

Connecting  Actions
Paris 2017

Connecting Actions Second Symposium

Laying the Groundwork

for a

**Coalition of European Civil Society Organisations for
Coexistence and Tolerance**

through

Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

Activity and Project Report



www.connectingactions.net



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Connecting  Actions

The social and political context

Intercultural and interconvictional relations have become increasingly tense for the past few years in France and Europe. Identities affirming themselves in the public realm are more and more perceived as threats to every other group's identities. Non profit organisations promoting citizen, interreligious, intercultural dialogue have been working for many years to provide people with safe spaces and a thorough processes to learn to know each other, understand each other, build social bonds and work together to improve the quality of coexistence. In the past years, initiatives have sparked to counter the tearing up of our social fabric. Sometimes, such programmes started without the know-how that older organisations possess. It is obvious that Civil Society Organizations (CSO's) are essential actors of the collective efforts to reinforce social cohesion and Coexistence. This work can best combat the rise of bigotry, racism, discrimination and violent extremism in Europe. Today, more than ever, those organisations need support, guidance and coordination, as they remain too isolated, cultivating differences of style, strategies or identities despite their common mission and their shared interest to collaborate and maximize their impact.



The genesis of the initiative



In this context, four organisations, the *Muslim Jewish Conference (MJC)*, *Coexister*, *3 Faiths Forum* and the *European Union of Jewish Students* gathered in December 2015 to think of the best way to institutionalize citizen dialogue work. Co-founded by Ilja Sichrovsky, Director of the Muslim Jewish Conference, Connecting Actions first started as an MJC program, coordinating projects like joint Muslim and Jewish initiatives for helping refugees in Europe. In the past years, the MJC team have had the opportunity to meet with many other organisations on the ground. From those encounters emerged the expressed need to meet more organisations, discuss their respective initiatives, share best practices and increase their visibility. In November 2016, Connecting Actions convened the First Symposium on Intercultural and Interfaith dialogue organisations for Coexistence, where 20 European organizations shared their diagnostics and practices and discussed on their identities and the vision for Connecting Actions' project. Participants reckoned that this network could be one of "organizations working on understanding between people of differing backgrounds, promoting vivre ensemble (living together), faire ensemble (doing together), and combating intolerance". They affirmed their willingness to co-develop skills to accomplish those missions. This was also a first occasion for the participating organisations to brainstorm on joint projects. The report of this first Symposium is available [here](#).

In 2017, Connecting Actions transformed into an autonomous Non Profit Organisation, registered in France. Rafael Tyszblat, Program Director at the Muslim Jewish Conference, is its current President. Emmanuel Michel, General Delegate of Coexister and Jane Braden Golay, Program Director at Fryshuset are part of its Executive Board. Thanks to the invaluable support of *OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR)* and *Natan Fund*, Connecting Actions convened a Second Symposium on the 6th, 7th and 8th of the December 2017. This meeting gathered the core organisations that attended the 2016 Symposium as well as new organisations vetted by the network's members for their work in the field of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in order to start building an active and sustainable Coalition of change makers.

The project



Connecting Actions' project is to formalize the initial engagement by establishing a formal and official Coalition gathering organizations implementing citizen, intercultural, interconvictional and interidentity dialogue programs to strengthen this field and give it more visibility and impact.

Connecting Actions' main objectives for the Coalition are to:

- Share best practices, diagnostics and resources among its member organisations
- Provided organisational support to its member organisations
- Help sustain and amplify the member organisations positive impact on society.
- Increase public awareness of dialogue initiatives
- Strengthen the field of citizen, interconvictional and intercultural dialogue

This year, Connecting Actions intended to make concrete steps to achieve that project to define what a coalition of NGO's on dialogue could look like and produce a one-page statement of the vision and the operating principles coalition from which bylaws will be drafted and submitted to the participating organisations. With the help of Fabrice Teicher, consultant on non-profit governance, the Symposium laid the groundwork for defining the identity, values, goals, vision and governance of a future coalition of European actors for dialogue.

The participants



More than 50 organisations were invited. 24 organisations from 11 European Countries participated. Several organisations were unfortunately unavailable to attend the Symposium but stated that they wanted to participate in the process of building the Coalition. Participating organisations presented a variety of size (4 international organizations, 19 nationals, 6 locals) and focus, dialogue being the main activity for some but just a part of their project for others.

