

PEACEJAM
BELGIUM

PeaceJam Youth Conference 2017

EVALUATION REPORT

Hosted By



With the support of



EUROPEAN
PEER
TRAINING
ORGANISATION

Learning for
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Foundation



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Université catholique de Louvain (UCL), one of four of PeaceJam's participating universities, hosted the second annual PeaceJam Belgium Youth Conference from 17-19 November 2017. The Conference brought the participation of Shirin Ebadi, one of the 14 Nobel Peace Prize laureates on PeaceJam's Board and the first Muslim woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize. Shirin Ebadi received the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize in response to her efforts implementing democracy, peace and women's rights in the Middle East.

This conference was historical in that it united universities from both the French and Flemish speaking parts of Belgium, reverberating the essential message of unity. UCL, VUB (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles) and KUL (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) co-organised the PeaceJam Belgium conference. Their participation reflects their enthusiasm and determination for the event to become an important action for peacebuilding in Belgium involving their students and young people of school-going age. The four universities take turns in hosting the annual PeaceJam event. The Conference was launched with a panel discussion featuring Ms Shirin Ebadi as the VIP guest speaker together with university professors of each of the four universities on Friday afternoon (see enclosure). The panel discussion was attended by media and distinguished guests.

UCL was supported by the Learning for Well Being Foundation and the European Peer Training Organisation (EPTO) who actively recruited teachers and young people from secondary schools and youth organisations to attend the conference. EPTO organised 3 training sessions for teachers and youth leaders in 2017 and presented the Compassion in Action Curriculum during school visits throughout the year. EPTO, with its track record of European Youth Projects convinced the European Commission to fund a 3- year PeaceJam Europe project which started on 1 December 2017.



DONORS

This year the Bernheim Foundation kindly offered to fund the annual Peacejam conference. This grant sufficed to host participants, train mentors and fund the extensive security required for Ms Shirin Ebadi. Furthermore, the King Baudouin Foundation aided in donating funds to the Learning for Wellbeing Foundation and the Peacejam foundation to help finance the implementation of Peacejam in Europe. Peacejam also qualified for 3 years of financial support from the European Commission as part of its Erasmus Plus programme, to fund the programme's expansion including six EU countries. The pupils/young people who could not afford to pay for their participation fee were kindly sponsored by Rotary Tervuren. Colruyt co-funded the training and recruitment of young people in 2017.

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ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

150 participants composed of 120 pupils, 21 teachers and youth leaders as well as other guests attended the PeaceJam Belgium Youth Conference 2017 in Louvain la-Neuve. 23 university students were trained on the preceding Friday to act as student mentors. These volunteers coordinated the family groups throughout the weekend. As well as participants, the conference had 8 interpreters simultaneously translating the discourse into French, English and Dutch. 13 staff members from EPTO, Learning for Well Being and the PeaceJam Foundation as well as 7 external volunteers were responsible for organising the event.

Youth organisations from Molenbeek participated, such as AJM- VMJ D'broej (with 2 adults and 12 youth), D'Broej Centrum West (with 3 adults and 28 youth) and Maison de Jeunes La "J" (with 1 adult and 6 youth). These organisations consist mainly of young teenagers predominantly from Muslim backgrounds. Organisations such as AMO Réliance from Visé (1 adult and 2 youth) and S2J from Liège (2 adults and 19 youth) brought young ethnically diverse participants to the conference.

Pupils from schools from disadvantaged areas in Rotterdam and Brussels attended, including St. Gilles (Institut des Filles de Marie with 4 adults and 17 youth), Rotterdam's Vakcollege de Hef (with 2 teachers and 6 pupils). The European school of Brussels (with 1 teacher and 8 pupils) and the British School of Brussels (with 1 teacher and 10 pupils) brought youth of higher income families to the Youth Conference. This led to a true diversity in participants. Thanks to the fact that the conference was attended by an array of different pupils from different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, the conference provided a true platform for integration and education.

"It made me more aware of certain problems in our communities and showed me that anyone can make a change."(age17)

"It helped give me a greater sense of people from all different backgrounds." (age14)

"I felt strong closure and had a feeling of union." (age16)

"I feel changed by my encounters, listening to different experiences and mostly meeting people full of humanity and kindness towards others." (age17)

"I met people that I wouldn't probably have the courage to meet in my everyday life."(age16)

"It helped me see what I have and that I can change the future, I am capable."(age16)

"My favorite part was Shirin explaining some moments of difficulties she had to face. It demonstrates the courage she kept without any glorification."(age19)

"I got close to people and that gave me a lot of emotions. It's it through conferences like these that you get to really meet people." (age14)

