

ACCT

Anti-racism & Civic Courage Training

Conferences Report

Developed By:

COMPARATIVE
RESEARCH
NETWORK:

 **Perspekt**
INITIATIVE

 **Crossing Borders**

 **Stowarzyszenie
Dla Ziemi**

 **imagina**

 **АСОЦИАЦИЯ
ЗА БЕЖАНЦИ
И МИГРАНТИ
БЪЛГАРИЯ**
**ASSOCIATION
ON REFUGEES
& MIGRANTS
BULGARIA**

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Introduction of Conferences

In order to increase the impact and sustain the results of the ACCT: Anti-Racism and Civic Courage Project, two events were organized in the cities of Copenhagen and Berlin. In Berlin, the Comparative Research Network (CRN) held a European outreach event for policy makers in Berlin that was part of Democracy Action Days. In Copenhagen, Crossing Borders (CB) hosted a civil society conference (held in person, with live streaming via CB's instagram). These events presented & discussed results of the ACCT project such as the research report & policy recommendations, curriculum. To engage with the target groups and have meaningful events there were panel discussions in both, yet they included interactive elements as well: including testing the curriculum in an active way, and performances in Berlin and Copenhagen. The events were considered to be extraordinarily successful by the organizers, participants, and attendees alike.

Overview of ACCT: Anti Racism Conference in Copenhagen

On October 25th Crossing Borders (CB) held a 4-hour conference title ACCT: Anti Racism Conference – Community Responses to Breaking Down Structures. CB partnered with Union (the culture house where CB is located and where 21 civil society organizations sit) to unite 8 house-member organizations to showcase the diverse and impactful work being done in the field of anti-racism and anti-discrimination in their combined network .

The organizations and individuals represent a wide array of civil society actors working on the local, national, EU, and global levels in varied fields such as the arts, anti-racism policy, political activism, and direct service provision to various vulnerable and at-risk groups (youth, refugees, migrants, minoritized groups/persons of color, etc.):

- Crossing Borders (2 individuals)
- SOS Racism (2)
- Center for Kunst of Interkultur (1)
- Refugees Welcome
- ACT (Afro-Cosmopolite Thespians)/New Nordic Voices (1)
- Rapolitics: CEO and one Rap Performer (2)
- Another Life (1)
- Wanjiku Victoria Seest, theater performer
- Zozo Mpolusa, Afro-Contemporary Dance Instructor
- Skole for Orientalsk Dans (1)

Bringing together these groups was part of the concerted effort to guarantee the engagement and reach of the target group civil society organizations; and thus efficiently amplify the ACCT project results. Additionally, this allowed for the leveraging of their wider networks to get more organizations that may not have come to the event as they are outside of the Crossing Borders Network. At the outset of the event, there were 81 individuals who had signed up for the event, representing CB's strategic partners and those of the above groups.

These include Roskilde Festival Gruppen (an organization that represents the largest music festival in Scandinavia), Danish Refugee Council (The largest humanitarian Danish NGO), Hack Your Future (A coding school for refugees), Copenhagen Municipality - Arts and Leisure, Aalborg University - Global Refugees Program, and others. While we had 67 who signed the sign-in sheet, due to the vast number of participants, we suspect at least 80 showed up, and may have missed signing in.

Day in Review

We started the day by presenting an overview of the conference with its goals. We presented the outcomes of the ACCT project, in which we included the website (both in text and QR code) so participants could access the site easily. The ACCT Poster Competition Posters as well. We printed several copies of the outputs for participants to take home as well. The poster competition winners were present at the conference as well.

We had 2 keynote speeches: 1) on the importance of intersectionality when writing reports and recommendations for anti-racism and inclusion and 2) On the importance of diversity in anti-racism work - especially in the workplace, and the continued need in the civil society sector.

There were 2 panel discussions with 4 panelists each:

Cultural Resilience: The Role of Arts in Deconstructing Racism. Moderated By Anna Skanborg, Center for Kunst og Interkultur. Participants: Manus Bell, Rapoltics; Michael Omoke, ACT/New Nordic Voices; Suzanne Potempa, Dof Orientalsk Dans Skole; Zozo Mposula, Afro Contemporary Dance

Grassroots to Global: Building Anti-Racist Movements. Moderated by Kiara Walker, Crossing Borders. With Juman al-Subeihi, Refugees Welcome; Nazanin Molaaghaei, Refugees Welcome; Steen Eriksen, SOS Racisme; Kristine Riis, SOS Racisme.

We had 4 creative performances in dance, rap, and theater. We chose to use this format as to show the concrete outputs of the organizations from Union and show the diverse ways we can use art for anti-racism, anti-discrimination and civic courage. We also connected this with the panels and speeches. Specifically, we mentioned how the ACCT curriculum has one day dedicated to Forum Theater activities, using art and theater as a way to explore privilege, discrimination, and to create solutions.

