

YOUTH PEACE TOUR UKRAINE

21 – 31 August 2015



**An inspiring 11-days tour through Ukraine with 14
Ukrainian young leaders**

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PAX
Utrecht, the Netherlands
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1. INTRODUCTION

The idea for a Youth Peace Tour came from Jacques van der Meer. He has been involved with PAX since many years and has an extensive network in Poland within the catholic community.

The idea was tested in discussions with i.al. Frans Hoppenbrouwers (Communicantes) and further developed during a visit to KIK (Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej) in Warsaw (February 2015) by PAX-colleagues Edwin Ruigrok (Identity and church relations) and Cinta Depondt (programme manager Ukraine), together with Jacques van der Meer and Paul Lansu from Pax Christi International. The idea to organise a Tour for Ukrainian and Polish youth in the summer of 2015 was concluded there. Besides connecting socially engaged youth from two different but neighbouring countries, this would also strengthen the ties between PAX and our old Polish network.

Tilia Maas Geesteranus (volunteer at the time, currently programme officer Ukraine) was asked to organise the Tour, which she did in close cooperation with Cinta and Edwin during the months of June and July. The Tour took place from 21 till 31 August 2015.

In the end, the envisaged cooperation with KIK wasn't established due to capacity issues on their side, and the Tour was solely organised and coordinated by PAX.

1.1 CONTEXT

We felt the need to organise this Tour in the light of the recent developments in Ukraine. These 'recent developments' started in November 2013 when then-president Yanukovich decided to withdraw from signing the Trade Agreement with the EU. Thousands of people went to the streets and protested for months. They demanded Ukraine to transform towards a more democratic country, moving away from corruption and Russian influence which aims, as was the common thought, to suppress Ukraine's free development towards a healthy and independent state that would serve its citizens.

When a new government was formed, part of the country (mainly people living in Eastern Ukraine, closely connected to Russia, often economically, and former Soviet times, mainly mentally) did not feel represented or happy with the new developments. They in their turn went to the streets and raided government buildings (March-April 2014), after Crimea was 'occupied by little green men' (February-March 2014), and subsequently 'reunited to the Russian motherland'. By now, parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblast have been self-declared DNR (Donetsk People's Republic) and LNR (Luhansk People's Republic). PAX refers to this zone as the Non-Controlled Government Area (NGCA) and to the people fighting for an independent Donbas as 'rebels'.

1.2 POLARISED SOCIETY

What PAX observed during two scoping missions in 2014 is that over the last two years polarisation increased and deepened throughout Ukrainian society. It divides families and friends over mainly ideological differences. We generally refer to this as the anti- and pro-Maydan 'camps'. Many people either fight in the Ukrainian army, with the volunteer battalions, or with the rebels in the Donbas. A large share of the Maydan people are still involved in all kinds of activities, ranging from 'urban pop-up' activities (often aiming to achieve local developments or solve problems not taken on by local authorities), to collecting goods for both the army and volunteer battalions to being involved in regional and national politics. Thus, the Civil Society (CS) movement has developed significantly and continues to be present and pursue changes, playing a crucial role in keeping the country running and moving forward.

1.3 YOUNG GENERATION

The role of young people herein is very important. Many of them are engaged with the recent developments (meaning both 'the conflict' as well as initiatives to counter the consequences of that conflict) in one way or another, forming a main driving force behind many of them. Many young people feel the need to do something, to participate. And they do, as volunteers in hospitals, as collecting or maybe even bringing material to the frontline and in many other ways. Young educated people are the countries' biggest hope, they are the generation that has to make Ukraine a democratic, free, and non-

corrupt country to live in. Unlike many representatives of the elder generations, they feel their efforts can make a difference in creating the future they envisage.

2. GOAL OF THE TOUR

2.1 GOAL

The goal of the Youth Peace Tour fits within PAX' specific objectives for Ukraine, the most important one for this project being:

“Civic change agents and their communities act as peacekeeping and human rights actors, and contribute to the social cohesion by facilitating dialogue between groups with differing perspectives.”

And, to a lesser extent:

“Civic change agents from different areas in Ukraine engage with and put pressure on their authorities to reform into responsive and legitimate institutions that, where within their mandate, pursue an inclusive, durable, peaceful solution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.” This implies that civic change agents “are capable of agreeing a mutually inclusive agenda with regard to human security and human rights, of gaining support by / mobilisation of their communities and undertaking the dialogue / confrontation with the government on the basis of that inclusive agenda”.

Related to this, the aim of this Tour was to:

- Create space for enriching exchanges: gather a group of young and socially engaged people, coming from different parts of Ukraine and possibly from various religious and ideological backgrounds.
- Stimulate listening: help them find ways to listen to each other's histories, stories and ideas and amidst the differences, and learn to listen more truly with less prejudices.
- Stimulate acceptance of different views and simultaneously discover what common points there are.
- Develop the deep realisation that change starts within oneself, that it has started and that it has to and can be spread.
- Help formulate peace-approaches that fit in the contemporary context and are applicable in their own context and networks (concrete action perspectives). Concretely: formulate a Personal Action Plan for follow-up action upon return (incorporating the above mentioned aims if possible).

2.2 OBJECTIVES

Concretely, we envisaged the following outputs and outcomes:

Output

- 14 youth activists from Ukraine¹ have spent 11 days together learning about dialogue planning, facilitation, and their country, sharing histories, perspectives on identity and reflecting on future scenarios specifically focussing on the war in Eastern Ukraine.
- The students have taken notice of the existing varieties in cultures and religious backgrounds, by which means they have created mutual understanding and openness for these varieties in each other and in general. To recognise the humanity of and in the other.
- Each participant formulated a concrete Plan of Action during the course of the Tour to be executed back home.

Outcomes

- Youth leaders apply the lessons learned in the form of activities (Personal Action Plan) in their hometowns.

¹ Initially we aimed to reach out to Ukrainian and Polish youth. But due to practical matters and to the relatively low quantity and quality of the Polish applications received, we decided to focus on highly motivated Ukrainian youth rather than to stick with initial idea of have both Ukrainian and Polish participants.

- The message of *reconciliation*, *humanity* and *conflict prevention* has been made more applicable / concrete by applying it to the participants' local political circumstances.
- Participants implement aspects of what they've learned and discovered during the Tour in their direct network and beyond after returning back home, spreading skills and insights gained within their network. Thus, more people are able to be in touch with mechanisms of conflict prevention and reconciliation.
- The results of the Tour can be used as input for a presentation to church leaders, such as the All Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (AUCCRO) and the World Council of Churches.

Indirect outcomes

A part from the above, for PAX the Tour also has meaning to:

- Learn more about needs and perception of different groups (of young people) in Ukraine, about the potential of the participants.
- Learn about the role of the church institutions and, with the results of the Tour, gain some access to the church hierarchies.
- Establish a better network amongst religious institutions.
- Gain a better understanding about the role and potential of churches or religious institutes with regard to conflict resolution.
- Increase access to youth leaders and their networks, from all over Ukraine, which could help to broaden and strengthen the Ukraine programme at PAX.

2.3 SET-UP

The main topics discussed during the Tour were peace and the role of different Ukrainian initiatives and institutions, as well as the participants' own behaviour and (possibilities for) action, when working towards achieving peace. During the Tour we organised to meet several guest speakers who elaborated on various topics related to the theme of the Tour such as history, identity and the role of various institutions regarding peace building processes. The Youth Peace Tour visited three different religious congregations in Eastern, Western and Central Ukraine.

3. SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

We reached out to potential candidates in various ways.