"I want now to spread love and peace, and make sure we all lend a helping hand towards each other." (age16)

"I want now to spread awareness and encourage others to be more open-minded." (age16)

"My favorite part was meeting interesting and inspiring people, the ceremony of inspiration really moved me, as well as the Nobel Prize Winner talk." (age16)

"I learned that everywhere in the world there is something that unites us: the fact that we want to progress in a better world. That gave me the courage to move forward." (age18)

"I learned to never give up despite difficulties that may come our way."(age16)



"It's inspiring to see people changing their world, and to show that underneath the surface of everything ,everybody's got the same values, the same interests, the same ambition and going to events like this really shows how, when you see each other doing this; it builds a momentum. I would want to come next year for sure with even more people. We're all social beings, we're all thinking beings, it only takes a little time to scratch the surface before you get people to start thinking and that pulls people in. We want to understand the world just like we want to have contact with people, social and intellectual, that's in all of us." -Matthew Pye, Philosophy Teacher

RATINGS OF CONFERENCE COMPONENTS

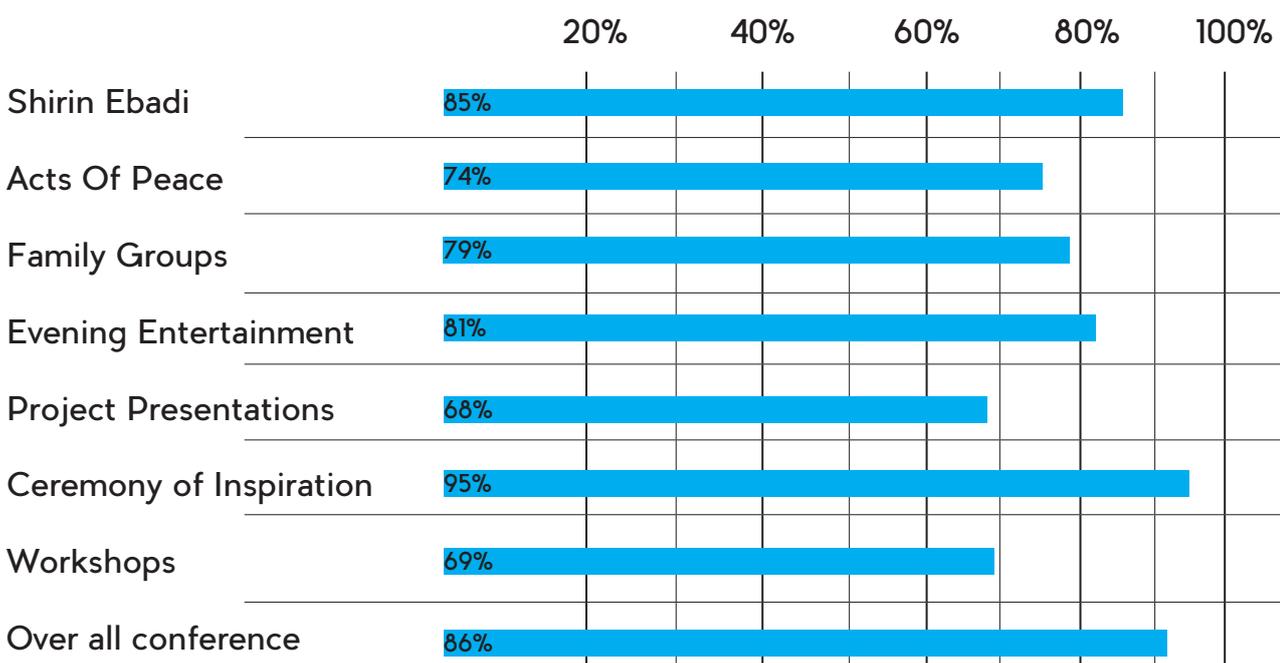
Participating pupils, teachers and youth leaders were asked to complete evaluation surveys at the end of the event covering: 1) their ratings for each component of the event scoring value and impact, 2) beliefs about themselves as peacemakers, and 3) written feedback on their favourite parts of the event and suggestions for improvements.

Overall the Conference was rated as “very good”, with 86% of the young people participating scoring it either 4 out of 5 or 5 out of 5 (with ‘1’ being not valuable and ‘5’ being very valuable). The highest rated activity at the conference was the Ceremony of Inspiration on Sunday morning (with a scoring of 95%) during which young people share their personal struggles and sources of inspiration with all the other participants.

This was followed closely (85%) by the speech and Q&A session given by Nobel Peace Laureate Shirin Ebadi on: “Education, Standing up against Injustice and Gender Equality”. The third highest rated element of the conference (79%) were the so-called “Family Group Sessions”: small dialogue groups mixing young people from widely differing backgrounds discussing peace themes; doing team building activities; discussing how to build self-confidence and anti-bullying and anti-discrimination activities at 6 different occasions during the weekend. These family groups were led by trained university mentors.

