



COOPERATION CIRCLE PROFILE

Coexister CC

Faiths /Traditions Represented: Muslim, Catholics, Jewish, Christian Orthodox, Agnostic, Atheist, Non-believers.

Location of CC: Paris, France

Primary Contact: Victor Grezes

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Key Areas of Focus: Religious equality, convey social cohesion in a civil secular and united society.

Key Languages: French & English

Approval: January 2014

Summary:

Coexister CC is a youth-led organization located in Paris, France. Coexister CC's main focus is the promotion of religious equality with respect to each person's belief. They inspire individuals and organizations not to engage in evangelism, discrimination, and proselytization. Their activities, Annual Festiv'All Together and InterFaith Tour, promote civil secularism and unite societies.



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

We have seen tensions between communities shifting from a model (20 years) where the identity was based on ethnic criteria (Arab, Asian, etc) to a model where religion is the identity used by people to differentiate themselves. In addition, we have seen increasing cases of Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, discrimination against Christians, etc.

2. Why is interfaith/intercultural bridge building needed in the area where your CC is working?

Interfaith/Intercultural bridge building is needed in the context of French secularism (laïcité) where we have a separation and neutrality between state and religion. People are misusing “Laïcité” as a tool to discriminate against others. We need to explain and clarify the legislation, promoting an inclusive “laïcité” where you can be yourself, and be proud of your identity in private and public spaces as long as there is respect for others and their differences.

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

Activities by portfolios:

Dialogue: We’ve organized conferences throughout the year in the 11 groups throughout France (about one every week). We also organize visits to places of worship.

Solidarity: We organized a huge festival in three (3) cities where music, conferences and blood donations were organized (15,000 students participated in total). We also conducted day-to-day partnerships with solidarity NGOs in France

Raising awareness: every year 10,000 students attend our talks in schools nationwide.

Training: Interfaith training for our members

Travel: 50% of last year’s activities were linked to the InterFaith Tour program (5 students from different faiths traveled around the world to encounter interfaith activists). Our traveling group encountered 435 interfaith activists in 50 countries. Upon completion, they went for a 2-month tour (during May/June) in France to do 90 conferences, and they met more than 9,000 people (who came to listen to their talks).



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

It is mostly between the monotheist religions, and between the atheists and agnostics. It's fundamental for us to include non-believers in our interfaith work.

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

We use action. We want to go far beyond the simple dialogue or theology approach. We have realized that by doing things together, even non-religious activities (sports, music, travel, etc.) we manage to bring people together.

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

The purpose of our action is to help people recognize that while they are going to have deep disagreements on fundamental issues, they have to find other things on which they can come together and find similarities. We want to hold the space for this thinking to emerge.

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

Little by little, we see new initiatives popping here and there. Also, we see changes in the way people are speaking about and to each other. Finally, we have developed strong links with various institutions and developed strong lobbying to promote active coexistence and "interfaith" through public action.

8. How is the work of your CC helping to prevent religiously inspired violence or transforming conflict? (Ask in areas with open conflict.)

(This is not area with open conflict)

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

Our CC helps communities become more open and liberal, overcome stereotypes and prejudice so that everyone can live in harmony and enjoy diversity. Also, through our interfaith tour we promote these values on a global level making significant positive changes in the world.

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

Through our everyday work, we promote the mission of URI and URI's values.