

UNAOC Fellowship Alumni

Acknowledgment:

This document is based on the reports of Alumni meetings in Milan, Italy in July 2015 and in New York, U.S.A. in May 2015 and December 2015. This report is also based on the conclusions drawn from one-on-one Skype conversations with more than 120 Alumni conducted by UNAOC staff between April 2015 and January 2016.

Background & Purpose:

In December 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2250 urging Member States to increase Youth representation in decision-making at all levels. This resolution recognized the crucial role young people can and should play in peace building and in advancing global stability.

Since 2010, the UNAOC Fellowship Program has been bringing together emerging leaders from Europe, North America, the Middle East and North Africa, inviting them to foster intercultural dialogue and cooperation between their societies.

Today, through the Fellowship Alumni Network, UNAOC seeks to encourage these young professionals and social leaders to exchange expertise, resources and ideas to develop partnerships across cultures and religions. The aim of this unique platform is to allow former participants to the Fellowship Program to connect with one another and with outside partners to create positive change in their communities and to promote understanding and respect between peoples of different faiths and backgrounds.

The UNAOC Fellowship Alumni network now counts 160 members living in 39 countries. The large majority has expressed its commitment to UNAOC mission and its interest in engaging with one another to develop intercultural collaborations in various sectors. The purpose of this document is to clarify the structure of the network and to convey a summary of the ideas that were expressed by Fellowship Alumni. This report is also the first step toward a Fellowship Alumni Charter.

The UNAOC Fellowship Alumni network:

I. The structure

The UNAOC Fellowship Alumni Network is a loose and decentralized networking structure which allows its members to share resource and expertise among themselves and with outside partners involved in Alumni projects or in UNAOC activities. One of its purposes is to encourage Alumni to mobilize one another's expertise, networks and resources to create cross-cultural added values together both on a community level and at a global scale.

II. The Alumni

The Alumni defined their sense of belonging to the Network through:

- Their commitment to UNAOC mission of fostering intercultural understanding
- Their willingness to create trust and long-term cooperation within the network
- Their strong motivation in sharing resources to produce positive change together at local and global scales
- Their genuine interest in meeting one another in person

III. Expectations

Alumni's main expectation is to build profound and long lasting partnerships around common goals, both globally and locally. Capacity building is seen as the immediate benefit that would result from Alumni cooperation. Alumni projects are also expected to benefit from such cooperation by gaining a wider access to resources and partners as well as a broader visibility.

The definition of common values, shared by all the Alumni, has been presented as an important tool to strengthen the sense of belonging to the Network.

Alumni also expressed their willingness to renew and increase their involvement in the Fellowship Program and their participation in the selection of future Fellows. They shared the idea of organizing an annual gathering during the last step of every new Fellowship program, in order to welcome and quickly integrate new participants in the Network.

Managing Alumni expectations is an important step and requires a more extensive conversation between UNAOC and the Alumni. The output of such exchange should lead to a set of recommendations that will be part of the future UNAOC Fellowship Alumni charter.

IV. Thematic pools of expertise

In order to be efficient, the collaboration among Alumni has to be content-oriented and focused on concrete and realistic goals. Therefore it appeared important to start identifying thematic pools of expertise within the Alumni Network. UNAOC has decided to use the following categories of classification.

Five main pillars:

- Education
- Media
- Migration
- Youth
- Politics, Diplomacy and Global Economy

Ten areas of expertise:

- Arts and Culture
- Civil Society and Human Rights
- Countering Terrorism, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution
- Intercultural Dialogue
- International Development
- Journalism and New Media Technologies
- Politics and Diplomacy
- Sustainable Development and Global Health
- Women Empowerment
- Youth Engagement and Sports

Six sectors:

- Academia
- Government and International Institutions
- Independent and Entrepreneurship
- Media
- Non-Profit and NGO
- Private Sector

V. Resources

Alumni have identified a set of resources and expertise in the fields of Media, Migration and Youth, that they could share with one another, with UNAOC and with partners, in order to implement innovative strategies at grassroots level to help counter xenophobia and radicalization.

Media

The Alumni professionally involved in this field are:

- Media professionals and analysts with knowledge of their countries' media landscape and language
- ITC experts able to use modern communication technologies to convey powerful messages

Together and within the Alumni network, they can create and offer:

- A digital taskforce to prevent and fight online radicalization and xenophobia
- Directory of blogs, websites, social media accounts, videos and documentaries related to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, as well as radicalization and xenophobia
- Cultural literacy manual and glossary, which can be made available to the alumni network, media professionals and schools/universities
- Compilation of best online sources on intercultural dialogue
- Media training for UNAOC alumni who are experts in their fields, but need help attracting the news media and effectively communicating their message
- A media watchdog committee that holds news outlets accountable for perpetuating stereotypes, fear mongering and using incorrect or damaging terminology in intercultural coverage

Migration

The Alumni professionally involved in this field are:

- Field experts working in MENA and EUNA countries and with a first hand involvement in their countries' reality

Together and within the Alumni network, they can create and offer:

- Field expertise and first hand understanding of the refugee populations, the root causes of their situation, the environment they live in...
- Data, information, access to field, analysis and networks compiled over the years and bridging the discrepancy between different stakeholders and sectors.
- A platform to allow actors working on migration from different perspectives

- (education, media, youth, etc..) to cross-pollinate.
- Conflict management resources: tool kits that can be shared on ways to avoid, analyze and better understand how to deal with conflict in migration settings between and within communities, and with host countries' populations etc.
 - Ideas and strategies on ways to manage government failures in empowering civil society organizations in their work with refugees.
 - Support in crowd-funding techniques to deal with emergency cases thus escaping bureaucracy of funding in emergency situations.
 - Trainings and tool-kits based on success stories on daily management of field issues in the camps.

Youth

The Alumni professionally involved in this field are:

- Young leaders with skills and knowledge of their countries' political and social context and dynamics.
- Grassroots organizations and youth advocates experienced in different youth related issues in their home countries

Together and within the Alumni network, they can create and offer:

- A wider cooperation between Alumni's organizations to engage more young people across the world on radicalization and xenophobia
- Capacity building strategies to encourage young people to be actively involved in their communities and to raise their voices on important matters
- Access to national and international youth networks
- Access to decision makers on the local and national levels
- Success stories based on concrete examples with data and models potentially reproducible elsewhere
- Toolkits to address and mobilize young people on different levels, both offline and online
- Programs for capacity building, such as offline trainings based on sharing experience in advocacy, community development, empowerment...
- Efficient action oriented engagement mechanism