compassion towards Anna, we don’t know about the boyfriend, if he is aware about possible pregnancy. As for the parents – they should have talked to the daughter about sex.
(1) Teenager/parents: first to seek the information, talk to parents or someone else to talk who you trust.
There are few cases of teenage pregnancy in Norway and Finland, more in Macedonia and other countries.
There should be programmes for parents on sexual education, so they are able to talk to their children.
(2) Programmes of preparation to family life/sexual education for young people.
And, access to contraception is important (contraception, including condoms, is expensive. But the group also noted that with sexual education one should be sensitive, not to be “pushy” for promoting sex.
(3) There should be a statement from churches on sexuality, in the silence of churches the other world has their say.

Appendix 5
Gender-in-a-box & Hyde Park outcomes

A “real” woman:
A “real” man:

Perfect partner survey:
Appendix 6
Role play

Role play situation:

A student of the Theological Seminary wrote an article about the gender and sexuality issues. The article was published in a Seminary Newspaper and it was also spread publicly through blogs and social media. A majority of the professors of the Seminary had a strong reaction to the article, as they considered some of the ideas and perspectives in the article not appropriate for the reputation of the Seminary. The Dean called for the Commission to discuss the situation. At the meeting of the commission one of the professors also shared with others about the “inappropriate behaviour” of the student: “Somebody noticed the student at the gatherings of strange people, the student even took part in the gay pride last year”. Another professor noted about the way the student dress outside the Seminary. The Commission decided to expel the student from the Seminary. However, in the official letter given to the student nothing was mentioned about the article.

The student sued the University and accused the Commission in discrimination.

After one month there is a reconciliation hearing and all parties involved will attend it. The meeting will decide what should be done next.

At the reconciliation hearing you are asked to act according to your given role.

Tasks:

Step I - you have one hour to think about your role, your position and arguments you will present at the hearing. You also need to find out who are the other persons, listen to their arguments and positions. You need to make sure that your voice is heard at the meeting.

Step II - you have one hour for the reconciliation hearing.

Roles:

Professors - 3
Dean - 1
Lawyer of the Seminary - 1
Student against the student - 3
Priest of the Seminary - 1
Faith-based organisations - 2
Journalist - 1
The student - 1
Professor supporting the student - 1
Lawyer of the student - 1
Friend of the student - 1
Human rights activist - 2
Student supporting the student - 3
Faith-based organisations - 2
Journalist - 1
Chair of the meeting - 1

Student
You are the student who wrote the article. You know what is a real reason why you are expelled from the Seminary. During the month before the reconciliation hearing you tried to make it known to everyone and report about this discrimination. You reached the Human Rights organisations, Christian organisations, students, journalist and you expect that they will protect your position at the hearing.

Professor
You are the professor of the Seminary who supports the idea that a student should be expelled from the Seminary. You think that the student who wants to become a priest should not have such open ideas about the gender and sexual orientation.
At the reconciliation hearing you are against the student.

Dean
From the beginning you had no strong position about the student, however, as the Dean of the faculty you signed the letter of expel.
At the reconciliation hearing you are against the student.

Lawyer of the Seminary
You were asked by the Commission to project they interest. Of course you can’t mention a real reason of the student expulsion from the university.
At the reconciliation hearing you are against the student.

Student
At the reconciliation hearing you are against the student. There are two reasons why you behave like this: first, you really believe that the student is a gay and there is no place for gay people in the Church. Secondly, you know that if you support the professors’ position you most probably will have some career advancements at the Seminary.

Priest of the Seminary
You read the article and you are strongly against the student’s idea regarding sexuality and gender issues. As a priest you were asked to talk to the student before the hearing about the consequences of his position regarding the Commission’s decision. However, you can’t openly say why the student was expelled from the University.
At the reconciliation hearing you are against the student.
Faith-based organisation
You are a representative of a Christian organisation. You are not sure about the real reason of the student expulsion from the university, but your position is completely in line with the opinion that Theological Seminary student should not have such ideas on gender and sexuality.
At the reconciliation hearing you are against the student.

Journalist
You are a representative of the main populist newspaper and you will report the hearing. However, you only support the position of the Seminary and the Commission. At the reconciliation hearing you do not express strongly your position, but you are quite provocative toward the student and towards the supporter’s of the student. You even called the student gay during the interviews.

Professor
You are the professor of the Seminary who supports the student and thinks that the student was really a victim of discrimination.
At the reconciliation hearing you support the student.

Lawyer of the student
You are the lawyer of the student, but you are also the father of the student.
At the reconciliation hearing you protect the student.

Student
At the reconciliation hearing you support and protect the student’s position.
You think that the student really was discriminated against the ideas the student wrote in the article.

Friend of the student
You are a very close friend of the student and of course you support the ideas student expressed in the article.

Human rights activist
You represent the human rights organisation. The student informed you about the situation and explained what happened at the Seminary. You will support the student at the reconciliation hearing.

Faith-based organisation
You are a representative of the Christian organisation. You know well the position of the Seminary towards gender and sexuality issues and you believe that the student really was expelled from the Seminary because of the ideas and perspectives the student wrote in the article. As Christian organisation you were informed by the student about the situation and you will support the position of the student at the reconciliation hearing.
Journalist
You are a journalist of a very liberal newspaper and you are going to report the outcomes of the reconciliation hearing in your newspaper. You are completely in solidarity with the student, but you will be neutral during the hearing.

Chair of the meeting
You will share the reconciliation hearing. Your task is very important, as you need to give a floor to everyone representing all parties involved. You should be neutral and make sure people respect each other. However, you are in solidarity with the student.

Appendix 7
List of participants (names written as first name, last name)

Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe
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+32 485 915 89
www.eyce.org

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Niels Gade

Egypt
Ramy Hanna
Hripsime Muradyan

Finland
Krista Autio
Matleena Ikola

France
Pierre Thierry

Georgia
Yulia Bajelidze

Germany
Michael Erhunmwunse
Matthias Potempa
Miriam Schubert
Natallia Vasilevich

Italy
Claudia Giampietro
Jakob Hilfiker
Immanuel Simon

Kosovo
Visar Xhambazi

Lebanon
Antranik Manoukian

Malta
Stevo Georgiev
Zivanka Vitanova

Norway
Amalie Kvamme
Knut Svihus

Romania
Maria Kozhinova

Russia
Anastasia Kryuchkova

United Kingdom
Paschalis Gkortsilas