- ❖ 3FF
- ❖ Coexister
- ❖ Dialogpilotene
- ❖ Dialogue perspectives
- ❖ Die Junge Islamkonferenz JIK
- ❖ EUJS – Europe
- ❖ EXIT
- ❖ Faith Matters
- ❖ G3i Groupe International, Interculturel et Interconvictionnel
- ❖ GFIC (Groupe des Foyers Islamo-Chrétiens)
- ❖ Groupe Inter Religieux pour la Paix 78
- ❖ Institut HOZES
- ❖ Initiatives et changement
- ❖ Integrationswerkstatt Unkel
- ❖ Interfaith summit Judiska Församlingen i Malmö
- ❖ Jewish Assembly in Malmö
- ❖ JUGA
- ❖ KifKif Vivre Ensemble
- ❖ Muslim Jewish Conference
- ❖ Open Skane
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Salaam Shalom
- ❖ Sharing Perspectives
- ❖ Together for Finland
- ❖ Together for Sweden
- ❖ URI Europe
- ❖ We Act

That list is not considered to be fully representative of all citizen dialogue actors in Europe and the conveners remain aware that many Southern and Eastern European countries are not represented. There are many more stakeholders working in this field and the goal of this initiative is to be ever more inclusive. At the same time, not all organisations represented at the meeting may eventually decide to participate in the emerging Coalition. There is also a necessary selection process that will progress as the vision for the Coalition gets defined.



The Symposium's structure



Prior to the Symposium, participants were invited to modify the agenda and share their preliminary thoughts on the various topics proposed by the conveners. A survey was conducted to identify the wishes of participants regarding the project of a Coalition. This allowed each of them to take ownership of the process.

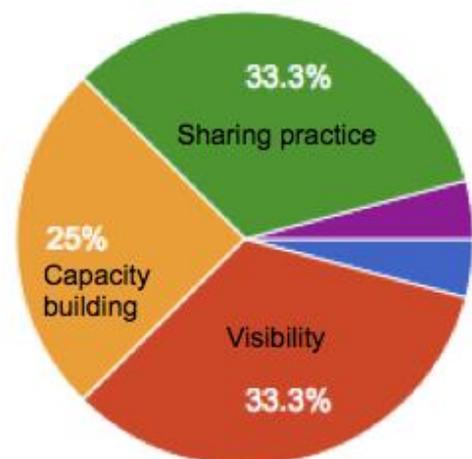
Their expectations in participating in the Symposium were:

- Sharing, listening and telling
- Promoting peace, understanding, dialogue and coexistence through non-violent activism, volunteering and community building.
- Promoting mutual understanding between different communities
- Living together beyond our differences is possible
- Enriching ourselves with our differences

The following objectives for the Coalition were mentioned, by order of degree of integration:

- Networking
- Sharing practices
- Capacity building
- Assistance in expanding
- Fundraising
- Enhancing visibility
- Increasing media exposure

To the question: "If the Coalition had only one objective, what would it be?" roughly a third



chose “Sharing practices”, a third chose “Capacity building”, and another third chose “Visibility”.

Through the survey, those potential challenges and obstacles were also identified:

- Representativeness of all member organizations
- Funding
- Time
- Geographical distance
- Mutual trust
- Deciding who should be included in dialogue
- Level of religiosity and the secular/ religious divide
- The differing approaches to controversial topics
- Differences of organisational structures

According to respondents, the following conditions needed to be met:

- Representativeness and making sure the smallest organizations have a place
- Funding to participate
- Time and trust
- Concrete activities to justify the investment
- A willingness to talk with anybody, and a refusal to get caught up in ideology

The first day of the Symposium was dedicated to define what the organizations want to do together, and the second day to how they want to do it. The third day served to deepen exchanges. The philosophy of the Symposium discussions were the same as most of the dialogue programs implemented by the participants themselves: all were encouraged to be authentic, respectful and open-minded. The facilitation of discussions happened through tested techniques and methodologies, used by the CSO themselves. Those techniques included the Open Forum and the World Café amongst other brainstorming and collective intelligence processes. The specific Coalition Building activities and discussions were directly inspired by ODIHR’s “Manual on Coalition Building for Tolerance”. They were conducted by Fabrice Teicher, consultant for CSO governance.

Summary the discussions



Who are we?

Participants were first invited to briefly describe their respective organisations, their focus, aims and practices and one success story related to their work. This introductory discussion confirmed that participating organisations came from diverse backgrounds and dealt with different forms of dialogue (interreligious/ interconfessional, intercultural, inter-communal, focusing refugees or immigrant integration, etc.). They also had different focuses such as bridging minority and majority groups or gathering all parts of society or community (including dialogue between minorities). They run programmes of different sizes and scopes and work on different levels- from local (community-based dialogue) through national and European to global.

