

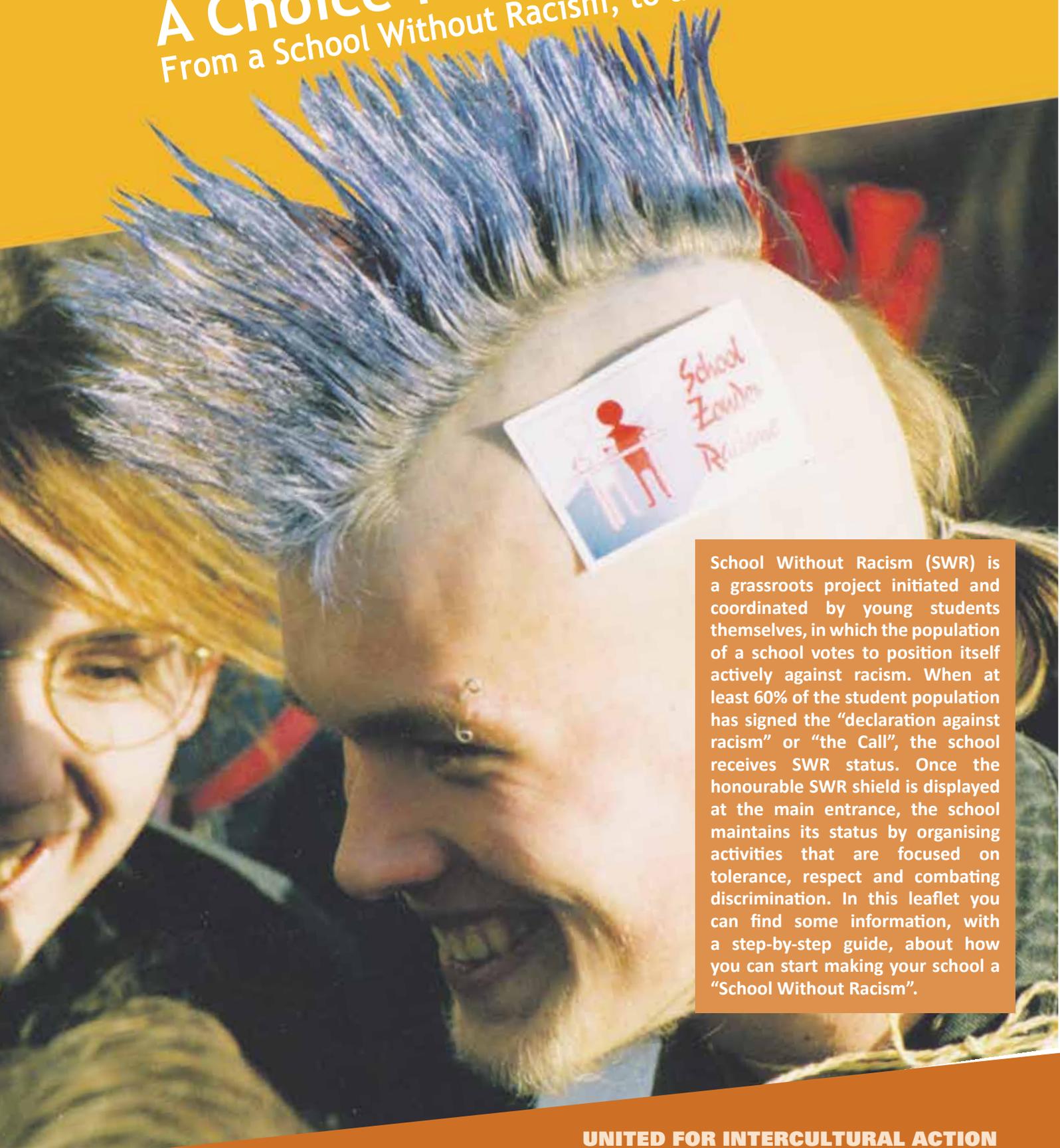
UNITED INFORMATION LEAFLET 31



A choice for the future

From a School Without Racism, to a world without racism

A Choice for the Future? From a School Without Racism, to a world without racism



School Without Racism (SWR) is a grassroots project initiated and coordinated by young students themselves, in which the population of a school votes to position itself actively against racism. When at least 60% of the student population has signed the “declaration against racism” or “the Call”, the school receives SWR status. Once the honourable SWR shield is displayed at the main entrance, the school maintains its status by organising activities that are focused on tolerance, respect and combating discrimination. In this leaflet you can find some information, with a step-by-step guide, about how you can start making your school a “School Without Racism”.

UNITED FOR INTERCULTURAL ACTION

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST NATIONALISM, RACISM, FASCISM AND IN SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

A SHORT HISTORY

Europe is in constant change and this allows us all to become acquainted with a multitude of different cultures, ideas and opinions, which all enrich our lives. Unfortunately there are some who resist these inevitable changes and fear a culturally diverse society. Today's youth will live and work in a multicultural Europe yet prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and senseless violence stemming from racist sentiment in, and around, schools is a common trend. We have a chance to do something against it by using good practices in antiracist work.

When the Belgian extreme-right party Vlaams Blok gained a high number of votes in the local elections, twenty young students in Antwerp started an antiracism project in their school. Many years back in 1988 they gave it the now famous name "School Zonder Racisme" (School Without Racism, SWR). Their success was noted by Dutch activists, who brought the idea to the Netherlands in 1993. The first large Dutch SWR activity was in February 1994, when 1500 students and other youngsters demonstrated on the streets against a series of hate incidents and extreme-right violence against asylum seekers in the Dutch city of Terneuzen. 