An Application Form (see Appendix 1) was spread throughout our Ukrainian and Polish networks, on the internet and on social media (FB). An accompanying letter (Appendix 2) explaining the purpose of this tour was sent to our contacts. Both documents were made available in Ukrainian, Polish and Russian and were accessible through google. We looked for participants who could understand both Ukrainian and Russian and speak at least one of those, since these would be the languages spoken during the tour.

We received 35 applications, of which three from Polish candidates. We considered all of those, but based on our Qualification Appraisal (in which we scored each application from 1-10 on the main criteria derived from the Application Form), we decided that most Ukrainian motivations were stronger (in comparison to the Polish ones). We therefore decided to set aside the idea of a Polish-Ukrainian tour for this first time.

With regard to the our appraisal, we consciously searched for different views to be represented. Thus, there were no good or bad answers as such, but we merely looked at the way the applicants motivated their interest in participating.

The participants were selected by Cinta and Tilia, with support by Edwin Ruigrok.

During the selection process, the main questions taken into consideration were:

- To find out what motivates the potential candidates to join such a tour;

- Their ideas about possible solutions to Ukraine’s current situation;
- Their thoughts about what could be the role of youth in social transformation processes;
- What they could do themselves to initiate such a process.

The participants who were finally selected and took part in the Tour can be described as follows:

- All Ukrainian, of which one studying in Lublin, Poland, and one in Moscow, Russia;
- 10 women, 4 men;
- Mainly from Central Ukraine (Kyiv (area), down to Odessa) , Eastern Ukraine (around NGCA), and Western Ukraine (Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions)
- Aged between 16 and 28
- Not something we selected on, but we found out during the Tour that most of the participants sympathise with ‘Western’ ideologies / political views and Ukraine’s search to find a balance between its own and ‘European’ values.

4. GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF THE TOUR



4.1 LOCATIONS

The three different areas visited were (in order of visit):

- Eastern Ukraine: Izyum (Kharkiv oblast)
- Western Ukraine: Hoshiv (Ivano-Frankivsk oblast)
- Central Ukraine: Lyshnia (Kyiv oblast)

These locations can all be characterised as ‘rural areas’: smaller towns or villages. We deliberately chose for such locations in order to let the rush of daily life pass by and allow creative and learning processes to develop. Consumption of alcoholic drinks was not stimulated (and at the location in Izyum prohibited).

In **Izyum** we were welcomed by the Evangelist Baptist community led by Vyacheslav Voronin, who came to meet us at Kharkiv airport. 'Slava' Voronin is a very friendly and engaged young pastor. The parish is practically a big house, renovated by means and efforts of the church community, in which a large service-room, kitchen and accommodation are located. It doesn't look like a typical church, but serves as one and feels very welcoming. During our stay a youth camp also took place which created a very lively atmosphere. We participated in their Sunday service which was impressive because of the joyful atmosphere. The parish serves a community of about 60 people, of which many were present during the service.

In **Hoshiv** we were received by the Greek-Catholic church, in the person of Sister Mykolaya. The monastery is an impressive building amidst woods and situated on the foothills of the Carpathians, but doesn't have the homely atmosphere that we experienced in Izyum. It felt more like the austerity of a convent. It offered better facilities and rooms though. We were given space to hold our sessions and we attended a morning mass. In Hoshiv also we received guest speaker Yaroslav Hrytsak, historian at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv (see 5.3 for a description of his talk).

In **Lyshnia** we were welcomed by the Ukrainian Orthodox church (Moscow patriarchate), in the person of Lydiya Lozova, a parishioner, and had several encounters with Father Filaret, the parish priest: briefly upon arrival, once during a guest lecture we invited him for and two other times during service in a neighbouring village and at a village celebration in yet another village (he serves in several villages in the neighbourhood). During the first days of our stay, a summer camp for homeless children also took place here. The church, meeting room and accommodation were all in the same building (renovated, here too, by effort and contribution of the parishioners), the meals were taken in semi-outside dining hall surrounded by flowers and fresh air. A lovely construction.

We received guest speaker Iryna Brunova-Kalisetska who stimulated us to think about (personal) aspects of identity and identity framing through upbringing, culture, the government etc. (see again 5.3 for more details regarding her visit).

In all locations male and female participants were lodged separately.

4.2 SAFETY

Aspects of safety were considered and discussed, especially around the choice travel to Izyum (Eastern Ukraine). We soon realized there wasn't much risk in going there. Izyum is located about 100 km from the front line and we kept our visit low-profile, for instance by asking the participants to not announce their visit to Izyum via social media beforehand. At the same time, we collected information from various contacts (local partners in Izyum and Kyiv, OSCE, PAX-colleague who visited the area with UNHCR) in order to estimate possible risks. We knew therefore that we could expect one checkpoint, which in fact was a regular police road post, outside of Kharkiv, on the road to Izyum and Slavyansk. We prepared for this and informed the participants what (not) to do before taking off on the road. We also had arranged Dutch travel insurance for every participant during the whole tour.

4.3 TRANSPORT

The trip started and ended at the Kyiv Borispol International Airport.

We travelled by plane, train and with minibuses. We once travelled by plane, from Kyiv to Kharkiv. We preferred not to fly (mainly for environmental reasons), but logistically this was the best option.

We travelled by train from Kharkiv to Lviv and from Lviv to Kyiv. These are long journeys overnight. The great advantage is that we have time to relax and enjoy the landscape, but also that we have time to do group exercises and to chat, play games and get to know each other in a somewhat constraint, but more informal setting.

From Kharkiv to Izyum, Lviv to Hoshiv, and Kyiv to Lyshnia (and back) we travelled with private busses (Mercedes Sprinter or VW Transporter for instance) including a driver. The advantage is that they know the way and what to expect.

5. SET-UP OF THE TOUR

With the set-up of the tour we paid attention to a combination of aspects we felt were important:

- PD - Personal Development;
- NI - gaining New Information (i.a. by means of guest lecturers) (see also 5.3);
- LS - Learning new Skills (i.a. facilitation techniques and non-violent communication);
- DI – Discovery and Interaction, room for new experiences or new energy;
- IGA - Individual and Group Assignments (a combination of personal development, group work and applying information).

5.1 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since we worked with young people during the Tour, we felt the need to support them in their search for ‘doing something’. They can only ‘do good’ and act meaningfully if they understand their own personal backgrounds, their needs and strengths, and believe in their ability to make a difference. This growth path eventually also opens the way to understandings other people’s behaviour to a certain extent, and create space for ‘the other’: other backgrounds, opinions and behaviour.

5.2 METHODOLOGIES USED

Drawing on the experience of both facilitators, different methodologies were used to help the participants forward in their learning and growth process, both individually and as a group. Some approaches were repeated several times, others only once.

5.2.1 Reflection

“Check-in”: A usually rather quick round at the beginning and the end of days and working sessions, where everybody could voice what was occupying her or him or how she or he felt at that moment. *This allowed the facilitators to quickly ‘take the temperature’ of the group, assess what would be needed to help the group forward or signal any issues. It also contributed to an atmosphere of openness where also less ‘nice’ preoccupations could be shared.*

Reflection rounds: In a recap session (after a meeting, after an exercise, etc) we often asked the participants what they thought of something (a meeting, etc). We asked them to phrase their remarks as observations, thus, “I think, I feel, I saw, I felt...”, staying with the facts and their own emotions, and avoiding judgement. This was later have explained as part of the Non-Violent Communication approach (see below).

Through the Tour we discovered that the results were much clearer when separating the different questions:

1. what did we hear? (facts, quotes)
2. how did that make us feel (emotions)
3. what do we learn from this / what do we take from it (processing, learning)

This exercise helped the participants to speak up if they wanted to in a surrounding that felt comfortable and non-judging. It also maximised the learning effect of the guest lectures and other input.