Here are some of the areas or themes that participating organisations address:

- Getting to know each other, mutual understanding
- Creating spaces for exchange (joint prayer, learning spaces, safe spaces)
- Educating youth
- Community building activities
- Training civil society, officials or policy makers
- Advocacy and norm changing

- Community events (for instance shared holiday festivities)
- Societal integration
- Refugee integration

Despite their differences, all of them implement inter-identity dialogue as their main mission or a significant part of their mission. Their main concern is fighting hate and ignorance, racism, anti-religion, discrimination, prejudice, fear... Here are some of the things that united them:

- Promoting understanding, peace and co-existence through dialogue
- Diversity (for instance of religious identities, as well as other identities based on sexual orientation, ethnicity etc.)
- Introducing counter-narratives to the mainstream
- Sharing experiences
- Encouraging social cohesion
- Preventing conflict and radicalisation
- Countering ignorance, stereotypes and racism

The main societal problems tackled by the participating organizations were:

- Racism,
- Anti-religious sentiment
- Discrimination
- Prejudice
- Fear
- Ignorance

Participants also identified several organisational challenges:

- Need for support
- Leadership
- Funds
- Creating interest

The participants were then invited to engage in several conversations to lay the groundwork for defining the identity of the future coalition.

A common definition of dialogue

In order to anchor the discussions in what was previously achieved, Rafael Tyszblat, main convener of the Symposium, reviewed and shared with the participants some of the main conclusions of the 2016 Symposium on the identity of dialogue, such as:

- The idea that dialogue is different from debate
- The centrality of learning (about each other, oneself, communalities and differences) as a core value of dialogue
- The importance of a safe atmosphere
- The value of cooperation
- The core skill of listening
- The concept of a respectful exchange

- The possibility to express doubts
- The importance of participants speaking only for themselves
- The importance of asking open questions
- The normality of differences within “sides”

Connecting Actions consultant invited participants to debate over what dialogue is, through 2 key statements:



1. *“Dialogue means there are no taboo topics”.*

Here were the pros:

- It is possible to have no taboos if we establish a safe space or enough bonding between participants
- Dialogue is a process that makes it possible to address all topics over time
- Topics are not a problem as long as basic dialogue norms are enforced
- Seeing openness from the “other” is opportunity rather than risk

Here were the cons:

- Taboos can endangering safe spaces
- Some topics are too destructive
- Risk of conversion/ persuasion attempts (especially in interreligious contexts)
- Religious ideologies make it difficult to overcome taboos

The majority agreed that taboos should not prevent dialogue, but there were some disagreement on what taboo means and how to approach them. In the end, it was accepted that, even though the people participating in dialogue activities might hold taboos or consider certain subjects as difficult to address, the dialogue programs themselves had to consider that no topic should be off the table,

provided the right structure and space was provided, including through the presence of trained facilitators.

2. *“Dialogue means accepting to talk with someone who doesn’t share my values”*

Nearly all agreed with this statement, even if they mentioned some challenges:

- The risk of losing funding or support from donors or media due to an engagement with the “wrong” partners.
- The question of how to converse with those who reject dialogue or another identity group: where does one draw the line? Does approaching them undermine dialogue?

Here were some of the main conclusions:

- It is not about who we talk with but how we talk with them. There are certain prerequisites and ground rules for dialogue: respect, empathy- for each other, for the dialogue, for the conversation
- We need to acknowledge that bursting our bubble requires patience and perseverance
- The only red line should be physical violence or the apology of it.
- Here too, there is a key responsibility of the facilitator to ensure certain ground rules are respected.

Our vision for the Coalition

Another activity of the first day consisted in engaging in prospective thinking, using an activity mentioned in ODIHR’s “Manual on Coalition Building for Tolerance” (called “Creating a Common Vision”). Participants were invited to think of an ideal and a disaster scenario for the coalition in 2020, in order to recognise risks, opportunities, and supporting or inhibiting factors.

Here were some the results of this exercise:

- **Successes**

General in the world:

- Cooperation focus on social and environmental justice
- Schools teaching about minorities
- Sensitization regarding minorities

Specific for the coalition:

- Implementing school/ university programs
- Impacting global action in conflict areas
- Enlarge variety of projects
- Umbrella org for small, effective, autonomous orgs
- Creating chapters in different regions

- Stable structure+ political/ state support
- Offices in Brussels
- Orgs supporting each other in risk-taking
- Ensured continuous funding- avoid relying on grants (*charging for trainings?*)
- Promote scientific studies
- Social/ financial sustainability
- Support to member orgs+ externally via trainings and professional development
- Funding/ support from international orgs
- High media exposure (quality not quantity)
- Creating a positive/ professional image of dialogue

- **Failures**

General in the world:

- Rising of radicalization and extremism

Specific for the coalition:

- Top-down structure instead of horizontal support
- Excess bureaucracy
- Coalition speaks for everyone without seeking internal consensus
- Loss of interest
- Enraging wider public
- Creating social media bubbles



Fabrice Teicher presented the 6 general goals of international networks:

The 6 main goals of international networks

COORDINATION OF ACTION AND RESOURCES

(Networking to maximize the resources and impact of our action)

- ✓ **Coordinate the action and expand the areas of intervention.** Obtain a greater operational strength ; guarantee a greater coherence and effectiveness of our action, for more impact
- ✓ **Guarantee economic viability.** Broaden the recruitment base and increase the collection of donations; access to donors who wish to engage in large-scale projects.

