

"Ungdomstoppmøtet". Statsministerens innlegg ved rundebord, Wien, lørdag 9.10.1993 kl. 15.00.

As you know, the Plan of Action adopted today has as a main element to support the launching of a European Youth Campaign.

The idea to have such a campaign came from Norway, and when I spoke in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 4 February, the plan of action and the youth campaign were among my main points.

The idea grew out of some negative experience we have had in Norway.

Firstly, we have seen aggression, hatred, harassment against immigrants as an increasing problem.

Secondly, four years ago, we experienced that political parties increase their support by taking fussy positions with regard to immigrants.

Thirdly, we were not sure if we could avoid having a repetition of this in the recently concluded election campaign.

I therefore invited the leaders of the youth organizations of the political parties in Norway to a meeting in my office to explore if they would assume responsibility for a youth campaign in Norway.

Not each and every one of these organizations agree on all points of the immigration policy of Norway. But they decided nevertheless to work together on the following basis:

We must fight xenophobia. Violence, harassment and discrimination based on race, colour, culture or religion cannot be tolerated. Everyone living in Norway shall have the same rights and responsibilities regardless of nationality race or religion.

These youth organizations are now shaping up a campaign of their own. The youth organizations are both formulating and disseminating the message. The campaign is not directed merely towards other youth, but towards the whole of the Norwegian society.

I have here in my hand a status report as of 1 October written by the common secretariat which the youth organizations have set up. Committees are being set up at regional and municipal levels. Campaign material is being produced with great imagination and creativity.

Representing political parties of all complections, from the far right to the far left, the youth leaders have taken up the challenge as sincere human beings, determined to fight the degredation of society which is imminent if racism and xenophobia prevails.

The challenges we face are not confined to Norway, not to any single European country. None of our societies can claim to totally free from intolerance. But none of our societies can live with widespread intolerance and still retain our dignity.

I am therefore pleased that European youth organizations are rallying to support an all-European Youth campaign.

Why a Youth Campaign ? We want to mobilize the strength, support and imagination of the young people of Europe. If the youth organizations themselves can take charge, reject the prejudices, animosities and fear which we know can become a social cancer if allowed to grow unchecked, if the youth organizations themselves can take care of planning and the implementation of the campaign, if we entrust the future of this continent as a refuge of enlightened diversity to the young generation, then Europe will never grow old.