4 high schools started as the first SWR schools and within 3 years there were 350 schools in the Netherlands bearing the SWR shield on their door. The Belgian and Dutch coordinators organised workshops all over Europe in close cooperation, along with the financial support of the Council of Europe and EU. In 1994 the Dutch and Belgian coordinators started the European Youth Movement School Without Racism. In 1995, SWR became one of the model projects of the European youth campaign "All Different, All Equal". These workshops were extremely successful - the German NGO *Aktion Courage* became very interested in SWR methodology, approached the coordinators and in that year, SOR (Schule Ohne Rassismus) began in Germany with help of SWR Belgium and SWR Netherlands. In 2001 a new network between Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain started. And now the project operates in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Bolivia and Venezuela, is being started up in Italy, Ireland and England and has been introduced in Switzerland, Romania, Lithuania and Hungary. So at this very moment the project has already reached a lot of youngsters in different countries.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

School Without Racism is a youth project, initiated and sustained by youngsters themselves, which structurally opposes all forms of racism and discrimination. Not just at school, but in many places where young people meet, such as youth centres and community centres. Whenever a school has a sign at its entrance carrying the words "School Without Racism" the population of that school has declared itself, with a big majority, in favour of a petition containing a code of conduct (the Call). SWR chooses this grassroots approach because democratic principles and the resulting active participation of young people guarantee a greater educational effect. It is democratic as every-

one at school votes **yes** or **no** for a SWR. Every student has read the 'Call' (see step 10) and knows what it means to be a SWR.

Being a School Without Racism depends on voluntary work. Work in which young people, teachers, members of the board and parents cooperate, but that is initiated and coordinated by the students (youngsters). When at a certain stage there are many SWR schools in a region/country, they can organise one or more "Points of Support" staffed with young volunteers. These Points of Support can be responsible for developing and/or distributing intercultural exercise books and materials as well as planning intercultural activities. They can also give further training to students and teachers, and coordinate combined activities and communication between participants. In addition, they can be responsible for the sustainability of the project, and finally, these Points of Support can stimulate research on the effectiveness of the project.