COMMON VOICE

(Networking to build a common voice and influence policies)

- ✓ **Develop advocacy and influence on policies, and build a stronger collective voice;** access to international forums and decision makers; to be represented at the international level
- ✓ **Defending the political space of civil society** against pressures to reduce it, seen in many countries

LEARNING AND PARTNERSHIP

(Networking to reinforce each other and change the partnership balance)

- ✓ **Learn together and improve our practices.** Improve the analysis of the issues; share experiences between partners and discover other ways of working
- ✓ **Change the partnership balance,** give a greater place for the South members in the governance; **strengthen the skills / expertise of Southern actors.**

The participants all agreed that they want a coalition that could serve as a network to reinforce each other. It implies:

- ✓ Learning together and from each other
- ✓ Improving each member's practices.
- ✓ Improving the analysis of the issues;
- ✓ Sharing experiences, practices, tools, ideas, resources between members
- ✓ Discovering new ways of working
- ✓ Supporting one another
- ✓ Promoting expertise
- ✓ Capitalising on good practices

Challenges and obstacles

The following issues were identified regarding the daily functioning of the future Coalition:

- Organizing time and human resources
- Lack of interest
- Different set of priorities
- Lack of centralized personnel to make reports or organize conferences
- Ensuring a balance of power structures

- Lack of consensus
- Assessment of who does what and how
- Lack of funding
- Language- how to translate contextual terminology
- Managing the differences in culture, internal politics and local needs
- State secularism and distrust of anything that may involve religion
- Bridging differences of target audiences
- Balancing online activity with on the ground work

Specific ideas were mentioned to address some of those issues:

- ✓ Sharing a group of employees in common
- ✓ A committee which is diverse in background and identity
- ✓ Acknowledge that no one group or person can speak for everyone
- ✓ Setting ground rules of dialogue and deciding how to refuse input that does not follow the rules.



ODIHR's Words into Actions project and ambition for Coalition Building:

Debra Erenberg, Dejan Petrovic and James Stockstill provided an overview of work done by the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. James Stockstill and Dejan Petrovic presented the [Words Into Actions](#) project against antisemitism, consisting in a yearly report on hate crimes essentially fed by civil society reports. This project is the framework in which ODIHR is supporting coalition-building efforts to unite

communities. With this aim in mind, they have been working on drafting a coalition-building manual based on the experiences of several European NGO's and Coalitions. The challenge is to adapt the value of this manual to the different local needs. Erenberg presented an overview of this step-by-step guide (what is a coalition, why coalition for tolerance and how to build one) and sought participants' input on both the content of the guide and the proposed tools and resources that should be included. She requested that participants respond to a series of questions designed to provide practical advice and real-life examples for those just getting started. Several participants already started providing their input to such an important tool.



Our Governance

Governance represents "*The set of mechanisms allowing an alignment of the functioning of the organization on the objectives and the values of the associative project*". (Hoarau and Laville, the governance of associations, 2008). It is the system that determines how members are accepted, how leadership is chosen, and how decisions are made.

Participants then were invited to engage in several discussions in small groups about the Governance of the future Coalition through 4 aspects: general structure, economic model, working committees and membership. Following are the results of those small group discussions:

1. The general structure:

- Role of the steering committee
- Rules of representation
- Frequency of meetings

- Membership
- Decision making process

This led to the following conclusions about the ways the instances of the coalition should function:

- ✓ There should be an executive board, a steering committee, and a general assembly

- ✓ Executive board

Role: the board should take care of the oversight, sustainability, fundraising and important decisions.

Members: it should gather 3 to 7 people from different organisations and nationalities (ensuring that the number is odd in order to avoid any tie votes). The Executive Committee at minimum should be composed of a Leader/President/General Secretary (title to be determined) a Secretary and a Treasurer. At the maximum it could be composed of a Leader, two deputy leaders, a Secretary, a deputy Secretary and a Treasurer and a Deputy Treasurer.

Meeting frequency: 3 to 4 times a year

- ✓ The Steering Committee

Role: the Steering Committee should take care of the oversight of daily operations and functions, and coordinate working committees.

Members: membership of the Steering Committee should be as small as possible and representatives from all the working committees would be welcome to attend any of the Committee's meetings.

Meeting Frequency: members of this group should be prepared and able to communicate as frequently as each week if necessary.

- ✓ The General Assembly

Role: The General Assembly, involving all member organisations, decide the general orientation vote on the charter, vote the report and budget, and elect the Executive Board.

