

**European Youth Hearing (as follow-up to the European Youth Event EYE2018)  
in the LIBE committee  
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Ideas presented by the young former EYE participants

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*Expertise: international protection, discrimination and religion, integration, young displaced, ACP*

Between 1 January and 31 March 2018, 1.163 children arrived in Europe by sea: 927 were unaccompanied and separated. They do not need any act of charity, but chances and opportunities to actively participate in civil society. 'Care' shall be one channel towards concrete commitment to rethink the principle of Solidarity by the Member States for the fulfilment of a common goal: the respect of displaced youth and, above all, their further integration.

For these premises, I would like to present two ideas to you today.

**Idea 1: Education for unaccompanied and separated children**

The first idea is to grant unaccompanied and separated children, together with young migrants and refugees, European scholarships to attend school immediately and equivalences of diplomas or other diploma comparability assessments (for those who already hold one and want to continue their studies) in the easiest, cheapest and fastest way possible.

For this, a new fund should be created, in order to bring every single unaccompanied and separated child into European schools. The same should be done for young migrants willing to start or to continue their studies (Bachelor, Master or even PhD). This must be supported by faster procedures granting protection – whether international, subsidiary or humanitarian – by national authorities, which are called upon to operate efficiently and effectively and above all not leave displaced youth in the void *limbo* of waiting for papers.

These European scholarships would, *ipso facto*, include the diploma equivalence or comparability assessment plus the recognition of qualifications, as well as support and strengthen the activity of the ENIC-NARIC networks in order to better give young migrants opportunities to be full-time students.

The initiative must be European, as all Member States must adhere to it and automatically introduce unaccompanied and separated children and young migrants into schools and universities to ensure inclusion and equal access to education and social spheres and take steps against discrimination of persons of every nationality.

As an Italian trainee lawyer, I had the chance to appreciate the CIMEA's (the Italian ENIC-NARIC Networks' office) work as far as the equivalences and comparability activity of diplomas are concerned. Their job is fundamental to assure better opportunities for young migrants. However, they only grant free equivalence assessments in cases of international and subsidiary protection holders. As far as high school and university diplomas are concerned, the CIMEA should be a tool to facilitate the entrance of young displaced persons to European universities, by granting free diploma equivalences to humanitarian protection holders too.

This good practice would lead to a safe long-term 'win-win' process. As Michelle Obama once said, "children in schools raise GDPs", independent of their nationality or status. Opening the doors of European schools and universities to accompanied, unaccompanied and separated children and young migrants would certainly lead to a substantial uplift of schools and academic institutions in

all Member States, raising the quality in education and integration processes. This practice would enhance virtuous cooperation amongst schools and universities both in Europe and Third Countries, and give to those who could not move from their country in a safe and regular way the chance to start or increase their academic expertise.

## **Idea 2: Custody of unaccompanied and separated children**

The second idea concerns children's right to play and study. As an Italian trainee lawyer building my expertise in the field of migration and human rights law, in line with the literature of European and Italian family law, I believe that the right to play and study for the longest time possible must be granted – equally - to every child, including all young refugees

For this reason, the practice of facilitating – where and if possible - the custody of unaccompanied and separated children might be a good starting point for the above-mentioned integration.

The European Union should harmonize national laws concerning displaced children, fostering the good practice of giving them the chance to keep living in familiar environments first, rather than in communities for minors, where their best interest is not always pursued as a priority.

Moreover, it is not only of unaccompanied and separated children that we should talk about. I had the chance to meet a young woman from Ivory Coast and her 4 years old son. She arrived in Europe by sea and was pregnant at the time. When they arrived in my hometown, they met a local person and became friends with her. The local person's whole family made a decision with the woman, to take custody of both her and her young son.

When we talk about 'custody', the focus is not necessarily strictly on the unaccompanied children, but on an issue concerning deeper integration. Custody can not only be understood as the first step towards adoption of an unaccompanied child, but also taking custody of his or her parents: taking care of an existing family. If this good practice would be encouraged at the Union level, taking custody of the displaced children together with their parents would imply a positive 'win-win' process.