EDUCATING A NEW GENERATION

School Without Racism does not solely concentrate on intercultural education and discrimination on the basis of colour and origin. It also focuses on discrimination on the basis of religion, philosophy of life, political persecution, gender, sexual preference and disability. The basic premise of SWR is consequently directly related to international treaties and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. That means that the SWR approach is suitable for schools all over the world, and can contribute to the education and emancipation of a critical generation.

The basic principles remain the same, although some aspects may differ from the original Belgian philosophy depending on national relevance.

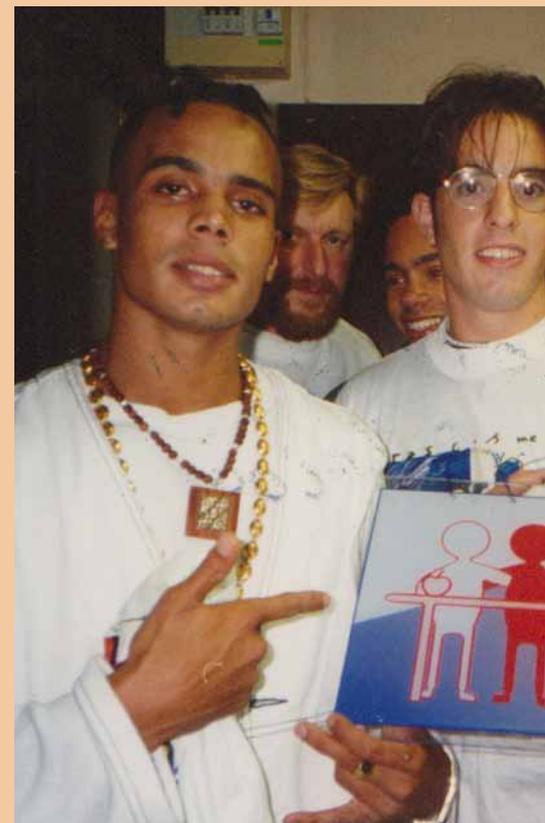
THE POSITIVE APPROACH

School Without Racism wants to stimulate young people to identify social problems and consequently try to solve them. In this way they realise that they can change their community and influence society as a whole. SWR aims to achieve changes in attitudes through a positive approach which is reflected in working methods that focus on participation, creativity, learning by experience, grassroots and peer-to-peer education. A few examples include alternative school trips like "A Different View on Brussels" and "A Different View on Amsterdam", designing posters, T-shirts and writing essays, exchanges, Human Libraries and the "Growing Box", a pack of educational materials that expands constantly through the contribution of those working with them.

Of course SWR takes part in UNITED activities: the European-Wide Action Week Against Racism in March, the International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism on 9 November and International Refugee Day on 20 June. SWR also participates in other European and global activities like International Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January, or locally and nationally important days that concern racism, minorities and discrimination.

A TRADEMARK FOR SOLIDARITY

School Without Racism is a project that wants to, and will, change society. It strives for a society with equal opportunities and equal rights for all. Every individual participating in SWR knows that he or she is part of a growing international network that is supportive and united. For help and guidance, all participants know they can count on each other, and also the Points of Support. Each "School Without Racism" can learn from the experiences of other schools and each SWR school is recognisable by the blue and red shield at its entrance. By means of exchanges, conferences and action-meetings, but also by Internet and e-mail it is possible for everybody to stay informed on the latest developments and - last but not least - experience being part of a network united by a common goal: a just, colourful and peaceful Europe without racism.



A MANUAL FOR ACTIVISTS

School Without Racism is for all schools, and anyone thinking that schools without a diverse population can have no racism is wrong – unfortunately whilst racism is present in society, it is present in all social environments. A School Without Racism is not simply created by a magic formula, you have to work at it, and this leaflet shows you how students have done this.

