

IAYSP Austria's Zoom meeting on Youth and Multiculturalism in Austria

M. Ladstatter
December 4, 2020

On the 4th of December 2020 at 7 pm IAYSP Austria organized a Zoom meeting on Youth and Multiculturalism in Austria: "Preventing violent radicalization of young people". Due to the recent event in the shooting terrorist attack in Vienna, we thought it is also an important topic for IAYSP Austria to tackle.

62 people from different backgrounds and NGOs participated in the event. We had three speakers who shared their input and answered the questions of the audience afterwards.



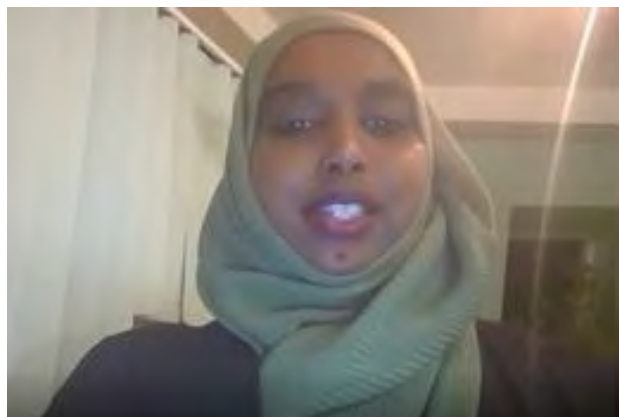
Mrs. Mag. Dür-Kwieder, a psychologist and adult trainer, as well as volunteer at the Documentation and Counseling Centre for Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism, mentioned that after the attacks, racism against Muslims, especially Muslim women, increased significantly.

Minorities often feel excluded and unwelcomed, which leads to isolation and many exclude themselves from society. She highlighted that solidarity is the key.

"Südwind" (The Südwind Association is an Austrian non-profit NGO focusing on education and campaign work in the international development field.) did a research on "rhizome against polarization", which states that young people who are facing racism and feel unwelcomed, develop an insecure personality. They have difficulties to connect and their identity becomes fragile. Extremist groups look for those who have a fragile identity and are in the need of support and orientation. She stated that we have been blind to the needs of young people and as a society we should include those young people more and give future prospects to them. There should be more offers of participation for Muslim young people to strengthen the sense of belonging to the Austrian society and social processes and involvement in civil society. We should offer activities to strengthen the resilience of young people, for example programs on self-motivation and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, she mentioned that we need more awareness raising and training on racism and sexism. We need to involve social actors who are working with young people on this subject.

She suggested that there should be a subject in school curriculums to learn about racism and social media competence, as young people are vulnerable to online information, as there is a threat of fake news and hate speech, and provide them with counter narratives. In addition she emphasized, diversity, human rights and democracy are crucial components and that we need more solidarity in our society and look out more for each other.



Mrs. Dr. Mohamed, a pharmacist and public health advocate. She is originally from Somalia, lived in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Pakistan, and Austria. Suad aims to spread awareness about refugee and migration issues, to improve the healthcare and pharmaceutical systems in developing countries and to empower women and young people. In her presentation, She highlighted that young people get radicalized because they do not have a sense of identity, they are missing a sense of community and they do not have anything positive they believe in, they lose trust and often face violence at home. She stated that the society can also cause

radicalization, it starts with small things, for instance when we do not tell others that racism is wrong. Furthermore, she mentioned that radicalization is not related to religion or just one religion. We can prevent radicalization through giving young people a sense of identity, providing dialogue in schools, such as talking to the students on the topic of migration and learning about other cultures. She emphasized that we need to work together as a community to prevent radicalization and help each other.



Mr. Bogdan Pammer, teacher in Steyr; former school director, and IAYSP President of Europe and Middle East, mentioned that radicalization of young people is a broader social issue. He stated that in his understanding there are two extremes that young people face: on one hand there is the nihilism, which portrays hopelessness, rejection of great stories of how the world is and not finding one's place; on the other hand, in their search for identity they are confronted with totalitarianism. It provides them with simple answers: a sense of belonging and empowerment. However, It is

important to provide young people with a narrative for their journey in life that equips them to deal with those traps or temptation of those two. Moreover, he mentioned that the family plays a crucial aspect in that. It gives us purpose and belonging and helps us to deal with contradictions in life.

He highlighted that schools and teachers are very important to provide a holding space for young people as young people have a lot of things going on in their mind, bodies and relationships. School is much more than a space that provides knowledge. A holding space means that there is a free space that teachers are there and that they believe in them and challenge their view in the world. Furthermore, he mentioned that applying the 7 pillars against violence are also key in schools and in preventing the radicalization of young people. He highlighted that teachers have to start believing again in themselves that they have an important role in society.

Another important aspect is the role of religious communities and NGOs. Mosques are important to build defenses against nihilism and totalitarianism.

He highlighted the 4 core values of IAYSP as being crucial fighting radicalization: RISE, which stands for Responsibility, Integrity, Service and Empathy. The role of Peace Designer Projects will increasingly be more and more important.

Afterwards the speakers answered several questions from the audience.

Thank you all for this interesting input and discussion on this topic.

M. Ladstätter and the IAYSP Team Austria