Members: representatives from each of the member organizations.

Meeting Frequency: The GA would meet annually

2. The economic model

- Possible expenses
- Possible resources

- Member contribution
- Possible budget

Even though it is too early to try and define a budget and an economic model, the participants analyzed the budget of the seminar and the projects of activities for the coalition and suggested the following ideas or questions:

- ✓ Estimation of 100,000 EUR yearly budget
- ✓ Possibility for national or regional coalitions (ex-Yugoslavia, Scandinavia)
- ✓ Membership cost of 50 EUR per year (larger orgs can donate to smaller ones)
- ✓ The 100,000 EUR budget could be broken down into trainings (20,000 X3), field visits (10,000 X3), website (5,000), misc (5,000).
- ✓ Challenge: paid staff makes a lot of sense but it is hard to fundraise for it.
- ✓ Possibility to contribute in kind (venues for instance), keeping in mind some costs will depend on the choice of the city of operation, charges of salary and/or rent.

3. Working committees

- What would be the list of working committees
- What should be the frequency of meetings

The following groups were identified:

- ✓ Internal Communication group
- ✓ Finance
- ✓ Logistics and administration
- ✓ Database: info on orgs, search by keywords (e.g. racism)
- ✓ Study visits
- ✓ Communication platform- info about projects and connecting interested parties

It appeared difficult to talk about working-groups before having a common aim for coalition and agreeing on by laws and a charter.

4. Membership

Finally, participants were invited to discuss in more concrete terms the issue of membership, identifying criteria for accepting or refusing an organization in the Coalition.

Some possible prerequisites for each future member organisation:

- European organisations only
- Dialogue must be the main activity of the organization.
- Sharing common values and goals and willing to accept others (without having to agree on other goals and values)
- A proven track record of impact and expertise (trained facilitators, evaluation...)
- Transparency (funding, values, bylaws, members...)
- Democratic governance

- Willingness to contribute to the platform (share practices, provide a contact person, physically attending meetings...)
- Respect for human rights and sensitivity to all forms of oppression
- Diversity and representativeness
- Community based organisations/ civil society organisations

Some possible reasons for rejection:

- Political parties or official affiliations
- Lack of transparency/ democratic structure
- Illegal sources of funding
- Business profiting organizations
- Motivated by personal gain
- Nationalist/ extremist
- Sectarian organizations (doesn't respect religious values, does not consider gender or race, against mutual recognitions), openly racists, *nationalist* or bigotry

Pending questions:

- Should religious institutions be included?
- Should individuals be included?
- Should adding/ removing orgs be decided unanimously?
- Should there be a division between hard and soft criteria?

Main provisional conclusions for the membership process:

- ✓ Membership would be determined by application from organizations addressed to the Steering Committee and voted on by the Executive Board.
- ✓ All applications by organizations should be transparent and shared with all member organizations.
- ✓ Organizations applying for membership must commit to follow the content of the Charter and sign it
- ✓ Applicants need to gather recommendations from at least 2 members



Learning from existing coalitions

The second day ended with three groups visiting three different existing Coalitions, based in Paris. This gave a valuable opportunity for everyone to learn from the experiences of similar well-established Civil Society initiatives. Here is some of the learning that came out of those on-site exchanges:

International Forum of National NGO Platform (<http://ifp-fip.org>). Rémi Renon and Joyce Soares.

- This is an international platform of platforms. It federates 50 member coalitions.
- There are no thematic criteria. Members need to adhere to a charter, pay a fee or 100 EUR a year, and need to be operating and organizing activities.
- It only registered last year after operating for 7 years.
- Its focus is on advocacy and capacity building as well as paddling EU funds and sharing practices between countries.
- It has 5 board members and member and the General Assembly meets once every three years. It elects council, which elects the board.
- This platform is mostly volunteer based, member-led and has two paid staff.

AEDH Human Rights NGO Platform (www.aedh.org) and World Coalition against Death Penalty (www.worldcoalition.org). Ariane Grésillon.

- This started as a World coalition and is now a French platform for NGOs.