5.2.2 Getting to know each other

Mapping expectations and intentions: What do I want to achieve here? What would I need help with to achieve that? What can I offer or contribute to others?

To get to know each other, as well as for the facilitators to get to know the group and adapt to the different expectations.

Map exercise: With little stickers participants indicated on a map (of Ukraine and a world map):

- Where they were born
- Where they live

- Where their roots are
- What places are important in your life

This exercise gave the participants an opportunity to talk about themselves and their (family) background and for the others to broaden their understanding of the person's 'walk through life'. It also demonstrates the (geographical) diversity and the interconnectedness of (personal) histories.

5.2.3 Listening and Communication (LS)

(Not) Listening: Participants were asked to do exercises to experience different types of listening. They split up in pairs and divided roles, changing pairs and roles after each round:

- One told a story and the other thought of his/her things to do at home, at work, etc
- One told a story and the other listened but didn't give any sign of listening
- One told a story and the other listened carefully by nodding and asking questions

Sharing a story: We split up in pairs and would take 10 minutes to tell the other about something to was 'an issue' to us. After ten minutes of listening, the other would to summarise what had been said in a few key words, which the story-teller could correct or approve.

These listening exercises gave the participants an opportunity to experience how it feels when someone is not listening at all or, on the other hand, when someone is listening with attention and interacting. At the same time, it helped them to let go of interpretations and actually listen.

Non-violent communication

The basic principles of non-violent communication (as developed by M. B. Rosenberg) were taught:

Observation (facts) ≠ interpretation or judgement

Emotions ≠ cognitive response

Needs (basic needs) ≠ quick-fix; these needs are universal but at certain moments some are more acute than others

Request ≠ demand

It helped participants to listen better, gain insight in their responses and reactions to each other. The concept of (basic) needs that we all share was unpacked well and helped many participants gain a deeper layer of understanding of their own and other's behaviour.

Story-telling

During the long train ride from Kharkiv to Lviv we split up in smaller groups, where each participant told the others about their grandparents: where did they grow up, what was their occupation, and where were they and what did they do during WWII?

This enabled the participants to think about their own background and identity, maybe to be proud of it, but also to understand where, potentially, someone else's thoughts and positioning might come from. It also made many participants realise the importance of the stories of the elder generations and – often – how little they knew about these.



5.2.4 Personal and group development

Brain-storm session: What could you think of to do (Action Plan) after you come home. Key-words listed by the participants were written on a big sheet and grouped afterwards.

An exercise to let go of structures and say what you think, even if wildly 'out of the box'.

Wheel of life: We all drew a large circle on a blank sheet of paper, dividing it into 8 segments and answering the following questions and 'draw' the answers in the circle:

1. What is important for you in life (different fields: work, family, hobby, etc.)?
2. Where are you now in these fields?
3. How will it look like when you would reach the full 100%?
4. What stops you from obtaining it?
5. What could you do?
6. What will you do?
7. What concrete small action will you take within 3 days of getting home?

This somewhat playful exercise gave insight in what is important in life and how we can initiate change even there where at first sight it seems little depends on us.

5.3 GUEST SPEAKERS (NI)

The Tour touched upon topics that are complex and require more in-depth understanding of some issues. We therefore chose to invite several guest speakers who gave lectures about various topics. The topics indicated beforehand were:

- History
- Personal development, identity, citizenship
- Responsibility of government / religious / civil society institutions with regard to peace building processes

Guest lectures were given by the following invitees (in order of appearance):

FATHER VYACHESLAV VORONIN – Pastor of the Baptist community in Izyum

After a lovely tour through the town of Izyum, including spectacular views on the valley and river Siversky Donets, Slava told us about last years' developments (in 2014 the town was an official ATO-post) related to the many refugees that arrived and passed through town and how his church dealt with that. Some of the topics he mentioned, for instance about homosexuality, were later again discussed during a group session amongst the participants.

VASYL LESYK – Deputy head of the Izyum District administration

Though Izyum is situated in a region where most people speak Russian, Mr. Lesyk (a government official) talked to us in Ukrainian. He seemed supportive of the current focus of the Ukrainian government: the need to decentralise, listen to and work with the people, have dialogue, and stimulate youth to develop this country further.

When it comes to corruption he stimulated reforms: make processes less bureaucratic. This takes away opportunities to bribe. In additionally he stressed the need to improve national production: not just produce plain crops, but add value and export processed products.

NATALIA YAKOVLEVA – Co-founder, Charitable Foundation "Kharkov with you"

More than a lecture, Natalia's talk was actually a city-tour through central Kharkiv, where she showed memorable places, provided a lot of historical data, and mentioned a few aspects of development and civil society movement in the city, especially with regard to EuroMaidan.

YAROSLAV HRYTSAK – Professor at the Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv, Ukraine), Director of the Petro Jacyk Program for the Study of Modern Ukrainian History and Society (Alberta, Canada/Lviv, Ukraine).

His lecture was inspiring for many of the participants. One of his main focuses was on their role as the new generation which, after EuroMaidan, should take up responsibilities to continue to develop their country. In order to understand their history reflected in contemporary developments, he explained about several models of dealing with historic memory. This led to an intense discussion with and among the participants, mainly related to the role of Russia in this case – a discussion that

FATHER FILARET – Priest of Lyshnia Orthodox community, Moscow patriarchate

Father Filaret spoke to us about the role of the church, and his church in particular, in relation to current developments in the country, and particularly the war and its consequences for large groups of people. The main focus was on social work and acts of concrete solidarity with and help for those in need. He also told us how he came to combine the roles of priest and member of the district council, and how this (exceptional) double role allowed him to work around administrative-bureaucratic obstacles to the social work carried by the church congregation. The length of the lecture and little room for interaction or questions was regretted by some of the participants. It was interesting to note the difference with the previous lecture, which strongly called upon personal responsibility for change, whereas Father Filaret merely called for compassionate dealing with the consequences of 'the system'.

IRINA BRUNOVA-KALISETSKA – Research Fellow at Institute of Social and Political Psychology, National Academy of Pedagogical Science of Ukraine

Irina invited us to explore our (unconscious) thoughts and ideas about identity and personal development, along the following issues:

- What forms our identity, what is important to us (with a choice from elements such as believe, country, birth place, family, friends), and what could we not live without?
- Which of those did IDPs have to leave behind?
- What means '*narod*' ('people' in Ukrainian and in Russian) to us.

- Why is identity important, what does it give us?
- Ethnic Identity; identity related to memory. How do we know about our history? Sources can be grouped in three levels: 1) bottom-up, 2) people in our direct surroundings, 3) society at large, culture, government policy. Memory is association, and how it is passed on the next generation has its importance.
- 'Chosen trauma'. Vamik. D. Volkan: Chosen trauma and its transgenerational transmission.
- Conflict and dehumanising the other. When someone is disconnected from your own identity, it becomes easier to exclude and hurt them.

5.4 DISCOVERING AND INTERACTION (DI)

5.4.1 Excursions

We made several excursions. Two are mentioned above: the city-tours guided by guest speakers Slava Voronin (Izium) and Natalia Yakovleva (Kharkiv).

Another excursion was a light hike to the Dovbush rocks during the stay in Hoshiv. After a one hour hike, the rocks suddenly appeared in the middle of the woods and when climbing them (some of the rocks can be climbed without ropes) one has an impressive view on the foothills of the Carpathians towards the south.

Upon request of the participants, another excursion was given in the city centre of Lviv, and much appreciated. It was informative and gave insight in interesting details of the city's past and the different population groups that made its history, showing different aspects of it.

