

AGORA 4 YOUTH

Perspectives on Youth inclusion

Report on the first round table

“Who are the excluded in Luxembourg ? And beyond !”

What is Agora 4 Youth ?

Agora 4 Youth aims to gather actors in Luxembourg working with Youth to discuss, share points of views and find sustainable solutions for the integration of Youth in dangers.



Organizers

- [Life Project 4 Youth](#)'s mission is the social and professional insertion of impoverished Young Adults living in exclusion.
- [Youth 4 Change Network](#) (Y4CN) is an international network of NGOs that develops and shares operational practices, advocates, in favor of the social & professional integration of vulnerable and excluded young adults.

The **theme of the Agora 4 Youth first round table** was “**Who are the excluded youth in Luxembourg? And beyond!**”. It was held November 22nd 2018, moderated by Nathalie Binet and Adrien De Hauteclocque.

The partners are deeply thanked for their support in putting together the event. As noted by Nathalie Binet: “They have enriched our discussion, our topic, and have allowed us to go further”.

Here is a reminder of the key elements discussed during the first great night!

Guest speakers

- **Robin Samuel** – University of Luxembourg, Associate Professor in Youth studies
- **Sandra Hauser** – Croix Rouge, in charge of the Direction "Service Perspectives – Logements encadrés"
- **Matthieu Cisowski** – DRH Ceratizit, Human Resources Director
- **Jean-Marc Delaporte** – Founder of the NGO Life Project 4 Youth

Introduction

"We are happy to be here for two reasons: because we are glad to host LP4Y and because we are glad to welcome youth here who are excluded. For hundreds of years humanity lived in a tribal style with the purpose being survival. We have progressed to a model that should allow for autonomy and inclusion. Our generation has faced the grand problem of creating a world with social security. Urbanization has given rise to new opportunities. The family unit has also changed. However, **by having excluded youth we have lost some of our greatest values.** We have to ask ourselves how we have come here; we need to listen to the youth; recognize the child as a person. This requires remodeling the family structure. Parents are not above children. This is an issue than is not limited to specialists nor to NGOs. **We will leave this room tonight more conscious of the problem and we will think of solutions.** Remember when talking to youth that they are people. In what way are the challenges of youth today's philanthropic practices? I wish you a good night thank you for being with us", given by the Banque de Luxembourg.

Youth contribution

As Agora 4 Youth is about speaking about youth with youth, two youth testimonies were provided from the Luxembourg area.

1. **Elmawafak's testimony**

Elmawafak, a 20 year old from north Sudan shared his journey to Luxembourg:

"My village was located in an area in which rebels passed. When they attacked my village we had to flee. When we came back to my village it was liberalized by the government, who then pillaged my village spearching for rebels. Unfortunately, I was kidnaped and tortured. I am not a politician, yet all of this happened because of rivalry in government.

After what happened to me I decided to escape. I was a minor and sometimes I had to walk long distances or live with strangers. I eventually reached Libya. My mother tongue is Arabic and I didn't even know it was Libya because they speak Arabic too, but with a different dialect. I was taken by a Libyan man. Finally I got to a safe place where I was working. Then militias engaged in a violent exchange and the only way to escape was by the sea. We were families: young people and old people. The trip took seventeen hours and there were waves, I was very afraid. Luckily we were found by the Italian coast guard.

When I saw Luxembourg indicated, and I love the people, I thought maybe it is worth a try and I will go see for myself. The first thing I noticed was the diversity of cultures. It is a very fantastic thing. I have been here for five months so far. I volunteer a lot in many places, for example I translate English to Arabic. Because of my background with farming I also volunteer at a farm here. The man at the farm is very nice and has even taught me some words (he gives examples). Everyone has a dream, I have so many dreams. I want to publish a book about my story to motivate others to overcome their obstacles. Luxembourg has changed my life for the better, for sure. Thank you Luxembourg. **Thank you so much for what you have offered me: maybe I will give it back someday.** Thank you for this precious time”.

2. Mati's testimony

Mati, a 29 year old, then explained how human rights has affected him personally.

He had endured hunger, torture, and harsh military training. When he tried to escape but was arrested and imprisoned. He said the worst part of his life was the stressful underground prison. He managed to escape to Sudan but it was not a safe place for him due to religious tensions. Mati explained, “From Turkey I went to Greece. The first time I crossed it was a long journey, five hours in boat. The police arrested me at the border for eight hours with no food and no mattress. I was then sent back. Nevertheless, I managed to go to Greece again”.