For the displaced parents this would facilitate the possibility to immediately have a house and to feel freer to search for a job, knowing that their children have a home, people looking after them and a structured programme to follow, including school, sports and fun. On the other side of the 'win-win', lots of European couples and families looking for someone to take care of, would contribute to this protective and virtuous circle.

On the footsteps of many NGOs encouraging European families to welcome migrants, a European fund should be created to sustain and encourage those families embracing this type of custody, taking into due account that, in this case, Union and Member States' economic investment would be less expensive than the actual placement of displaced children and parents into communities. This, because the custody reaches the target in a shorter and more direct chain, without passing through the inevitable fixed costs imposed by the communities, which are organized as firms.

This good practice would boost the possibilities for accompanied, unaccompanied and separated children to express their potential, reducing the unfortunate, but diffused, possibilities for them to end up in child labour market, disappearing, or growing up with no specific care addressing their needs and desires. A mutualistic symbiosis based on the best interest of the child.

These responses, in accordance with the Principle of Solidarity, would be a win-win process, not only in the perspective of roles and responsibilities of Member States, but also as a means of serious long-term integration, through enlightened European supranational political choices, foreseeing the gigantic power, benefits and opportunities for a more sustainable and human future for all.

The 'win-win' output of these two ideas would be the one of converging two opportunities into one. First, transforming young migrants' (children or not) irregular status into a positive opportunity and second, giving to Europe young and new intelligences to be added to the European ones, in order to give, together, long life to the Union.

**Lukas Feuchter** (25, Austrian)

*Expertise: migration, asylum policy*

### **Idea 1: European Residence for Qualified Migrants Persons**

The idea I would like to present to you today is of a “European residence for highly qualified persons”. The European Union already addresses this issue with the Blue Card, but this instrument has almost no practical usage. The reason for this being the very high requirements to obtain the Blue Card. While requirements are valid, they do not seem to consider equal access to all groups. For example, young third country citizens who just graduated from a European university. Article 5.3 of the Blue Card Directive states that one’s salary must be 1.5 times the gross average annual salary of the country. For example, according to Statistics Austria the gross average Austrian salary for 2016 was around 31.000 €. I will graduate as a law student next year, and I highly doubt that I as a European and Austrian citizen will be able to start with a job that pays me 46.000 €.

So, my proposal is to amend the Blue Card Directive and create an exemption for the salary requirement for third country citizens who studied and graduated in the European Union. As this would be a European programme, a European institution could determine rules around eligibility. The current system makes no sense economically. Why should the European Union invest in the education of young people from all over the world, and after they graduate, we are not allowing them to contribute to European society? Therefore, I think adding an exemption to third countries citizens who graduated in Europe would be a small but very effective change to enable non-EU persons to contribute to our societies.

### **Idea 2: Humanitarian Corridors for Refugees**

Secondly, I want to talk about humanitarian corridors for refugees. The idea is to change the place where asylum seekers are able to apply for asylum. Not in the EU member states as it is right now, but only in European-Member state’s Embassies or Consulates around the world. There the asylum seeker could first be interviewed and then the national representatives could already ascertain if the Geneva Convention is applicable. The final decision would then be made by the responsible national court.

Before I explain my proposal further I believe that whatever solution for this issue you will choose, there is something we need to acknowledge: that this is an issue we can only solve as European Union and every country needs to participate. The strategy to just say “no we don’t want any refugees” might be a compelling sentiment for some in the EU but it’s just not realistic. Because people who fear for their lives will always try to protect themselves and for most of them the EU seems to be their only chance.

There are some who, although they live in precarious conditions, have no legal basis for asylum status according to the Geneva Convention. For example, persons who are being displaced because of climate change don’t qualify as refugees under the Geneva Convention (Keep in mind that the World Bank is predicting up to 140 Million people will be forced to leave their home countries by 2050 because of climate change ).To fix the problems we face right now and be prepared for climate change refugees. I propose to examine asylum seekers status in EU embassies and consulates all around the world because I believe that people who are working directly in regions from where refugees are seeking asylum have better insight into political developments of the region. As such they have a better grasp of what is a plausible story and what is not. I personally experienced cases where government agents tried to argue against asylum cases with a complete lack of regional knowledge. For example, they stated that a case of political persecution should have been “reported to the authorities.” From the perspective of someone having lived in Europe their whole lives, this