The excursions gave the group information about parts of the country they might not have known before, a break-away from the more cognitive processes as a welcome change, and also seems to have given the participants, each in their own way, a sense of pride of their country.

5.4.2 Energisers

Fruit salad – a variation on the 'musical chairs' game.

'Pictionary' – a game on speed of reaction where participants represent moving pictures in groups of three upon a cue by the 'director'.

Back-to-back –in pairs, backs towards each other and start rubbing it without hands.

... and others, also brought in by participants.

Energizers bring energy back into the group, help people connect with each other and the process, and give a little compensation for the large amount of time spent sitting on a chair.

5.4.3 Evaluation

At the last day we asked the participants to write down their thoughts, in a few words on a post-it, regarding the whole tour. On two sheets we draw a large hand on which the participants stuck their post-its. The five fingers held the following questions:

1. This was great!
2. This I will remember (cognitive)
3. This sucks
4. This stays with me
5. This I still have to think about, have to give it a place

5.5 PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

During the tour we engaged the participants in individual and group exercises (as described in 5.2). Over the last few days we asked them to make a Personal Action Plan. This intended to reflect their interests, newly acquired knowledge and their willingness to make steps towards peaceful change (meaningful within their own context). Those who wished could make this plan together. This was done e.g. by four girls who live in different cities, but who shared similar thoughts about their Personal Action Plan.

The Personal Action Plan was formulated on the basis of the SMART (Specific-Measurable-Attainable-Relevant-Time-framed) and / or GROW (Goal-Reality-Options-Will) logic. The participants presented their Personal Action Plan on a flip-chart for the whole group.

This was to learn planning, and to implement concrete steps upon arriving back home after the tour.

6. FOLLOW-UP

6.1 QUESTIONNAIRE

Besides the 'big hand' evaluation we did during the last day of the Tour, we asked the participants to fill in an online questionnaire. This request was sent one month after the Tour had ended (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1N83Zw60Bgjpv7EQddgFzeBUAUbd7z6Eb9rxVhg6DZoA/viewform?c=0&w=1>). Nine out of fourteen participants filled in the questionnaire.

6.2 FACEBOOK GROUP

Upon returning home, we created a Facebook group, 'Molodizhnyi tur myru' (Youth Peace Tour). It is not a very active group, but occasionally people post pictures, an article they published, or ask for feedback. It is a nice and informal way to stay in touch and see what everybody is up to, and keeps a spirit of inspiration and connectedness.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/943440325729127/?fref=ts>

6.3 EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Additionally, at the end of November, we sent another email to ask the participants how they are doing. Five of them responded with great enthusiasm. Their answers can be found in the chapter on Results and Outcome.

7. RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

7.1 OUTPUT

The output achieved by the tour is multiple. Some aspects were mentioned as perceived output in the beginning of this report, some output is additional (*italic*) to that:

- 14 Youth activists from Ukraine have **shared their histories, perspectives on identity and reflected on future scenarios** specifically focussing on the war in Eastern Ukraine.
- The students have taken notice of the existing varieties in cultures and religious backgrounds, by which means they have created **mutual understanding and openness** for these varieties in each other and in general. To recognise the humanity of and in the other.
- Each participant have formulated a concrete **Plan of Action** during the course of the Tour which will be executed back home.
- *The participants have (re-)appreciated their country as a group, not as individuals only.*
- *Many of the participants have gained **motivation and trust in themselves as actors of change**: they realised that taking small steps (either alone or together) could bring large achievements.*
- *Information (in Dutch) about the Tour has been **published on the PAX website** (<http://www.paxvoorvrede.nl/actueel/nieuwsberichten/jonge-stemmen-tijdens-de-youth-peace-tour-oekraine-2015>) and in the Dutch **Ukraine Magazine** (<https://www.platform-oekraine.nl/nieuws/oekraine-magazine-jaargang-18-nummer-2-najaar-2015/>). The basis for these articles are **individual interviews with several participants** that were conducted during the tour (see Appendix 3).*
- *At PAX the results of the Tour were presented to colleagues during a **lunch presentation**. Questions that were asked were noted down [here](#).*

7.2 OUTCOME

7.2.1 Direct Outcomes

- Some of the participants (we know of five at least) have applied the lessons learned in the form of **activities in their hometowns**. Through these activities they have actively approached their

fellow-citizens, (re)gained confidence in their own ability to operationalise ideas and ideologies and have added to forming a nationwide network (though maybe not connected as such) of actors of change.

- Besides initiating activities in their hometowns, some participants have continued to gain more knowledge and skills on certain topics of their interest, such as facilitation techniques or women's roles in peace building processes, by participating in additional trainings or seminars (self-organised or organised by others). See also 7.3.
- The message of **reconciliation, humanity and non-violent dialogue** has been made more concrete by applying it to the participants' local political circumstances.
- Participants **implement aspects** of what they've learned and discovered during the tour in their direct network and beyond when back home. The network of each youth leader will be used actively to shape the lessons learned. Thus, more people are able to be in touch with mechanisms of conflict prevention and reconciliation.
- One of the perceived outcomes (to use the results of the Tour as input for a **presentation to church leaders**) has unfortunately not yet been operationalised due to lack of active contacts within these networks. However, with this report in hand we can still approach such church networks: the information in and achievements of the Tour are still relevant.

7.2.2 Indirect outcomes (for PAX)

- Learn more about needs and perception of different groups (of young people) in Ukraine, about the potential of the participants.
- Learn about the role of the church institutions and, with the results of the Tour, gain some access to the church hierarchies.
- Establish a better network amongst religious institutions.
- Gain a better understanding about the role and potential of churches or religious institutes with regard to conflict resolution.
- Increase access to youth leaders and their networks, from all over Ukraine, which could help to broaden and strengthen the Ukraine programme at PAX.

These outcomes were all realised, albeit to different extent

7.3 OUR IDEAS OF OUTCOME

At the end of November we asked the participants how they are doing and especially, what has come about of their Personal Action Plan. Several of the participants responded and told us of their actions undertaken after the tour. These activities are quite impressive and listed below.

Nadia T., student in Mariupol, 15/12/2015

Hello! Sorry to answer you this late. The end of the year always means a lot of work. My job is going well. On November 24-25, me and my colleagues took part in the training "Peacekeeping in Ukraine: the role of women", carried out by the NGO "Women's Union of Ukraine" (Спілка жінок України). The main purpose of the event was to discuss the possibilities of reconciliation in Ukraine and the role of women herein. I had the opportunity to talk about our Tour and the very important role of youth in peacekeeping. Examples of our Tour were much appreciated by the other participants.

But in general after the Tour I often realise what I've learned: everyone wants to be heard, and when that is satisfied you can have empathy for others too. Try not to forget the needs that exist in people. For instance notice that when someone is nervous you can analyze why so and come to the conclusion that this is because of a certain dissatisfaction regarding their own needs. This realisation helps a lot in my personal life and at work. In fact our Tour gave me inspiration, helped me to look differently at certain stereotypes I seem to have. I try to understand people who might have another point of view (although this is still hard to actually do, but I'm working on it). It also gave me good friends! For all this, I am very grateful to you all!

Viktoria S., student in Moscow, 3/12/2015

“Now I am working at the material about our Tour for online magazine. I will send you the link when it will be ready (next week).

Also I am reading about the history of Ukraine and Russia, compare it, try to understand different points of view, try to learn about the development of relations between Russia and Ukraine.

I plan to go to India in some weeks where an international conference for 20 students from different countries will be held, we will speak about intercultural communication, about peace between countries, it helps me to look wider at our world and better assimilate experience gained during our Tour.