Impact of the Copenhagen Event

“I think it was vital for starting a conversation... this event was a necessary action to continue engaged discussions about racism in Denmark” - Egle, Crossing Borders Intern

Despite all the organizations (that participated in the program) being in the same house we can be limited in resources - as often is the case in the civil society sector. Therefore we do not always have the time to come together to discuss the work we are doing and strategize across fields and disciplines, despite having similar goals.

This gathering served as a platform to highlight initiatives and share best practices, including those of the ACCT project, and strengthen our collective efforts to combat racism. It also became a space for the audience to engage with our work and create opportunities for collaboration and active change making; namely in the Q&A rounds for the panels.

The incorporation of artistic mediums allowed for nuance in discussion and meaning making. One audience member, Laura, stated after, ***“The performance [Blinkered] made a big impression on me. It reminded me of the danger of a single narrative, how it simplifies and dehumanizes a whole continent and its people, by taking away the nuances and replacing them with assumptions and stereotypes. It was such a powerful performance, I had goosebumps the whole time!”*** The performances, interspersed throughout the panels and keynotes allowed for continued engagement and excitement.

Together with these 8 associations to host the event, over 15 other external organisations were engaged. Following the events, the organizer was reached out to by an outside organization called *Hack Your Future Denmark*, a coding school for refugees, to give positive feedback and follow up on the outputs of the ACCT Project. *Another Life*, an organization that works to create inclusion and fight anti-racism, expressed gratitude. *Center for Arts and Inter-culture*, and *Rapolitics*, both participants in the ACCT conference, posted respectively on their accounts to recap the event. This helped to further spread the ACCT projects messages of Anti-Racism and Civic Courage.

Overview of Democracy Action Days - ACCT Conference in Berlin

The ACCT project was part of the Democracy Action Days, which took place at Europäisches Haus in Berlin on the 1st and 2nd of October 2024.

The ACCT project was active on the first day. After presenting the project's aim, its timeline, and main results such as the Curriculum, the Portal and the soon to be published Handbook, the project leaders Maxine Salmon-Cottreau and Anja Söyünmez introduced, in an interactive conference setting, 3 exercises of the ACCT Curriculum. Together with the audience the activities Crossing the Line and Civic Courage Styles were performed, drawing eager interest and leading to vital discussions and reflection. The final exercise supported the knowledge gathered of the previous two, with definitions to match the principles on Racism, Discrimination, Civic Courage.

This interactive part was followed by a panel discussion. Invited guest speakers were Cora Mantel (Brand New Bundestag), Abdou-Rahime Diallo (Diaspora Policy Interaction and DaMOst) and Eduardo Felisberto Buanaissa (NARUD, among other NGOs work), who all shared insights into their activist work on anti-racism and democracy building. The panel revolved around addressing and fighting discrimination as well as racism within diverse local communities and finding solutions to ongoing hardships collectively. Specific topics were the Anti-Discrimination law in Germany and its challenges in practice, systematic and institutional discrimination and racism, the upcoming federal elections in Germany and the rise of the far right, last but not least the difficulties of obtaining funding as well as budget cuts for NGOs by the state and donors.

Impact of the Berlin Event

Conversations were sustained throughout the event. Some of the results are as follows: Solutions to the rise of a far-right sentiment in Germany, along with related issues and the path to fostering civil courage were discussed. Thus a range of solutions covering various fields in which the society can get actively involved were presented. In education the need for anti-racism courses for teachers was emphasised, in combination with student-focused activities such as excursions and summer schools. Community and neighbourhood

engagement can be strengthened through hosting interactive cooking spaces or building/joining walking groups, which can be especially engaging for elderly. For more activist involvement joining a grassroots movement and being part of volunteering groups who organise in political parties, NGO's, societies, private institutions or state institutions can be a great way of fighting racism and discrimination. The panel discussion then opened up to questions from the audience and concluded with a musical live act from Abdou-Rahime Diallo, who performed on the guitar singing, while animating the audience to sing along.

Conclusion

These two international events represented a successful closing of an impactful 2-year project. While space was given to demonstrate the results and outcomes of the ACCT project, including printed copies of outputs as well as QR codes to reach the ACCT websites to download the materials, and the ACCT poster campaign being displayed prominently, there was a further impact of the events that was demonstrated through the networking possibilities, discussions that arose, and the cross-sectorial sharing of methods for anti-racism and civic courage. The ACCT project holds that these events created space for civic society actors and european policy makers, respectively, to start discussions and begin to organize for the future, and they served to already establish synergies. Overall, these events allowed the project to sustain itself past the project end date - and to live on in collective actions throughout our networks.

The ACCT Project is a consortium of 6 EU partners:

Comparative Research Network

Crossing Borders

La Asociación de Desarrollo Social Participativo IMAGINA

Perspekt Initiative

Stowarzyszenie "Dla Ziemi"

The Association on Refugees and Migrants in Bulgaria (ARM-BG)

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