He didn't know many words and heard the person in line in front of him say Luxembourg so he said Luxembourg too, **“I am lucky to have made that decision because Luxembourg is a great country”.**

Panelists discussion

Below are key elements we gathered from the discussion with the panelists about the Youth exclusion.

What is exclusion ?

- **“Social exclusion involves the lack or denial of goods, services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships or activities available to the majority of society.** It affects the social cohesion of society. It is about social, cultural, and political aspects in addition to economics. It doesn't just affect the individual, but the society as well” - **Robin Samuel**
- **“Poverty exists, first of all, but you can be poor and not excluded. Exclusion is a cumulative factor that can take different forms,** for example being handicapped. To be re-included there needs to be a social connection. **Exclusion is a phenomena - a negative spiral in which one cannot escape. We can change things.”** - **Jean-Marc Delaporte**

What pushes the Youth to be excluded ?

- **“Early tracking** (separating pupils by academic ability into groups for all subjects or certain classes and curriculum within a school) has been found to **reproduce inequalities.** Early tracking in Luxembourg starts at 6th or 7th grade. Changing tracks is difficult. It increases risks of being socially excluded. Moreover, labour markets discriminate. People probably won't admit that they do this sort of discrimination” - **Robin Samuel**
- **“It can be because of the educational system or the parents’ lack of knowledge. For some of us, it (access to education and assistance) is obvious, but if you don't know then it will not help you”** - **Robin Samuel**
- **“People with lower education overestimate the costs of education and underestimate the benefits of education.** People with more education are more willing and capable to invest in education. Learn now, work later” - **Robin Samuel**
- **“They have endured hurt** that can prevent them from making good decisions. This can prevent advancements in personal development” - **Sandra Hauser**
- **“These youth are on route to exclusion. Youth who are raised in centers find themselves without a home on their 18th birthday. It is discomfoting to find youth who have lived in the streets for years without people who looked for them.”** - **Sandra Hauser**
- **“The system has a distinction that creates exclusion: if there is exclusion it is because there is not a will to include. But it's not a fatality”** - **Jean-Marc Delaporte**

Why focus on Youth ?

- “Research shows, if you are young, things we consider to be soft skills are more valuable. For example, self esteem. Yet, adults are also a societal cost, so there is a hope to include them as well” - **Robin Samuel**
- “**Exclusion starts when you are young. We can see hope most when they are young**” - **Matthieu Cisowski**
- “They (youth) have a capacity for resilience. Youth have a resilience that adults do not. There are differences in teaching that are not possible for an adult” - **Jean-Marc Delaporte**

What solutions are possible ?

- “Work doesn't suffice at all, at all, at all. We have to approach the excluded youth and then we can find solutions” - **Matthieu Cisowski**
- “Cerazitit gave training to youth. We gave each person a mentor. We also coached the mentors to instruct them that they will be, and will have to want to be, models” - **Matthieu Cisowski**
- “They need above all housing because it is expensive. They need health insurance; **they need human help; a permanent presence to not allow them to slip.** Their educational level is usually low. It is a challenge to keep them out of exclusion. The youth who are in the school system really have a chance” - **Sandra Hauser**
- To make the change, “**there needs to be a catalyst that takes charge.** Then there needs to be an entourage. A family: a group that loves the youth. It's not easy to escape exclusion, but it is doable. With increasing urbanization it is possible that exclusion will increase as well. There needs to be money, but there also needs to be more, like coaching. **I believe Youth need a project.** Then you need to believe in them. Give them the codes: professionalization, training, and societal codes. It needs to be taught. Enterprises need to include schools. They (youth) need to be immersed in work environments. Entering into the circuit is complex, there are many constraints and it is not easy. This is a way to include them” - **Jean-Marc Delaporte**

Closing statements

Two closing statements were made. Patrick Wies thanked the youth for sharing their experiences. “Tonight,” he said, “I learnt things. There are aspects for which we are not conscious in daily life. A message retained: us all (nous toutes). From the round table: it is true that having a job is not sufficient. It is deeper than that”.

Marc de Crouy-Chanel: "Thank you everyone for coming. Who are we addressing tonight? This is an important question. The objective is to gather together a variety of energies to find a variety of solutions. It is important to talk. What I have retained more than other factors is that **it is more of a cost for Youth to be excluded than to include them**. We received no money for this conference. We need action and initiatives. Let's continue to engage in this conversation. I applaud these youth and all youth who have overcome challenges".

THANK YOU !