Now I realized better how useful our Tour is for me. Thank you!

Also, if I can help you in some projects from Moscow, I will be glad.

Viktoria wrote an article which can be found here (in Russian, page 33-38): http://issuu.com/culture-trend/docs/winter_2015.

Julia Z., Mariupol, 30/11/2015

I'm really glad that you've written to me. I'm ok) What about you? How are you doing? To tell the truth, after our Youth Peace Tour I have a great passion for facilitation and during 3 months I have visited lots of training courses that were dedicated to different acute topics which appear in society. And you know, I'm really interested in it and want to master the skills of facilitation. So, some of my goals that I've set for myself during the Tour I'm going to realize. Also, I am going to hold an Open Forum in my own city that will touch on the issue of human trafficking in Ukraine. I hope everything will turn out well.

You know, your Tour gave me a lot of things that are important for me, such as good friends and maybe my future mission. Who knows, maybe our next meeting will be hold on the one of Mariupol's sunny beaches, where I will facilitate with you and each other and during the breaks I will serve you cool cocktails)))))))) Good idea, isn't it?) I'm joking)) But, who knows... who knows :)

Andrei T., Zhytomir, 29/11/2015

Next week I will take part in a project which will involve mediation facilitated by German specialists.

Nadia M., Lviv, 27/11/2015

I currently work on the creation of projects at my University 'At UCU (Ukrainian Catholic University) it feels like home'. The goal of the project is to bring students and teachers closer together in a more informal atmosphere. You can find more information on this website: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1705093139721698/>.

I am very happy to share with everyone about my experiences during the Tour. And I can tell you that I have applied this newly gained experience already in the first month after the Tour. During the lectures we talked about topics that are similar to mediation.

8. FUTURE

8.1 IMPROVEMENTS FOR YOUTH PEACE TOUR 2016

Guest lecturers

- Many participants would have wanted to have more guest lectures.
- The lectures by Natalia Yakovleva (excursion Kharkiv) and Father Filaret were not received too well by all participants. Natalia's excursion contained little information on civil society movements and was very much focused on buildings. Besides, some felt she didn't pay much attention to the questions, opinions or feelings of the participants. Father Filaret's lecture was perceived as being very much a monologue, lacking interaction.
- No lecture should last longer than 1,5 hours, and ideally all should be interactive.

- We could consider combining gaining new information with an interactive methodology called 'theatre of the oppressed'. The NGO 'Theatre for Dialogue' based in Kyiv (Oksana Potopova) could be an interesting partner. The principle is to display a certain topic by professional actors. They stop the play at a certain (crucial) moment and ask the audience to step in with solutions. This might be repeated several times and thus offers various insights into solutions to a certain problem. The advantage of using such a methodology is that sensitive topics are depersonalised and that people search for solutions from a personal perspective.

Personal development

During some sessions we noticed that participants had opposing opinions regarding some issues, such as the role of Russia in the Ukraine conflict. Actually, we supported these 'confrontations' because it was part of learning to deal with opposing ideas in a human and tolerant way. Thus, engaging in dialogue instead of trying to convince the other (or worse, ignoring and maybe in the long run de-humanising the other), is something that could be practiced directly (this was also practiced on a chosen topic where participants could step onto the 'scene' on one or the other side and bring arguments into the discussion). Giving participants the space and 'tools' to listen to each other's stories was essential in this. Maybe next time the confrontations could be discussed more deliberately. However, overall we felt many participants left with the insight that the goal shouldn't be to all agree on certain issues, but to respectfully and non-violently deal with the differences that exist in a group.

Logistics

Upon arriving at a new accommodation, we should make sure there is someone to receive the group and give a (very) small excursion through the premises.

Are there towels and sheets for everyone?

Are dietary wishes known and passed on to kitchen in time? Maybe even ask in advance what solutions they have for dietary wishes (e.g. for vegetarians), since we noticed that some 'alternatives' were simply to leave out the meat without replacing it with any other proteins, which doesn't form a substantial meal.

Involvement of participants of 2015

Some of the participants have shown enthusiasm in applying newly learned skills and executing (part of their) Personal Action Plan (see also 7.3). It could be interesting and stimulating both for them as well as for a new group of participants, to offer these previous participants the opportunity to show how joining the Tour changed or helped them to become aware of their dreams and realise them.

Methodologies

To apply different or more methodologies, the handbook (Dutch) 'Het groot werkvormen boek' by S. Dirkse-Hulscher and A. Talen could be consulted.

8.2 CONNECTING WITH RUSSIAN YOUTH

This tour has brought together Ukrainian youth from different backgrounds. As mentioned, this sometimes resulted in conflicting positions towards issues such as Ukrainian development, Russian involvement and identity. Meaning that within Ukraine there are multiple opinions regarding these issues. On a larger (national) scale we see the same pattern: antagonist groups exist within Ukrainian society and have different or opposing positions regarding issues such as the war, Russian influence and democratic values 'copy-pasted from Western Europe'.

Despite the fact that Ukraine clearly has enough issues to deal with internally, it is therefore worth exploring the relationship with youth from neighbouring Russia. Culturally, historically and geographically, they share a lot – but there are a lot of differences, too.

It could be worth exploring, though this idea should be approached with care because of existing stereotypes but also because of safety reasons for (mainly) Russian participants (Russian government might monitor their whereabouts quite closely).

9. CONCLUSION

The Tour can be considered a success. Participants, various contacts we met along the way (guest speakers, hosts, etc) and ourselves as the organisers, have greatly enjoyed this Tour. It has been fun, inspiring and mind broadening. Besides, it has been very affordable financially.

The biggest bonus of the Tour is the invisible added value to the personal development of each of the participants, together with some newly learned skills and insights after the Tour, and the network of young, engaged people connected with PAX that is forming all over Ukraine. This shows a great motivation to continue to acquire knowledge and techniques, as well as a deep understanding that change starts within oneself. With this Tour we couldn't have aimed for higher stars.

APPENDIX 1 – Application Form

This document has been published in four languages: English, Ukrainian, Russian and Polish.

APPLICATION

YOUTH PEACE TOUR UKRAINE 21 - 31 August 2015 (tbc)

Please send to maasgeesteranus@paxforpeace.nl before 15th of July 2015.

PERSONAL

1. Full name
2. Date, place and country of birth
3. Nationality
4. Address
5. Mobile telephone(s)
6. Email address
7. Whom to contact (address, email address and telephone) in case of calamities
8. How have you heard of this application?

CURRENT OCCUPATION AND EDUCATION

1. What is your current occupation?
 - a. Study:
 - b. Work:
2. Location:
3. Since when:
4. Please briefly describe your study direction / speciality or job description.
5. How is your spoken knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian? How is your level of understanding of Russian and Ukrainian? (fluent, good, moderate, poor)
6. Are you available at the end of August and the beginning of September?

MOTIVATION

1. Why would you want to join this Tour?
2. What do you think of the situation in Ukraine right now? Which aspects of the current situation are most worrisome do you think? Why?
3. What do you think should be done to solve the problem in Ukraine, i.e. to end the conflict?
4. How could youth in Ukraine and Poland (depending where you are from) be empowered and what could be your role in that?
5. In what way would you say you are involved with developments in your society? If not, how would you like to be involved? (With socially involved or engaged we mean something that you do in your free time (or part of studying or working) and on a (mainly) voluntarily basis, that can be described as 'doing something for society'. Society can be your neighbourhood, a specific group of people (older people, children, refugees), the municipality, etc.)
6. Why are you or do you want to be socially engaged?
7. What kind of activities could you undertake (for whom: target groups) when back home (after the Tour) with regard to aspects of tolerance for diversity, dialogue, role of civil society and government, etc (themes of the Tour).