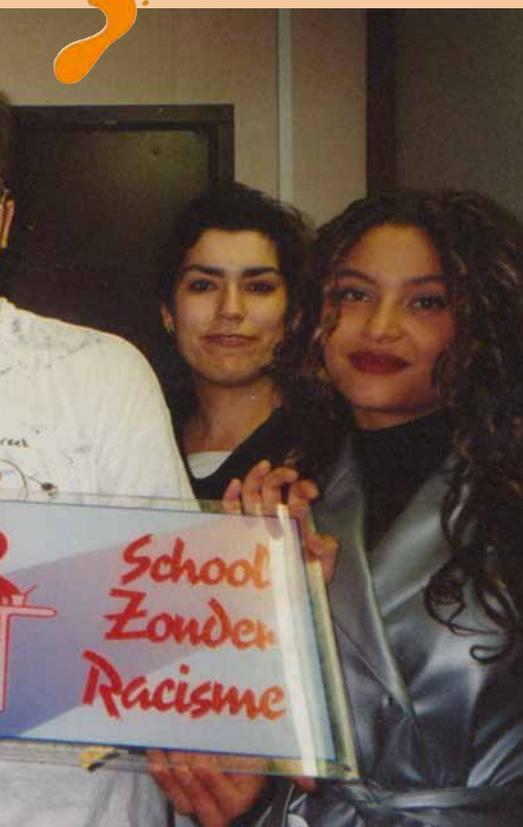
The thing is, you want to do something against exclusion and racism in and around your school: that is for sure! So, write this goal and your many ideas for achieving this down, and then you have a starting point for your project.



STEP BY STEP

Find allies and partners

STEP 1 Remember: first find some of your friends, classmates and school-mates to join you. Do not involve teachers yet - it is a grassroots project! That is the formula for success. So now you can make a SWR action team and call it the "Initiation SWR Group". Look for (local) antiracism organisations for help and advice. It is very important to have a lot of partners/friends in the beginning. Maybe a student school board or school newspaper-working group already exists, who is interested in cooperating with the SWR team. You also can look for human rights-, refugee-, gay and lesbian-, minority- or other groups to be partners or friends of your SWR initiative.



Cooperate... and create a strong group

STEP 2 Do this with the help of antiracist organisations and you can use the free UNITED training leaflets (www.unitedagainstracism.org - publications). And remember: you are not alone. When your group is strong and has made good plans, appoint some positions in your team; like who is doing what and is responsible for what, and use all students' own creativity and knowledge. But always cooperate; make sure that no individual's personal interests become the most important topic. It should be clear that your project will involve many discussions about a broad range of issues: racism, migrants, colonial histories, genocides, different views, homophobia, etc.

Now it is time for your strong action group to involve one or more teachers. Look at how

teachers are giving their lessons; how do they talk about North-South, poor-rich, human rights, genocides, slavery, racism issues, etc.? Look for a teacher you (the whole group) really trust! This will help other teachers see that you are a serious group and maybe get enthusiastic about your ideas as well (most teachers are also against racism). Make your vision clear before you get your chosen teacher involved.

Meetings...

Not too many and not too long

STEP 3 The moment when everything is in place (plans are clear, teacher involved, the group is strong) it is time to move forward with a small, strong delegation. Before moving in this direction, you will have decided, together with the delegation group:

- ✓ the exact content of the SWR Call;
- ✓ a strategy for group members to mobilise students and how to do this;
- ✓ which activities are coordinated by whom and when they should be done.

Also:

- ✓ make good, short agendas;
- ✓ write everybody's positions and responsibilities down;
- ✓ start activities within the working group like making banners, posters, badges, T-shirts, songs, stories or poems for the school newspaper, etc. You are an action group, not a discussion group.

Board of recommendation

STEP 4 Now it is time to start a "Board of Recommendation". Make contact with well-known people and tell them your ideas, ask them to give their name to your project so they can support you during difficult times (e.g. if your head teacher is not keen on your work) and festive moments (e.g. awarding the SWR shield to students from your school). Well-known people could be: artists, the mayor of the town, directors of an important business, editors of newspapers, TV and radio personalities like DJ's, VJ's, etc.