would be a legitimate response. But for example, the Talibans have almost full control in some regions in Afghanistan and going to the police to report them would most likely be a death sentence. I believe pre-screening of individuals in embassies or consulates is also the only viable way to combat human trafficking. Increasing the difficulty for human traffickers for example by increasing border security would not stop them, rather it would simply adjust their prices upward. People who pass this first screening could then be brought into the European Union where specialists further vet them and a responsible court finally decides their status. After that, they could be distributed according to a quota to Member states. I know this is a very broad and bold proposal; but I strongly believe this would solve many problems we have now in the asylum-process.

**Simón Cabrera Ebers** (28, Swedish)

*Expertise: prevention, extremism, anti-radicalisation*

### **Idea 1: Tackling exclusion**

My first idea tackles exclusion by targeting youth close to issues of extremism, crime and violence in general. It is built on the belief that youth ought to be seen as part of the solution rather than the problem. The goal of this idea is to get those that feel most excluded from society to participate meaningfully. My proposal is that the EU would finance a pilot project and closely evaluate its impact so that it can be transformed in an action plan to serve as an example for local governments across Europe.

Now to the idea:

In order to reduce violence one has to look at the context that it stems from. There are various push and pull factors that increase the risk of a young individual ending up in the destructive environments of crime and extremism. This idea tackles the problem of **exclusion** – and the feeling of it – as it is prevalent in all those who end up in anti-democratic, anti-law, types of groups. If young people from affected communities feel that they have the power to shape their own future and participate meaningfully in what society has to offer – the pull factors of a life outside of the law will be weaker.

This is a strategy to prevent youth from entering extremism and crime that should be implemented at the municipal level. The strategy has several steps:

1. Meet the target group where they are: this is essential, do not expect those that feel excluded to show up when hosting events. Use passionate interests as a starting point – i.e. martial arts – build relationships and trust amongst the local community.
2. Use the trust and relationship to motivate young people from affected areas to participate in leadership programs and take on new roles. Enable them to find their full potential, this can only be done with the conviction that everyone can develop, given the right conditions.
3. **Include** the target group in political processes such as youth councils. The desired outcome is that the new participants – from the most affected communities – will serve as role models providing a positive alternative to the destructive.

The project needs to work with both the youth and the local government, as the youth change the authorities needs to follow – doing so the youth can feel empowered and the stakeholders can benefit from this untapped resource.

## **Idea 2: Disengagement of radicalised people**

My second idea is based on my experience from the field of disengagement from extremist groups and criminal gangs. I have worked closely with colleagues that use their personal experience from these type of groups in order to help others find a way out.

My idea targets a gap in the field of disengagement – it consists of setting up a fund to pay former members, now practitioners, so that new programmes based around formers can be started around Europe.

Some background:

There are a few successful **“disengagement” programmes** across the EU. Amongst the most successful are those using former members – also called formers. Trained formers can easier build the initial – and crucial – relationship with persons motivated to leave their destructive life behind.

However, to start up a disengagement program using formers is hard for two reasons: 1. You do not know who is a real former member, the level of engagement and how reliable the person is.

2. The former might not have the tools to use his/her experience to help others. In order to do these two steps effectively you need another former with experience from working with disengagement. This is in many cases very hard to find and thus the problem. My idea is therefore aimed at helping out with the initial and important phase of starting up disengagement programs using formers.

I propose that the EU creates a resource pool drawing from experienced formers from the field of disengagement – these are easily available through the EU **Radicalisation Awareness Network, or RAN**. To further ensure the sustainability of the pool, the EU would finance these already working formers as consultants to start up new disengagement programs across Europe.

This idea pin points a hole in the disengagement field: the RAN provides the knowledge, however they cannot pay the experienced formers to spend the necessary time abroad to open up new initiatives. This means that the practitioners would have to work on a voluntary basis or on the cost of their host organisation – which many times not is possible. Therefor I call on the EU to provide the resources necessary to counter this gap.