TRAVEL

1. Have you travelled through Ukraine or abroad before?
2. Do you have any health problems which might cause you trouble while travelling in Ukraine?
3. Do you take any medicines? If yes, which?
4. Do you have any allergies or diet-wishes (vegetarian for instance)?
5. Anything else you'd like to mention?
6. Do you have a Travel Insurance? If not, we strongly advice you to organise that yourself. The organisers of this Tour, PAX and KIK, cannot be hold accountable in case of emergencies. If you do not have a Travel Insurance, you travel at own risk.



Thank you for applying to participate with this Tour. The dates still have to be finalised. We will inform you before the 1st of August if you are invited to join the Tour or not. By that time you will also receive more information regarding the logistics and set-up of the tour. In the meantime, please make sure that your passport is still valid to enter Ukraine and that you have a personal travel insurance for Ukraine.

With kind regards, on behalf of my colleagues Cinta Depondt and Edwin Ruigrok,
Tilia Maas Geesteranus
Coordinator 'Youth Peace Tour Ukraine 2015'
MaasGeesteranus@paxforpeace.nl

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DZ

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Utrecht



APPENDIX 2 - Accompanying Letter

This document has been published in four languages: English, Ukrainian, Russian and Polish.

Youth Peace Tour Ukraine 2015

Dear madam, dear sir,

We would like to inform you that as part of the Ukraine programme, PAX Netherlands will organise a Youth Peace Tour taking place in Ukraine this summer. Approximate dates are 21st till the 31st of August (tbc). The aim of this Tour is to gather a group of young and socially engaged people, coming from different parts of Ukraine and Poland and possibly from various religious backgrounds, and let them find ways to listen to each other's histories, stories and ideas and amidst the differences, to find common ground in them. The Tour consists of socialising-parts such as cooking together and making hikes, and consists of thematic discussions and deep conversations with each other. Most important is to truly meet each other.

Eventually we hope that they will implement aspects of what they've learned and discovered during the Tour, in their direct network and beyond when back home.

WHY THIS TOUR

With the war and internal conflicts erupting in Ukraine over the last year, we've experienced (mainly through field trips and debates) a stronger polarisation of ideologies (pro- and anti-Maidan) and less space for a neutral stance and dialogue. We think that there's a great need to enable dialogue and developing skills to engage in dialogue. Young people who are now socially engaged, are future decision makers, businessmen, teachers, artists, journalists. By enabling them to be open and tolerant to other people's stories and interpretations of history, we together work on a peaceful future. That's the aim of the Tour and the work of PAX in general.

SET-UP OF THE TOUR

We plan to organise this Tour at the end of August this year and in cooperation with KIK (Catholic Network in Poland) Warsaw. We'll bring together 15 socially engaged youth from both Poland and Ukraine. During the ten days of the Tour, we visit three different places in both Eastern, central and Western Ukraine. Costs are all covered for by the organisation. Spoken language during the Tour is Ukrainian and Russian.

During this week the participants will develop insight and some skills to enhance aspects of tolerance for diversity (of identity, interpretation of history, etc) and ways to apply these when back in their daily routine.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO ASK FROM YOU

This email is to ask you to spread this invitation amongst your network and specifically to send it to potential candidates. We are looking for young people who:

1. are (aspiring to be) in some way engaged in their direct society (as volunteer, in a students' union, church, involved with local politics or activism, etc).
2. are from Poland or Ukraine and speak or at least understand Russian and/or Ukrainian.
3. are aged approximately from between 17 – 28 years old.
4. are open / enthusiastic about spending the nights in monasteries or parishes and actively participate in a week of open discussions, concrete activities and deep encounter
5. people from all kinds of)religious' backgrounds are welcome to apply.

APPLICATION FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Together with this email we send the **Application Form in attachment**. Therefore, please **forward** this entire message to whom you think might be potential candidates. They will fill-in the Application Form themselves and send it back to us directly to MaasGeesteranus@paxforpeace.nl. **Deadline for application is 15st of July 2015.**

The actual dates of the Tour aren't yet finalised, but we aim for approximate 21st – 31st of August. For us, PAX Netherlands and KIK, it is very important to have your support for this Tour, especially if candidates will be chosen from your community. Therefore, please feel free to ask questions or make remarks about the set-up of this Tour. We're open to receive your feedback and thoughts!



PAX IN UKRAINE

PAX (formerly known as PAX Christi) Netherlands started working in Ukraine since last year, when Maidan turned into an internal conflict and war. This Tour is a small pilot project as part of a wider approach in which PAX focuses on aspects of 'dialogue' and the nexus between 'statebuilding and peacebuilding' in Ukraine. See also: <http://www.paxforpeace.nl/our-work/regions/ukraine>.

With kind regards, also on behalf of my colleagues Cinta Depondt and Edwin Ruigrok,
Tilia Maas Geesteranus
Coordinator 'Youth Peace Tour Ukraine 2015'
maasgeesteranus@paxforpeace.nl

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APPENDIX 3 - Interviews with some participants of the Tour**INTERVIEWS MET DEELNEMERS VAN DE YOUTH PEACE TOUR UKRAINE****UITGEWERKTE VERSIE****19 september 2015**

Onderstaande interviews zijn tijdens de jongerenreis in Oekraïne door Tilia Maas Geesteranus afgenomen. De meningen en beweringen zijn van persoonlijke aard en vertegenwoordigen niet per definitie PAX' standpunt.

**Maria, 16 jaar****Odessa****Student Odessa Medical School**

“Het is voor mij een heel mooie gelegenheid om met deze reis delen van Oekraïne te leren kennen waar ik anders niet snel kom.

Sinds de brand in Odessa mei vorig jaar is de situatie sinds kort weer normaal. Het was toen veel chaos en veel slachtoffers, maar tegelijkertijd zag je een enorme veerkracht in de samenleving. Veel mensen gaven bloed of geld om slachtoffers te helpen. Die ‘vibe’ is er nog steeds. We zijn er sterker van geworden, we voelen ons meer één groep. Voorheen voelde het overgrote deel van de Odessieten zich met Rusland verbonden, maar nu meer met Oekraïne. Niet zozeer met de overheid, maar met de bevolking. Elk weekend verzamelen mensen zich in het centrum om liederen te zingen en te dansen. Oude mensen die in de Sovjet-Unie zijn opgegroeid en samen met jonge mensen van de smartphone-generatie. Ook zijn er veel flashmobs die vooral door en voor jongeren zijn georganiseerd. Het is zomer en men geniet.

Mijn moeder is een voorbeeld voor mij. Ze heeft een netwerk van oudere mensen, vooral vrouwen, opgezet en stimuleert hen om weblogs bij te houden. Ze schrijven over hun leven, maar ook over het leven van vroeger en laten foto's zien. Veel jongeren lezen die blogs. Ik vind dat mooi, omdat er sinds de oorlog veel aandacht is voor de jonge generatie waar veel aandacht voor is, maar de oudere generatie, die al meerdere oorlogen hebben meegemaakt, worden een beetje vergeten.”

“Ik vind het tof dat ik mee op deze Tour kon. Ik ben vooral benieuwd te horen wat andere jonge lui doen. We kunnen met elkaar ideeën en ervaringen uitwisselen.