Ask them to write down their reason and motivation for being a member of the SWR board in a short letter.

Inform the head teacher

STEP 5 OK, now you have a SWR working group, a board of recommendation, good plans, your first action materials, a formal delegation, one or more teachers who are kind (or crazy!) enough to help.... but it is still your *students* action group. Now take a real look at your delegation. Check there is nobody who has been in trouble with your head teacher before; the risk here is that your head teacher thinks "Oh, him/her again, what kind of problems are they going to make now?". Instead, let the head teacher think: "Oh, these are good students, with good reputations who usually do well in their work. I take them seriously and would like to listen to them." It is a little strange, but that is the way it works.

Inform your head teacher of the project's successful track record. SWR Netherlands and the European coordination has been nominated for, and won, some prizes: for example it was

adopted as a good practice in the Council of Europe "All Different, All Equal" project; "European Voluntary Youth Prize" for starting up SWR Germany (1995); Dutch national youth-work "Marga Klompe" prize, "First National Dutch School" antiracism prize; "Golden Baron" Internet prize; and some more local prizes. Also SWR Germany has won some national prizes: the "CIVIS" Prize, the "Heinrich Bußmann Prize", the "Aachen Peace Prize" and the "Buber-Rosenzweig Medal". As you can see, SWR really works.

Winding roads and danger of skidding

Some head teachers are not thrilled with the idea of making their school a School Without Racism. They have all kinds of reasons, so give them counterarguments and some good examples, such as:

>> Head teacher (H): *In our school there are not many migrants, so your action is superfluous. Answer (A): the number of migrants is not important, maybe there are not many incidents in our school, but look around in the neighbourhood, in the discos and sports clubs. Unfortunately racism is a common social phenomenon so it exists at our school as well.*

>> (H): *We are missing so many lessons already. We cannot effort to lose more lessons to this project, they are important. (A): teachers can introduce intercultural and interreligious approaches, ideas of respect and multiculturalism, and historical facts like genocides in their planned lessons; in some lessons it is easy and in others it asks for creativity. But we will also organise activities outside of class time in and around the school by ourselves.*

>> (H): *Antiracism OK. But no declaration and no SWR shield on the wall. (A): Explain that it is an honour to have the SWR shield on the wall, as your school is able to show how open and safe for all young people it is.*

There will be more reasons, be creative and prepared. If they are still against it, let them write down their arguments. Then publish them in the school newspaper and ask other students what their opinion is.

An OK from your head teacher... Now it is time for action!

STEP 6 Start by informing students, make posters and leaflets for the notice-boards with good arguments for being a SWR. Do some activities; an information market about different religions, ethnicities, about disability, antiracism, refugee work, etc., use NGOs and let them present their work or aims. You can also organise workshops about the Holocaust and genocides, different religions and situations of ethnic or religious conflict. Or practical workshops on how to organise activities for the European-Wide Action Week Against Racism, International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism, International Refugee Day and more. Be creative! Display the declaration/call, hang it everywhere!

Start voting procedure

STEP 7 Make it clear that it is democratic; take care that no one can tell another how to vote - it must be 100% secret! Do it with ballots and give everybody the possibility of saying YES or NO. Make sure it is impossible that ballots can be copied. Use voting booths, and queue students up, class by class, in the aisle. Hand the ballots out just before entering the voting booths and use a name list to tick each voter off. 

At the end of the school day, do a public count of the votes, maybe with some music and intercultural snacks to eat and drink.

Is it NO or is it YES?

STEP 8

If it is **NO** you have to accept that and organise a meeting with your preparation group to discuss what to do now. One option is to discuss the possible reasons for this outcome, what kind of amendments you need to make to your project and then restart it.

