



## Press Release for a Youth Exchange Program "Countering Violent Extremism"

### Athens/Greece

Our project **"Countering Violent Extremism (CV-EX)"** has been completed and its goals have been met with success greater than our expectations!

"Countering Violent Extremism" was transnational initiative organized and coordinated by ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SOCIAL ECONOMY GROUP (E.K.O.) in the context of the European Commission's Erasmus+ Youth Exchange programs. It took place in Athens on **14<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018** and involved a group of **forty-three (43) young people** aged 18-30, including their leaders, from 7 different countries across Europe and the Euromediterranean basin (**Greece, Spain, Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Italy**), and gave them the opportunity to explore together a phenomenon that concerns us all: Extremism in all its forms driven by a radical "ideology", which gives reasoning to violence.



The project focused on the complex issue of radicalization and examined the roots behind extremist behavior, including the changes in moral values, the increasing refugee and migration flows, the spreading economic crisis and the role of internet and social media as a powerful means of recruitment and reinforcement of extreme violence.

A central objective of the project was to provide young people a platform for a fruitful discussion concerning the parameters fueling the rise of extremist tendencies, in all their forms including social polarization, the rise of the far right, islamophobia, terrorism, online propaganda and hate speech, systemic discrimination, and so on, as well as the exchange of best practices and ideas for innovative approaches that can effectively counter extremism, enable non-violent conflict resolution and promote harmonious and peaceful coexistence of humans in celebration of diversity.

*Exploring Diversity; Diverse ideas on debate*

Indeed, the participants took every opportunity given to engage in lively discussions both during and after the sessions, exposing themselves to a constellation of different (and many times opposing) viewpoints, learning to dare to speak their minds, while being active listeners and respectful to their conversational partners at the same time. What an amazing way to cultivate solidarity and respect towards all facets of diversity, including one of the most neglected ones; "diversity of opinion"!



Through a series of non-formal education activities, and most importantly by facilitating direct interaction, within an environment of mutual respect, participants deepened their understanding with regards to the social, economic, political and psychological consequences worldwide and realized how our problems are interconnected to each other, calling for common solutions





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### *Teaching one another through Non-Formal Education*

This project was made for the participants by the participants themselves, in that every national team took up the responsibility to design a coordinate a set of workshops and was in charge of their implementation (Moderator of Activity)

In addition, each day a different team organized the ice-breakers, energizers and session transitions, ensuring proper time-management, team dynamics and smooth flow of the daily program (Moderator of the Day)



### *Creativity, Artistic Expression and Humour against Extremism*

Integral parts of the program were also tasks that required imagination, creativity and artistic expression! For example, participants had the chance to create the Project's Logo & Motto themselves, visualizing the message they want to spread;

**"Peace Promotion Across the Ocean" that is!**

Moreover, cultural visits in Athens provided the participants with an important insight into the Greek culture, history, and everyday socio-economic life of Athenians. Through several intercultural nights, organized by the different national teams, the youngsters came to appreciate each partner's culture. The smooth collaboration, the fruitful discussions and the many friendships developed among different young people made evident that an experience shared by all participants was the discovery of the many similarities among our cultures and the realization that what is fundamentally human remains the same irrespective of cultural differences and enables people of our diverse world live in harmony with each other.



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Through this life changing experience, the young participants returned home with new experiences, new skills, new friends and an enhanced their commitment to support their community and take action against extremism, violence and exclusion, for a better society!



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