Een van de meest leerzame dingen tijdens de Tour vind ik het SMART plannen van mogelijke activiteiten voor als we weer thuis zijn. Voor die opdracht ging een groepje meiden van onze groep samen zitten en hebben meteen heel constructief aan hun plannen gewerkt. Ze hadden meteen door hoe ze die SMART formulering op hun eigen ideeën moesten toepassen. Ook het concept van non-violent communicatie wisten ze meteen goed toe te passen. Dat vond ik super inspirerend om te zien. Ik ben er later bij gaan zitten en heb toen meegedaan.”

“Over 5 of 10 jaar hoop ik te werken aan het bestrijden van corruptie binnen de medische wereld. Er zijn veel kwakzalvers in het veld die veel smeergeld vragen. Ook hebben we veel goede dokters, maar ze krijgen te weinig betaald. Ouderen in ons land hebben een zeer mager pensioen en er zijn ook veel achtergestelde groepen mensen die die torenhoge bedragen niet kunnen betalen. Later wil ik

onderzoeken hoe we deze corruptie kunnen oplossen. Onder andere door te reizen en te zien hoe ze in andere landen de medische wereld hebben georganiseerd. Daar moeten we de positieve aspecten uit halen (want je moet wel kritisch blijven, niet alles in het buitenland is beter) en die combineren met goede aspecten van hoe we het in Oekraïne aanpakken.

De Tour heeft me geholpen om inspiratie op te doen en te leren van anderen. Ik durf niks te zeggen over de toekomst, maar misschien word ik later wel Minister.”



Viktoria, 22 jaar

Woont in Moskou, komt uit Kyiv

Studeert aan de Hoge School voor Economie, richting Multimedia Journalistiek

Kan je iets vertellen over jouw leven in Rusland?

“Ik ben in Kyiv geboren, maar studeer en woon in Moskou sinds een jaar. Deze stad heeft mijn leven veranderd. Het is het centrum van culturele ontwikkeling, business, zelfontwikkeling, goed onderwijs. Tegelijkertijd probeert het niet zoals bijvoorbeeld Kyiv probeert, te worden ‘geliked’ door Europa, maar lijken we eigenlijk (Moskou en veel West-Europese steden) wel erg op elkaar, in tegenstelling tot Kyiv dat daar niet aan kan tippen.

Bijna 20% van de studenten in Moskou zijn Oekraïens! Veel meer dan ik verwacht had. We praten met elkaar over de oorlog. De omgang met Russische studenten is open-minded, ze stellen open vragen zonder te veroordelen. De mensen zijn niet zo stereotype zoals het op de televisie wordt voorgesteld. De Oekraïense studenten zijn wel verdeeld in hun meningen, maar beseffen dat Rusland niet enkel de agressor is zoals ze dachten. Ze zien ook meer ontwikkeling in Rusland, betere wegen bijvoorbeeld. Mijn vrienden in Oekraïne steunen de oorlog niet, omdat ze zien dat het een machtsspel is tussen de VS en Rusland.”

Wat vind je zelf van de situatie? Snap je dat mensen zich ook bedreigd voelen door de situatie?

“Het klopt wel dat Rusland veel meer betrokken is bij de oorlog dan ik dacht. Ze geven niet altijd objectieve informatie. En ook in Rusland zijn er kritische geluiden; niet iedereen steunt Poetin. Hij heeft inderdaad zijn minkanten, maar het feit dat hij de Krim kon innemen heeft meer met de opstelling van Oekraïne te maken dan met die van Rusland. Ook het gasthema weet hij naar zijn hand te draaien. En overigens, ik geloof niet dat ze van plan zijn DNR en DLR in te nemen.”

“Maar in Oekraïne kijken ze teveel naar de slechte kanten van Rusland en teveel naar de goede kanten van Europa en de VS. Maar is alles wat de EU en de VS doen zo goed en alles wat Rusland doet zo slecht? We kunnen veel van Rusland leren. Het onderwijssysteem is goed ontwikkeld, het heeft een bijzonder rijke theater en media cultuur (multimedia shows bijvoorbeeld) en ze zijn daar met recht trots op. Het zijn rasechte patriotten. Zonder, zoals vele Oekraïense nationalist, met een beschuldigende vinger naar het buurland te wijzen omdat het volgens hen nog steeds op de USSR lijkt.”

Wat zou er gedaan moeten worden om de oorlog te stoppen?

“De echte oorlog speelt zich af tussen de VS en Rusland. De VS probeert het internationale politieke veld te controleren en gebruikt Oekraïne als pion. Weer volgt Oekraïne een andere natie en krijgen ze daarvoor geld. Poroshenko kan de oorlog stoppen, maar dan zou hij dat geld mislopen. Oekraïne is niet bezig de eigen identiteit te ontwikkelen, maar ze kijken over de westerse grenzen voor steun.

Poroshenko moet dus het investeren in de oorlog stoppen, pas dan zal Poetin hem meer als een echt leider respecteren. Als Rusland zich nu uit de oorlog zou terugtrekken, dan heeft de VS gewonnen en breidt ze haar macht uit. Het lijkt erop dat de oorlog de Oekraïense bevolking langzaam in twee kampen doet opsplitsen. Ik zie niet dat de Oekraïense overheid veel doet om de politieke ontwikkelingen positief te beïnvloeden.”

Wat heb je geleerd tijdens de Tour en wat zou je willen ondernemen als je terug bent?

“ Ik wil proberen meer objectieve informatie te verzamelen over de Russische geschiedenis en de Sovjetunie. Hoe de Sovjetunie uit elkaar viel en hoe de diverse landen zich over de jaren hebben gevormd. Dus daarin ook de rol van Oekraïne. Ik wil vooral het publieke staatsarchief raadplegen. Ik hoop op die manier stereotypen die er over Rusland bestaan recht te zetten.”

“Ik wil ook graag bij een politieke partij. Nu ik in Rusland woon, maar later ook als ik terug ben in Oekraïne. Om te weten te komen hoe een overheid werkt en op welke manier je besluitvormingsprocessen (van politieke partijen) kan beïnvloeden. Maar ik hoop ook beter te leren begrijpen hoe Poetin naar Oekraïne kijkt.”



Alona, 22 jaar

Woont in Lublin (Polen), komt uit Zolotonosha, Cherkassy oblast

Studeert Europese Wet- en Regelgeving

“Aanvankelijk dacht ik dat we tijdens de reis veel vrijwilligerswerk zouden doen, mensen helpen. Dat sprak me erg aan. Maar toen ik het document opende bleek het meer om persoonlijke processen van tolerantie en begrip te gaan, onder andere gezien vanuit een religieuze context. Aanvankelijk was ik wat huiverig, onder andere omdat vanuit protestantse hoek het evangelie soms wordt opgedrongen. Met Slava [in Izjum] was dat helemaal niet het geval. In tegendeel; hij had het over concrete aspecten van vrede bereiken en dat is een van de meest relevante aspecten voor ons Oekraïners om over na te denken op het moment. Overigens ben ik heel blij dat in Oekraïne officieel staat en kerk van elkaar gescheiden zijn.

Voordat ik naar Lublin vertrok om te studeren was ik als vrijwilliger betrokken bij het ‘Juridische Kliniek Auditorium’. Ik hielp kinderen om hun kunnen en mogelijkheden beter in te leren kennen en te ontwikkelen.

Ik ben blij om wat ik heb geleerd tijdens de reis, onder andere het concept van en kennis over het toepassen van non-violent communicatie. Ook de sessie met Yaroslav [Hrytsak, historicus] was inspirerend omdat hij vanuit historisch perspectief verschillende vredes-modellen presenteerde. Het programma was sowieso erg gevarieerd en dat was fijn.