If it is **YES** you can have a small party and plan how you wish to organise the official moment that the SWR name shield appears on the wall of the school. You have to make your own SWR shield, look at the example on this page. Find a creative activist to paint or spray paint the shield, or ask the art teacher to help you. Make sure it is vandalism-proof!

The official day

STEP 9

Make it special with a lot of positive media attention. Keep your eye out for a good date, maybe there is a special memorial day or an activity scheduled in your country/city that you could use. Invite your board of recommendation, the mayor of the city and/or a minister who is involved in this issue. Maybe the minister will be keen to present you with the shield bearing the name "School Without Racism", and you will present the shield, on behalf of the students, to the head teacher of the school. Ask him/her to hang the SWR shield up at the front of the school next to the main entrance, which is also a great way to attract media attention. Also include your SWR status in writing somewhere in the school's rules and regulations or code of behaviour. Everybody should know about the content of your call and know that your school is a SWR school.

Managing to be- and stay- a "School Without Racism"

STEP 10

Organise regularly activities, make a weekly/monthly news bulletin for the notice board with information about racism, antisemitism, homophobia, minorities etc., take part in campaigns like: 27 January - Holocaust Memorial Day, 21 March - Action Week Against Racism, 20 June - International Refugee Day, 9 November - International Day Against Fascism and Antisemitism, etc. Use information from the websites of UNITED and other organisations. Check the online UNITED Calendar of Internationalism and the lists with UNITED campaign activities for ideas (on a low- or no- budget) and good practices. Also, you can invite speakers for special regular SWR events in the school, or organise SWR music and art events, be creative! **And every new school year you have to restart the voting procedure with the new scholars and teachers in your school.**

THE CALL / DECLARATION 'SCHOOL WITHOUT RACISM'

- We, students, teachers and staff, the head teacher and governing bodies say "NO" to racism.
- We fight against all forms and manifestations of racism and discrimination in our school.
- Our school must be faithful to its educational mission to take initiatives against racism.
- Our school rejects racist propaganda and racist organisations.
- Our school organises initiatives against racism and for a multicultural society every year.
- Our aim is that a majority (a given percentage) of students, teachers and other members of staff, the board and governing body support this call. This gives our school the honourable name "School Without Racism" and we are committed to maintaining this status. *You can choose whether you prefer 60%, 70% or another amount, but make your chosen percentage clear to everybody.*

Good luck and inform UNITED if you are successful!

FOR HELP

For practical tips and guides to organising antiracist activities, check out the UNITED info-leaflets and other publications. All of them are available at www.unitedagainstracism.org or you can order them for free from the UNITED secretariat.

Useful sites with information about School Against Racism projects in different countries:

- www.schoolzonderracisme.be (in Dutch & French)
- www.acpp.com (in Spanish, French & English)
- www.aktioncourage.org (in German)
- www.radar.nl/read/scholenproject_n (in Dutch)
- www.osce.org/cio/25694 (statement in English)
- www.escuelasinracismo.org/seccion-europa/en/swr-network-in-europe.php (in GB)
- http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schule_ohne_Rassismus_-_Schule_mit_Courage (in D)



UNITED for intercultural action

EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST NATIONALISM, RACISM, FASCISM AND IN SUPPORT OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

UNITED for Intercultural Action is the European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees. More than 550 organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together in common activities, such as European-wide campaigns. Like-minded organisations have the opportunity to meet each other at conferences and elaborate specific projects. UNITED is and

will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe. Information is received from more than 2700 organisations and mailings go out to about 2300 groups in Europe. Let us know if you want to get involved! And add UNITED to your mailing list!



UNITED IS SUPPORTED BY: more than 550 organisations from 48 European countries, many prominent individuals, private supporters and long-term volunteers from Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, the European Voluntary Service- and Leonardo Programme and Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service.

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> 2012 is the 40th Anniversary of the European Youth Foundation



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