

Political Declaration of the German-Cypriot Youth Exchange Programme

Nicosia/Hanover, 04.10.2010

The German-Cypriot Youth Exchange Programme was initialised by the Hanover branch of the Socialist Youth of Germany - The Falcons (SJD - Die Falken) in 2007. The core Cypriot partners are the Greek Cypriot foundation IKME and the Turkish Cypriot foundation BILBAN.

Activities in 2010

The purpose of the programme is to have an exchange every year in an alternating order in Germany and Cyprus. The first exchange programme took place in Cyprus (25.10 - 05.11.2007). The second joint seminar took place in Germany (04.08 - 14.08.2008). The third exchange programme took place in Cyprus (17.09 - 28.09.2009). The project is supported by different NGOs/Foundations, including Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

This year's programme was conducted in Germany from 16.07. - 28.07.2010 and included workshops on the political histories of Germany and Cyprus, division of Cyprus and Germany, unification of Germany and unification attempts in Cyprus, the recent political developments in both countries, the Nazi period, mass graves in Cyprus, nationalism, identity, the Bologna process, immigration, information access in Cyprus, recording history of coexistence in Cyprus and the Cypriot dialects. The group also did sightseeing tours in Berlin including the Berlin Wall, the Holocaust Monument, the former Nazi concentration camp Bergen-Belsen, the Kreuzberg immigration museum and the German Parliament (Bundestag). For the Bergen-Belsen visit and Hanover city tour the group met with the Mostar group. The Mostar group is an exchange between students from the Leibniz University of Hanover and Christian and Muslim students from Mostar (Bosnia-Herzegovina). The German-Cypriot Group also met with Julia Bläsius from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and members of the International Commission of the Falcons. The group also had a seminar on domestic violence at the Terre de Femme association.

Conclusions and Demands

We support the negotiation process between the leaders of the two communities and demand a federal settlement to the Cyprus conflict. The elements of bicommunality and bizonality are essential for a solution to be achieved under current circumstances.

We demand a strong central federal government with common health care, legal and education systems as well as common tourism, environmental and social policies. Both Turkish and Greek should be taught in the schools and accepted as official languages. The public forces such as police should be common and mixed. There should be single sovereignty, citizenship and international identity that will encourage civil society participation in decision-making processes to promote and guarantee bicommunality. There should be political equality. The states should work in cooperation without polarisation. There should be free movement of people, labor and capital between two sides as well as within the European Union. Free movement, free settlement and free representation should be fair and regulated under all circumstances. We demand cross-voting system that will further support bicommunality.

We demand complete secularisation for religious and civic matters, emphasising civic identity over ethnic identity. Democracy should be self-standing, self-regulated and indissolvable without any dependence on guarantors' intervention if they are present. We demand complete demilitarisation of the island. Transparency and access to information are essential.

The relationships with Turkey should be normalised. Ports and trade routes between Cyprus and Turkey should be opened and Turkey is needed to be brought closer to the EU.

In our opinion, fates of the all missing people should be determined and an official state culture of remembrance, acknowledgement of history and reconciliation should be established. There should be an official process for representation of history. It is essential to have freedom of speech without any tolerance to hate-speech and crimes.

The economy should be unified. North side needs a 'fast-track' economical equalisation. A type of 'solidarity tax' can be used to fund the improvisation of infrastructure programmes without affecting the living standards of the citizens especially the Greek Cypriots. The utilities such as electricity, sewage and transportation should be harmonised and centralised. Special attention to environmental and tourism matters must be paid. In the tourism sector the quality should be improved, eco-tourism and alternative trends should be encouraged. Common policies to fight with environmental issues such as water shortage, garbage recycling, desertification, preservation of species and cleaning of CMC areas should be adopted. There should be a common policy to bring the antiquities from abroad.

We demand that both the NGOs and politicians should immediately take confident building measures such as supporting bicommunal projects and cooperate in fields like telecommunication, opening more crossing points, cooperating in environmental issues and infrastructure planning.

Future Activities

Our aim is to establish the German-Cypriot Youth Exchange Programme as a long-term project by continuing the exchange of youth in Cyprus and Germany in consecutive alternating years. We want to propagate the results to as much wider audience as possible. The organization process of the coming project in Cyprus next year has already started.

We emphasise the openness of our programme and its independence from political parties and we do not want to exclude people because of such perceived biases. The core partners, the Falcons, IKME and BILBAN, will decide on a possible widening of the project to more organisations and possible other regions as well.

Finally, we opt and support long term sustainable actions for the future of a solution of the Cyprus problem. The actions of our group are only a small contribution to this process and others are needed. We are interested to keep people alert to the lurking of nationalistic tendencies as indifference and tolerance towards such tendencies pave the way to destruction.