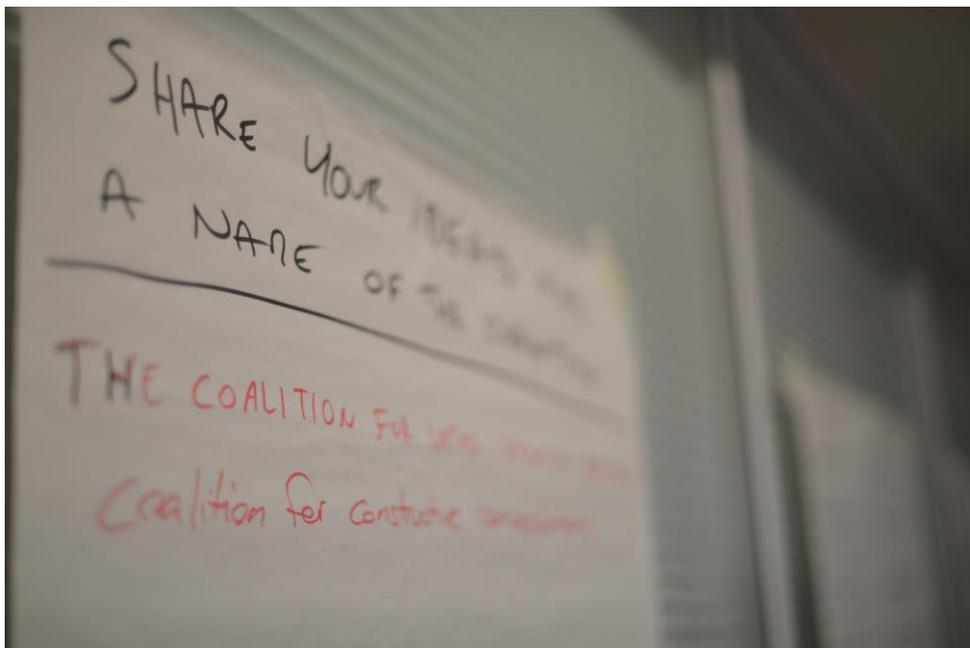
- Creating this platform was a process consisting in distributing questionnaires, and identifying 40 possible member NGOs of which 12 joined.
- They adopted a pragmatic approach, working with what they had, not wasting energy and lose momentum over disagreements.
- Their day against death penalty was a concrete action to focus on because it was attractive, simple to operate and served the cause.
- The convening organisation was clearly the leader of the coalition at first.
- They insisted on the importance of being thorough with finances.
- Its international steering committee meets 4 times a year.
- It distributes materials in six languages.

FORIM Forum of International Solidarity Organizations Originating from Migrations (www.forim.net). Souad Frikech.

- This gathers 1,000 organisations under one umbrella.
- It serves as a connecting link with governments.
- It capitalized on existing connections between organisations working on the same region. Its member associations are organised by region or country.
- Its focus is on advocacy, funding of projects and information sharing.
- It has 6 paid staff.
- It favours ad hoc partnerships.

Connecting Actions will inspire itself from the main teachings of those coalitions, and will keep in mind that Coalitions can take time to formalise, even if they can start operating before being officially registered.

The Provisional Conclusions



One of the ideas that originated this initiative and that was reinforced during those two days, is that dialogue, whether it is intercultural, interfaith, etc. is a serious job and is a

key to many of the challenges that we face. All participants also clearly expressed their support for the creation of a coalition that would enhance the field of dialogue.

Here are the main provisional conclusions regarding the vision for the future Coalition:

- Several participants advocated for focusing our consensus effort on the methodology of our work rather than on the content.
- All participants agreed that the structure should be bottom-up and, as much as possible, horizontal.
- There wasn't a consensus on the idea of using the Coalition to carry a common voice. For several participants, every organisation should choose, case by case, if they may agree on specific statements.
- Some participants mentioned the possibility of a quality control mechanism – which would require a set of criteria for joining (e.g. impact, methods).
- All participants agreed that the most important activities should be:
 - Sharing organisational and field knowledge
 - Exchanging best practices via an online platform, conferences, trainings, workshops, group and interpersonal exchange, etc.
 - Fostering multi-organisational partnerships and joint actions
 - Sharing networks of volunteers and participants
 - Fundraising support on local level or joint grant writing when applicable
 - Mutual empowerment
 - Reciprocal promotion
 - Operating as mutual multipliers
 - Communicating and exchanging regularly through newsletters, online meetings and yearly conferences.

The main task of the Coalition that didn't gather a consensus was the idea of the coalition carrying one voice. This was deemed to require more time and trust before it could be part of the Coalition's mandate. Connecting Actions, as a convening organisation, is the guarantor of a process based on consensus. Its primary interest is to ensure that the Coalition it creates will not overpass the mandate given by its members. At the same time, Connecting Actions' ambition for the impact of the future Coalition is high. Its task will therefore be to create an organisational basis that can accommodate both collective work and reinforced collaborations between groups of member organisations, including those who do want to be able to speak publicly.

Next steps

The propositions elaborated by participants during the Symposium will be translated into a charter and bylaws, which will be submitted to the board of each organization for a preliminary vote of approval or propositions of modifications.

In the first semester of 2018, extensive online discussions will be conducted by Connecting Actions to fine-tune the project of Coalition through discussing the bylaws and charter of the future entity. During that time, future members will be invited to start

sharing resources, information and act together. An online platform will be set up to facilitate the exchanges and working groups will be invited to achieve specific tasks.