The ratings for family groups sessions were followed closely by project presentations (68%) with students presenting their own service projects to the Laureate and the audience. The workshops (8 choices) were rated with 69%. Young people were invited to attend a workshop of their choice on Sunday afternoon.

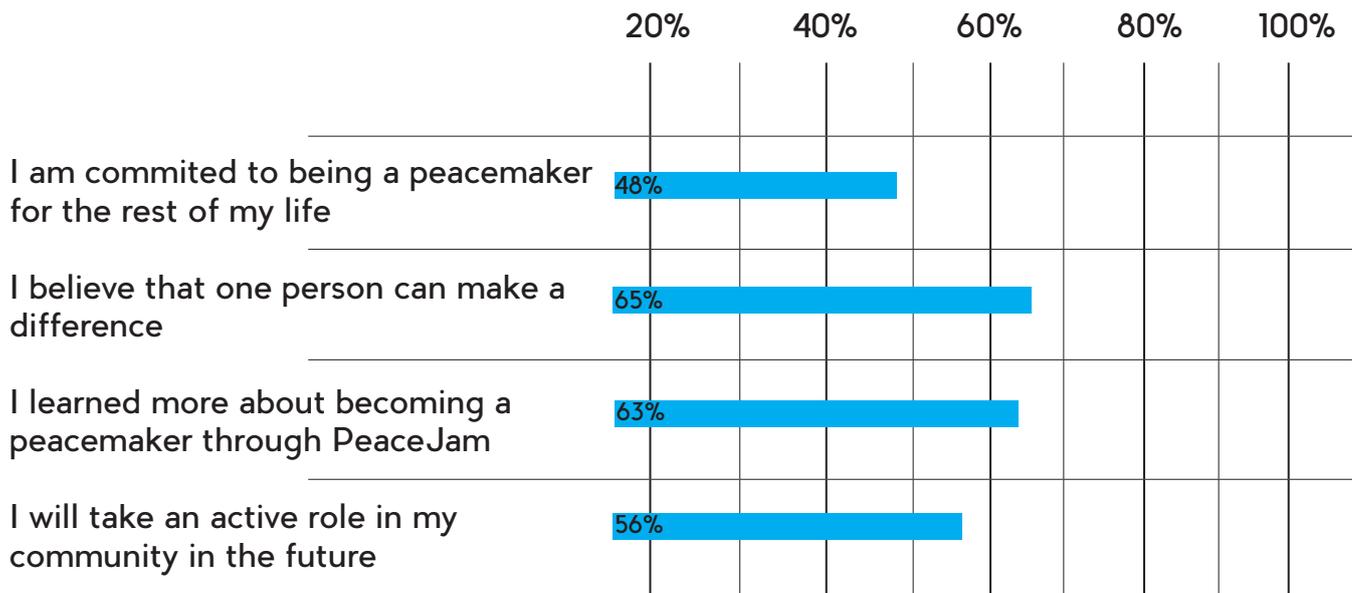
Chart 1: Diagram with evaluation figures ‘Rating of PeaceJam Conference Components’



IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Chart 2 indicates that participants were significantly impacted by their PeaceJam experience.

65% of participants believed that “one person can make a difference” by the end of the Conference. 63% “learned about becoming a peacemaker from PeaceJam” and 48% are “committed to being peacemakers for the rest of their lives.” 37% believe they “can make their neighbourhood/community more peaceful after participating in PeaceJam” and 56% pledge to “take an active role in their communities in the future”.



CONCLUSION

The overall aim of PeaceJam in Belgium and the 40+ countries where it is implemented, is to break down barriers between young people who come from widely different communities and backgrounds. PeaceJam creates a safe place in which experiences and thoughts can be shared, often leading to young people bonding and the formation of trusting relationships. Both young people and adults experience more compassionate ways of interacting and besides feeling that PeaceJam nurtures their sense of acceptance of diversity, often end up feeling inspired to take action through the role models of peace they are introduced to. Many have reported feeling more equipped to create positive change in themselves, their communities and the world.

The evaluation results make it abundantly clear that through a highly rated second edition of the PeaceJam Belgium Youth Conference, PeaceJam reached its aim of connecting youth-communities for peaceful action. Having so many young people from all walks of Belgian life, a microcosm consisting of Belgian's young people was empowered to plant the seeds for creating a more inclusive society.



Thank you!



REPORTING by
Learning for Well-being Foundation
European Peer Training Organisation