‘YOUTH FOR GENDER EQUALITY’
EUROPEAN YOUTH FOUNDATION
PILOT PROJECT

LIMASSOL, CYPRUS
Who we are:
AEQUITAS is an NGO in Cyprus that works on promoting human rights education, intercultural education and citizenship education. More particularly, AEQUITAS holds that these three interrelated areas are necessary characteristics for a democratic, tolerant and just society. In this light, AEQUITAS provides Human Rights Education, Citizenship Education and Intercultural Education for children, youth and adults, educates competent authorities on issues pertaining to human rights, empowers marginalized communities and individuals to know and uphold their rights, carries out awareness-raising campaigns on a variety of human rights issues and encourages Human Rights Debate and Education. For more information on our organization, please visit www.aequitas-humanrights.org.

European Youth Foundation:
The pilot project was funded by the European Youth Foundation. The European Youth Foundation is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial support for European youth activities. It has an annual budget of approximately 3 million Euros. Since 1972, more than 300,000 young people, aged between 15 and 30, mostly from Member States, have benefitted directly from EYF-supported activities. Its purpose is to encourage co-operation among young people in Europe by providing financial support to such European youth activities which serve the promotion of peace, understanding and co-operation in a spirit of respect for the Council of Europe's fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, tolerance and solidarity.

Project Overview:
The pilot activity was a training course during which 20 participants, representing youth NGOs and groups, were empowered to take an active stance in promoting gender equality in Cypriot society through human rights education. More particularly, the project enabled participants to understand women’s rights, explore the phenomenon of gender discrimination, gain the ability
to recognize stereotypes and prejudices against women, challenge such phenomena within their own communities and become empowered to implement human rights education activities as a means to this end within their own organizations. It ensured that participants embrace the values necessary or the creation of a human rights culture, such as respect, solidarity and non-discrimination as these are necessary pre-requisites for gender equality. As well as the training course, this pilot project resulted in a flash mob on gender equality which took place in Limassol as well as in the formulation of a strategic plan, which incorporates recommendations made by participants of the course to competent authorities, policy makers and other NGOs in relation to the promotion of the rights of women and gender equality in Cyprus.

**Project Objectives:**

The purpose of the project was two-fold, namely to raise awareness amongst young people and representatives of youth NGOs in relation to women’s rights and gender inequalities and to
equip them with the knowledge and skills to implement human rights education activities, within their own organizations, as a means of combatting gender inequalities. Against a rights-based approach, the project considered the history, causes, manifestation and consequences of gender inequalities and