Participating organisations already started to promote each other on social media, through the [Connecting Actions Facebook page](#) and will be invited to continue this effort as well as communicate about their joint initiatives in the months to come.

Participating organisations will be asked to designate a point-person within their teams to maintain a continuous link with Connecting Actions and already engage in joint collaboration. Other future member organisations will be informed of the results of the Symposium and invited to take part.

Another meeting will be convened before the Summer of 2018 to formally adopt the bylaws and charter elaborated from those discussions and launch the creation of the Coalition.



Dialogue is a serious business and if society was paying more attention to those initiatives, societal challenges like racism, intolerance, radicalism and violence would be tackled very differently and much more effectively. The coalition that this movement will allow is the best prevention tool for the multiple clashes that riddle our social fabric. It's time to show what we can do, collectively.

Rafael Tyszblat

Special Thanks

Supporters

The [OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights](#) (ODIHR), committed to supporting Coalitions of Civil Society Organizations for tolerance, has once again supported this initiative by providing a venue, accommodation and catering for the three days of the event. They also provided the tools and the structure to build consensus around key aspects of the vision and governance of the future Coalition.

[Natan Fund](#), allowed Connecting Actions to prepare the Coalition effort and get the expertise needed to effectively facilitate the Symposium discussions. The grant also helped us build the Connecting Actions website and interactive platform for future members to interact and share resources. It also covered travel expenses for the participants and communication materials and collaterals.

More than just sponsors, they have been instrumental in helping Connecting Actions reach this level of success.

Initiators

The founder: the Muslim Jewish Conference

The Muslim Jewish Conference (www.mjconference.org), founded in 2010 by Ilja Sichrovsky, is a Non Governmental organisation, which activity is run by volunteers from all origins and which aims at building trust, mutual respect and collaboration between young Jews and Muslims, religious or secular. Each year since 2010, the organisation gathers over a hundred young Jews and Muslims coming from different parts of the World for a week long intensive interreligious, citizen dialogue in order to better understand each other overcome antagonisms and initiate common projects. The *MJC* team gives those young leaders the opportunity to launch they own projects in order to promote a sustainable change in the field of interreligious cooperation and intercultural understanding.

For the past 8 years, the Muslim Jewish Conference therefore gathered more than 900 actors of change who combat hate, extremism and intolerance. The young students, NGO leaders, Human Rights activists, entrepreneurs, researchers or political leaders are each time invited to design and implement joint projects in their respective societies to fight all forms of intolerance and promote a better intercultural understanding and interreligious friendship.

With its international experience and network, the *MJC* wishes to contribute to federate youth and action-oriented citizen, intercultural and interreligious dialogue practitioners.

The steering committee

The *MJC* was supported by the three following organisations to conceptualise this project:

Coexister (www.coexister.fr), the interreligious youth movement, is a non-profit and social enterprise that, through dialogue, solidarity, and advocacy work, promotes active coexistence. They reject both proselytism and syncretism: clash of civilisations and relativism being two pitfalls that don't allow for a true and healthy coexistence. Their motto "Diversity in faith, Unity in action" invites them to build unity around what we do by preserving the diversity of what we believe in. With 600 volunteers et 1800 members doing daily groundwork for a positive use of diversity, *Coexister* had its successes recognized by national and international institutions for its inclusive vision of the French concept of *laïcité*.

3 Faiths Forum (www.3ff.org.uk) is an interfaith organisation from the UK who works to build good relations between people of different faiths, beliefs and cultures by creating safe spaces in schools, universities, places of work and worship and the wider community where people can engage with questions of belief and identity and meet people different from them. It also delivers trainings in effective and intercultural communication and dialogue.

The European Union of Jewish Students (www.eujs.com) is a pluralistic, inclusive and non-partisan umbrella organization supporting Jewish student unions throughout Europe and representing its members in international institutions and organizations. Founded in 1978, they currently have 35 member organizations. *EUJS* seeks to strengthen Jewish communities and European society through Jewish student activism and advocacy. Therefore, *EUJS* connects peer-led, independent Jewish student unions throughout Europe and supports them in fulfilling the aspirations of the Jewish people; developing Jewish religious, spiritual, cultural and social heritage, and ensuring continuity. Through its actions, *EUJS* actively promotes interfaith dialogue.

