

Resilience and Learning: Insights from Northern Ireland and the British Council Programme

By Anna Chatzi, Journalist

You may wonder how I will combine journalism, traveling in Northern Ireland, and the British Council. It all started when I received a thrilling email informing me that I had made the final 25 for the **British Council's EU UK Youth Stronger Together Programme**, a seminar for young journalists from around Europe. It was exciting because I had the opportunity to improve my skills in solutions journalism, inclusive reporting, fact-checking, and environmental & social storytelling. Equally exciting was the idea of partnering with young journalists from all over Europe and beyond.

It is not easy starting out as a young journalist. It is a path full of doubts and confusion. Am I doing it right? Is it worth all the effort? Sometimes, you feel so frustrated when you are unable to find your own voice as you try to understand how this demanding profession operates. Insecurity is inescapable in journalism, and being courageous enough to venture into unknown paths or stumble before standing up again is essential. **For every mistake, there is a lesson learned; hence failure becomes part of the mastery process.**



Programmes like the EU UK Youth Stronger Together Programme are invaluable within this spectrum. They provide knowledge, yes, but also act as a compass for young journalists who need extra guidance in their early years in newsrooms. During the workshops, we were energised to supercharge our environmental and social narratives. Most importantly, we got first-hand experience of seasoned journalists at work and interacted with them, learning from their points of view and experiences. This type of exposure is crucial for young journalists as it provides practical insights that no book can give.

Travelling in Northern Ireland

Amidst all this learning and collaboration, I was presented with an astounding opportunity: a trip to Northern Ireland. My article began to take shape as I reflected

on an interesting quote from my participation in a seminar at the Corrymeela Reconciliation Centre in Ballycastle during the Nurturing Hope Summer Learning Journey. The quote from our discussions there was: 'Mimesis describes the reality of who we are as human beings. We exist in relationships. Human beings change and grow through learning in relationships, in both positive and negative ways. Mimesis—this process of interaction, learning, and meeting with each other—comes before consciousness; we are never aware of it.' It was not just going to be a journey but rather an adventure into a country with a rich history and stunning landscapes. Upon reaching Belfast, this reality dawned on me.



Strolling around the city, I was struck by the resilience of its people. Living and working through the so-called periods of troubles must have been incredibly challenging, yet here they were, thriving in the face of adversity. The places depicted in the artworks were indeed rather brilliant. However, the greatest gain on this trip was the interpersonal contact. Connecting with local people taught me that Northern Ireland, too, has a lot of resilience, besides being full of struggling yet constructive diversity. Various conflicting groups manifest their political and religious biases; hence these are parts of the earth where similar conflicts still exist. This history seems akin to the cases of Greece and Cyprus, Turkey, and the conflict with Palestine-Israel. It is for this reason that within such conflicts, the matter of reconciliation is inherent. Here in Northern Ireland, I saw people's efforts to establish approximation and gain mutual comprehensibility.

One memorable conversation was with a taxi driver who expressed scepticism about climate change, remarking, 'Why should I believe in that? Here, the weather is always rainy and wet.' Such a discussion highlighted some people's failure to think beyond their individual, often self-centred, interests in an issue. It made me reflect on how we all tend to prioritise our microcosms over larger challenges. A personal lesson that is difficult to forget is the spirit of hope and drive among the people of Northern Ireland. However, there is a continuity of the struggle by people for peace in the community, country, and the entire world. To the local communities, justice entails embracing the fight for others and encouraging both the common society and the government to take appropriate actions.

Cross-sectionally, from this experience, I realised that it is possible to be happy and in solidarity even in the hardest of circumstances. The people of Northern Ireland provide a living example of the strength that comes with unity and the need to join hands. Looking at my life's journey, people should always take the side of the struggling and smiling no matter what. We need to initiate discussions concerning needy communities and strive towards a globe filled with hope and change.

The values of reconciliation and cooperation, which I saw being practiced in Northern Ireland, are very important in our workplaces. Each day, we should endeavour to work together for the betterment of society and for positive change. If such values are followed, one will create sustainable environments that encourage knowledge and progress. I am very fortunate to have wonderful individuals who shape my life not only personally but also professionally. Sometimes, we fail to appreciate how privileged we are with support systems and opportunities like traveling the world and meeting amazing people. They create hope.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the British Council for offering me this incredible opportunity. This experience has encouraged me to keep pushing for more dialogue, acceptance, and togetherness for all those in all societies and workplaces. I realised that this trip was not just a travel experience but rather a journey in my mindset about how we interact, meet, and learn with each other and how important this is if we want to make a difference. As the words carved into wood above the door at Corrymeela say, 'Corrymeela begins when you leave.' I wholeheartedly agree. As we move forward, we must hold onto hope. **We believe in the power of people, and we believe we can still make a difference.** As André Breton said, '**Human is the answer, whatever the question may be.**'