considered key reports, research, facts and figures in relation to the role of women along all levels in Cyprus as well as other Council of Europe countries for purposes of comparison. Here and in relation to all objectives, the training course was designed in such a way as to give a particular emphasis on how gender inequalities affect young people in Cyprus and what part they can play in combatting this phenomenon. Further, participants developed their knowledge in relation to women’s rights under international, European and national law, explored the phenomena of gender discrimination in Cyprus within the political, societal, family and employment framework, comprehended stereotypes of women and discriminatory activities against women, as these are present in our society, and also considered issues such as gender based violence in Cyprus. It also considered the obstacles faced by particularly vulnerable women such as migrants, disabled women and rural women as well as the impact of the financial crisis on women's rights. After this theoretical framework was established, the course looked at the aims and objectives of human rights education and the technical side of implementing relevant activities as a means of combatting gender inequalities and promoting women’s rights. It also looked at other activities that can be implemented on a local level by NGOs, which are relevant to the promotion of human rights issues including flash mobs and awareness raising campaigns. The participants had the opportunity to arrange and carry out a flash mob in the community. When considering means and methods that can be implemented by NGOs, the training course also focused on inspiring young people to take an active stance against this phenomenon and to develop their skills vis-à-vis the discussion and assessment of gender based violence so they, and subsequently their organizations, are in an empowered position to contribute to this purpose. All of the above were pursued with the aim of fulfilling the overarching objective which was the empowerment of youth NGOs in relation to the elimination of discrimination against Women in Cyprus.
Participants:
The participants were young people aged 18-30 who are members or staff of youth NGOs and groups operating in Cyprus. They are all potential multipliers of the learning outcomes of the course and are in a position to contribute to achieving its objectives. More particularly, they are persons who can return to their own organizations and implement human rights education activities in the field of gender equality. All participants were involved in youth work but came from a variety of professional backgrounds such as education, the law, sociology, social work and political science. Although AEQUITAS tried to ensure a fair representation of both male and female participants, the vast majority of the participants were female.
Methodology:
AEQUITAS’ approach was founded on principles of non-formal learning, aimed at the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes in a voluntary, learner-centred setting. Moreover, throughout the training course, solidarity-based working methods were adopted within an interactive, participatory environment. An array of different activities were implemented throughout the training course, including COMPASS and Gender Matters activities, presentations, debates and discussions with the flash mob and formulation of the set of recommendations occurring at the end. All these activities, although varying in nature, placed the participants at the epicentre of the course. COMPASS and Gender Matters activities, in themselves, are learner-centred with active participation being a key theme. During the debates, discussions and workshops, methods such as wall magazines and co-operative group work as well as other techniques for supporting effective learning, were implemented in order to ensure that participants played an active role. Creative methodology such as role plays, wall magazines and brainstorming were used throughout. With regards to the participants’ flash mob and the formulation of the set of recommendations, the participants were responsible for all the preparation, implementation and evaluation of all the aspects of these activities, ensuring their active participation. Furthermore, during the project, participants drew up recommendations for the promotion of women’s rights in all frameworks of Cypriot society which have been incorporated in a strategic plan on gender equality prepared by AEQUITAS and promoted to relevant governmental and non-governmental organization as a tool for learning and also as a tool for change in the field of gender equality and women’s rights.

Learning Outcomes:
Participants embraced the values necessary for the creation of a human rights culture, such as respect, solidarity and non-discrimination as these are necessary pre-requisites for gender equality. Moreover, the project sought to increase awareness on issues pertaining to discrimination against women, including gender based violence, to enable participants to appreciate the inalienable and indivisible nature of women’s rights, to promote human rights
education as a tool for combatting gender discrimination, to inspire young people to take an active stance against this phenomenon, to develop their skills vis-à-vis the discussion and assessment of gender based violence and to promote dialogue and cooperation between young people from different countries. In relation to knowledge, as well as understanding the theoretical backdrop of gender equality and women’s rights, participants became acquainted with key international, national and European rules and regulations that aim at eliminating discrimination against women and explore different types of gender based violence. Furthermore, participants considered the aims and objectives of human rights education and discovered how they can use this method as a tool for promoting gender equality. They also looked at relevant activities from COMPASS and Gender Matters and saw how they can implement these within their own youth groups and organizations. Also, participants developed their team-work skills, enhanced their creative skills, organizational skills and communication skills and improved their sense of initiative. These skills were developed through the participatory nature of the course and were set in force, particularly during the flash-mob and the creation of the recommendations for the strategic plan. In addition, a very central objective of the course was the cultivation of attitudes and values including, but not limited to, the respect for human rights, equality, solidarity, non-discrimination and active citizenship. The project enabled participants to develop professionally and become more effective in their role as staff or members of youth NGOs within the ambit of gender equality and through the endorsement of human rights principles and approaches. The general pursuit of human rights attitudes and active citizenship, outside the participants’ professional arena, was also a significant characteristic of this project. They became potential multipliers for human rights attitudes and practices in their entirety and within the framework of gender inequalities within their local community and personal environments, thereby becoming actors for change.
Outputs:

- Strategic Plan

Contact:

For more information on the project, contact Natalie Alkiviadou at nalkiviadou@aequitas-humanrights.org or on 25 582333.