List of Participants and participating organisations

Organisation	Person	Designation	Email
CONNECTING ACTIONS TEAM	Rafael Tyszblat	Director	rafael.tyszblat@mjconference.org
	Meytal Rozental	Co-facilitation and logistics	meytal.rose@gmail.com
OSCE/ ODIHR TEAM	Debra Erenberg	Consultant	debra.erenberg@gmail.com
	James Stockstill	Adviser on Civil Society Relations	james.stockstill@odihr.pl
LOYA Consulting	Fabrice Teicher	Founder and director	fabrice@la-cabane.net
	Lisa Schmid	Writer / Journalist	
	Georges Dobrev	Photographer	
De Paul University	David Wellman	Associate Professor of Religious Studies	davidwellman7@gmail.com
PARTICIPANTS			
Muslim Jewish Conference (Austria)	Ilja Sichrovsky	President and Founder	ilja.sichrovsky@mjconference.org
Coexister (France)	Emmanuel Michel	General Delegate	delegue.general@coexister.fr
3FF (UK)	Ben Shapiro	Programmes Officer, ParliaMentors	ben@3ff.org.uk
EUJS – Europe (Berlin)	Alina Bricman	President	alina@eujs.org
Interfaith summit (UK)	Hashim Bhatti	Counsellor and Co-organizer of UK's Interfaith Summit	hashim.bhatti2@gmail.com
Maison du Dialogue et de la Paix - Madipax (France)	Jacques Hubert	Founder	maisondialogueetpaix@gmail.com

Together for Sweden (Sweden)	Jane Braden Golay	Program and Methods Development Officer	jane.braden@fryshuset.se
	Liam Sallamander	Coordinator	liam.sallmander@fryshuset.se
Salaam Shalom (Germany)	Larissa Zeigerer	Member, Public Relations	la.z@gmx.de
JUGA (Germany)			
G3i Groupe International, Interculturel et Interconvictionnel (France)	François Becker	Honorary President	frbecker@orange.fr
NCBI-Projekt « Respect : Muslim- und Judenfeindlichkeit gemeinsam überwinden» (Switzerland)	Lamya Hennache	Coordinator	lamya.hennache@gmail.com
	Noëmi Knoch	Coordinator	noemi.knoch@solnet.ch
Sharing Perspectives (Netherlands)	Casper van der Heijden	Programme Manager	ccvdheijden@gmail.com
GFIC - Groupe des Foyers Islamo- Chrétien s (France)	Lucie Roldan	President	lucieroldan@hotmail.com
	Aziza Haddar	Active Member	aziza_may@yahoo.fr
United Religions Initiative - URI Europe (Bosnia Herzegovina)	Vjekoslav Saje	URIE secretary	sajecrd@gmail.com
	Adnan Hasic	URI Bosnia and Herzegovina	agencijanms@gmail.com
Dialogue perspectives (Germany)	Iman Al Nassre	Project coordinator	alnassre@dialogperspektiven.de

	Marek Azoulay	Community building & public relations. Member of the board.	marekazou@gmail.com
We Act (Denmark)	Hanna El Gourfti	Social media content & promotion of the peace festival. Board member.	hannafilalielgourfti@gmail.com
Integrationswerkstatt Unkel (Germany)	Zachary Lapin Gallant	Co-Founder	zachary.gallant@fulbrightmail.org
	Riad Al Hamad	Co-Founder	alhamadriad7@gmail.com
Institut HOZES (Sevran, France)	Yacine Hilmi	Co-Founder	hilmiyacine@yahoo.fr
Open Skane (Sweden)	Rabbi Rebecca Lillian	Project Leader	rabbi.r.lillian@gmail.com
Amanah The Jewish and Muslim Trust and Faith Project (Sweden)	Rabbi Moshe David HaCohen	Rabbi of the Jewish community - Co-Founder	rabbin.hacohen@jfm.se
	Imam Salahuddin Barakat	Director of Islamakademin - Co-Founder	salahuddin@islamakademin.se
Together for Finland / Ad Astra (Finland)	Milena Parland	In charge of Together for Finland-youth program	milena.parland@ad-astra.fi
Interreligiösa Centret (Gothenburg, Sweden)	Berit Bornecrantz	Coordinator	berit.bornecrantz@interreligiosacentret.se
Initiatives et Changement (France)	Claire Tamano	General delegate	claire.tamano@ic-fr.org
	Marie Hélène De Cherisey	President	marie-helene.decherisey@ic-fr.org
Groupe Inter Religieux pour la Paix 78 (France)	Henri Foucart	Co président	contact@gip78.fr

Organisations joining the discussion but not present

Dialogpilotene (Norway)	Claudia M. Lorentzen Waage	Coordinator Dialogpilotene	claudia@dialogpilotene.no
Die Junge Islamkonferenz JIK (Germany)	Jessica Bajinski	Network Coordinator	milena.jovanovic@j-i-k.de
KifKif Vivre Ensemble (France)	Gabrielle Allante	Board Member	gabrielle.allante@gmail.com
Faiths In Tune (Germany)	Anja Fahlenkamp	Founding Director	faithsintune@gmail.com

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