Voordat de zomer voorbij is en ik terug ga naar Lublin, wil ik met mijn vrienden delen wat ik heb geleerd tijdens de reis. Ook het SMART model [manier om ideeën en plannen concreet te formuleren] vond ik bijvoorbeeld inspirerend en zal ik aan mijn vrienden willen voorleggen.

Ik studeer nu in Polen, maar als ik klaar ben wil ik terugkomen naar Oekraïne en mij inzetten als advocaat. Er zijn veel mensen die juridische hulp nodig hebben, zoals ouderen en minderheden, maar zij worden uitgebuit. Ik wil een ander geluid brengen. Daar zet ik me voor in.”



Andrei, 21 jaar

Zhytomir

Student Psychologie

“Over vijf of tien jaar hoop ik gelukkig te zijn. Maar ik hoop dan vooral een job in de psychologie te hebben en in een niche daarbinnen. Daar is minder concurrentie en kan je je ontwikkelen tot expert. De Tour helpt me om daarvoor nog meer gemotiveerd te worden. Thuis in Zhytomir merk ik niet zo veel van de oorlog, men leeft zijn dagelijkse leven. Een maand geleden was er wel oproer toen een soldaat terug kwam van het front. Hij hekelde de bevolking van de stad omdat ze niet betrokken zijn zoals de bevolking van Lviv dat is. Daar zet men zich actief in voor verandering, maar hier... Mensen denken veelal aan zichzelf. Maar niet iedereen. Zo ben ik vrijwilliger bij de afdeling van het stadsbestuur van Administratie van jeugd, families en sport. Zij doen veel verantwoordelijk werk. De manager doet alles wat in haar machte ligt.

Als ik terug ben van de Tour zou ik zelf bijvoorbeeld een training over *mediation* willen geven aan de medewerkers van die afdeling bijvoorbeeld, of aan studenten van mijn opleiding. Bijvoorbeeld over beter leren luisteren, hoe te communiceren zonder conflict, etc. Dat heb ik geleerd tijdens de Tour. Ook zal ik contact blijven houden met de deelnemers omdat het leuk was met elkaar, maar ook omdat het kan helpen. Ik vond het inspirerend om te zien hoe een groepje meiden concrete plannen maakten om in hun stad (ze komen van verschillende steden) trainingen te ontwikkelen voor kinderen en hun docenten en ouders.”

Berichtgeving

“De officiële nieuwskanalen en veel kranten geven een verkeerd beeld van de oorlog; vaak veel te rooskleurig en subjectief. Ze hebben het over anti-terroristische acties’ terwijl het gewoon oorlog is. Ze manipuleren de mening van het gros om mensen niet in paniek te laten schieten. Maar geruchten nemen de overhand door die onduidelijke en vage berichtgeving, mensen raken in de stress. Bijvoorbeeld toen de eerste mobilisatie werd aangekondigd: mensen sloegen massaal aan het hamsteren, prijzen stegen. Er zijn bijna geen goede journalisten, misschien weten ze niet wat goede journalistiek is. Veel kranten zijn ook in handen van olichargen of steunen de Russische agressie. Wat ik een goede zender vind is TSN (een overheidskanaal), omdat ik weet dat bepaalde ambtenaren die ik steun die zender ook bekijken. En mijn opa is een goede bron voor mij: hij heeft vanwege zijn leeftijd veel ervaring en kan wat er gebeurt rondom de oorlog het een en ander ‘vertalen’.

Wat ik ook merk is dat als men nu wordt aangesproken, men dat sneller als beledigend opvatten en sterker en harder reageren. De media stimuleren dat ook. Men praat er thuis ook verder over. Kinderen praten nu ook over ‘Poetin guilo’ [scheldwoord voor Poetin]. Mensen zien dat de politici dat doen en doen het nu zelf ook. Eerst met woorden en later meer en meer ook met geweld. Een spiraal van verbaal en fysiek geweld lijkt niet te stoppen te zijn.”

Boodschap aan Nederland

“Als ik iets aan Nederlanders zou kunnen zeggen, zou ik zeggen dat we blij zijn dat Nederland organisaties als PAX heeft die aan ons denken, met ons samenwerken, in ons geloven in moeilijke tijden. Het geeft ons kracht in onszelf te geloven. Dat we volhouden in moeilijke tijden.

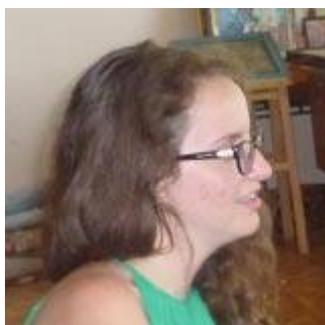
Ruslands’ regime is echt gevaarlijk voor Oekraïne. Omdat ze de Krim hebben ingenomen, er veel Oekraïense doden zijn gevallen, ze ruïneren Oekraïense grond en eigendom.

Oekraïne kan zich daartegen verweren door een sterkere maatschappij te worden, zich te verenigen. Mensen moeten met elkaar in gesprek gaan. Ik zie dat ook wel gebeuren ja. Tijdens maidan is dat begonnen, maar nu ook, vrijwilligers die mensen in de ATO zone helpen met goederen.”

Maar houdt dat de oorlog niet in stand? “Klopt, maar anders komt Rusland het overnemen. En het regime van DNR en DLR. Die spelen onder een hoedje. Er is veel bewijs daarvoor.”

“Maar er zijn ook andere manieren oplossingen te vinden voor de oorlog. Bijvoorbeeld door het uitzetten van overheidspropaganda voor conflictloos handelen. Rusland gebruikt nu een psychologische oorlogsvoering; dringt stereotypen op. Wij hebben specialisten nodig die daarmee om kunnen gaan en dat ‘vertalen’ aan de gemeenschap. Ze zijn er misschien wel, maar moeten actueler worden. Iedereen in de gemeenschap wordt er door geraakt.”

Het is duidelijk dat de leiders in de bezette gebieden en Rusland onder een hoedje spelen. Levensgevaarlijk. Het is goed dat de bevolking de soldaten aan het front steunen. Ook al houdt dat de oorlog deels in stand. Als we dat niet doen rolt Rusland zo het land binnen.”



Nadia, 23 jaar

Mariupol

Social work specialist at the Centre for Social Services for Families, Children & Youth

“Je voelt de oorlog in Mariupol [ongeveer 25km van het front]. Er zijn minder mensen op straat, er zijn IDP’s [Internally Displaced People], winkels zijn gesloten. Overheidsgebouwen zijn nog wel in bedrijf. Op 24 januari werd het oosten van Mariupol beschoten met granaten. De stad ademt wel levendigheid uit, maar mensen willen dat er een eind aan de oorlog komt.

De bevolking is verdeeld: een deel steunt de terroristen [red.: rebellen] en of Rusland, een ander deel steunt Oekraïne [red., wat niet per definitie betekent dat ze de overheid steunen]. Een deel van de mensen die voorheen de terroristen steunden zijn daar van terug gekomen en zijn nu neutraal. Maar ze komen daar niet openlijk voor uit, uit angst voor represailles. Ook mensen die de terroristen steunen zijn daar niet open over omdat ze vorige jaar maart stemmen in de verkiezingen hebben verloren.”

“Als ik bij terugkomst in Mariupol een separatist op de straat zou tegen komen, en hij zou de discussie aangaan, heb ik nu geleerd hoe daar mee om te gaan. Ik zou proberen een welles-nietes discussie te vermijden en een open gesprek over verschillende standpunten proberen te voeren. De drie geschiedenismodellen [van gast spreker en historicus Hrytsak] zouden daarbij als leidraad vormen. Ook wil ik een training organiseren samen met de directrice van het Centre for Social Services waar ik vrijwilliger ben.”