



## COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

### Euro-Asia CC

***Faiths /Traditions Represented:*** Catholic, Baptist, Altai, Siberian traditions and all people with open minds

***Location of CC:*** Novosibirsk, Russia

***Primary Contact:*** Galina Ermolina

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***Secondary Contact:*** Rimma P. Zvereva

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***Key Areas of Focus:*** Our purpose is to encourage people of the region to unite in the name of the common good, and to promote interfaith cooperation between the people of all backgrounds, different cultures, and social status. We also strive to share Siberian heritage and learn more about the heritage of other nations.

***Approved:*** April 2011

### ***Summary***

*Euro-Asia CC is located in Novosibirsk, Russia. This CC predominantly focuses on organizing events and symposiums around health and cultural traditions. Their events bring together Catholics, Baptists, Altai, and various Siberian traditions and actively aim to build bridges between different religions and traditions in this area. Euro-Asia is making a proactive effort to share the richness of Siberian cultures and traditions with the rest of the world. They are building strong bridges within their community, and on larger scale, between Europe and Asia*



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### **1. Can you please help me understand the current religious/cultural/political context in the area where your CC is working?**

Novosibirsk is the third most populous city in Russia after Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the most populous city in Asian Russia. It is the administrative center of Novosibirsk Oblast as well as of the Siberian Federal District. The city is located in the southwestern part of Siberia and is informally known as the "Capital of Siberia". People of over 80 ethnicities and nationalities reside in Novosibirsk. The largest groups are Russian, German, Ukrainian, Tatar, Jewish, and Belarusian. The population is mainly Catholic, but there is a considerable Altai community, Atheists, and individuals from different Siberian traditions.

### **2. Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where the CC works?**

We work in a big area that connects Europe and Asia (this is the reason why we chose the name Euro-Asia for our CC) with people from different religions and traditional backgrounds. Also this was previously a Soviet country, where expressing religious beliefs was forbidden. Consequently, there is an added need to build bridges between different religions and traditions in this area.

### **3. Can you please briefly describe the main activities or programs your CC is doing this year?**

Our group organizes a variety of activities and events, such as symposia around issues of health and traditions, round tables, and workshops. Some members work with pensioners, invalids, and some teach children. We share the wisdom of the indigenous people of Siberia with interested partners. We also appreciate learning from people around the world.

We participate in celebrations, e.g. of the spring equinox, and organize visits and journeys. In 2012, our CC cooperated with "Faiths without Borders" in Finland. Galina Ermolina, with help from Heidi Rautionmaa, visited Finland and participated in various encounters, exhibitions and events, speaking and exchanging experiences and knowledge.

In Novosibirsk there is a unique Museum, the only one in the world-The Sun Museum, where our CC along with others celebrates four Equinoxes of the year. We have also taken part in URI's *Talking Back to Hate* campaign, through which we organized activities with children for World Interfaith Harmony week.



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### **4. Between which specific religions or cultures are bridges being built?**

We are building bridges between Catholic, Baptist, Altai and different Siberian traditions. We also strive to have open dialogue with Muslims and Atheists in our community.

### **5. Please explain the method or strategy that your CC uses to bring together people of different cultures and faiths that would otherwise not interact or cooperate with each other.**

We try to bring people together through different activities and work in the local community. We organize exhibitions where the community discusses different issues and prays together. Also we do volunteer work to help people in need and to improve life in our local community.

### **6. Given the current context you described, what does the CC hope to achieve (goals)?**

Because this is a vast area with people from different religious backgrounds and traditions, we want to build bridges between different religious traditions that are living here. Also we want to help people in need and make positive changes in the community by showing everyone that they can enjoy the diversity, the rich traditions and the cultures of our region.

### **7. How do you see this CCs work improving cooperation among people of different traditions?**

We are bringing a lot of positive energy to our community. Also, we are spreading information about our rich Siberian cultures and traditions, beginning to build bridges not just in our community, but between Europe, Asia, and the rest of the world.

### **8. What are some indicators/observations you see that relations are improving between people of different faiths and cultures in the area where the CC works?**

The work of our CC helps our community become more open and liberal so that everyone may live in harmony and enjoy its diversity. We also show all people the beauty of Siberian culture and tradition. We motivate children and youth to become volunteers, and to make positive changes in their local community.



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### ***9. How is your CC's work helping to achieve the mission of URI?***

All of our work is in line with the principles and the mission of URI. We try to create harmony between people from different religious traditions and backgrounds, and also strive to make positive changes in our local community. We also support and take part in various URI campaigns such as World Interfaith Harmony Week and *Talking Back to Hate Campaign*.