

# COEXISTENCE INTERNATIONAL AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

## Strengthening Coexistence Policy (Strand 3) Concept Paper

### **Introduction**

This concept paper, “Strengthening Coexistence Policy”, describes a strand of work being initiated by Coexistence International at Brandeis University (CI). “Strengthening Coexistence Policy” is one of five strands of work being undertaken by CI. It will be convened by Dr. Mari Fitzduff, Director of the MA Program in Coexistence and Conflict Resolution at Brandeis University, and Chair of CI’s Advisory Board, with support from the CI Program Manager and a Graduate Assistant.

CI is a new initiative funded through a gift of the Alan B. Slifka Foundation, housed within the Slifka Program in Intercommunal Coexistence, itself a program of Brandeis’ International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life. CI envisions a world in which people of different religions, races, ethnicities and cultures relate with respect and recognize their interdependence, where diversity is embraced for its positive potential, and where equality is valued and actively pursued. Its mission is to strengthen the field of policymakers, practitioners, researchers, advocates, organizations and networks promoting coexistence at local, national and international levels.

CI has recently completed a strategic plan, committing itself to advocating for a complementary, inter-disciplinary vision of the coexistence field that includes not only practitioners and theorists working directly on coexistence (i.e. conflict resolution practitioners, coexistence facilitators, mediators, etc.) but also those working in related disciplines, such as cultural work, democracy, education, humanitarian aid, sustainable development, etc. CI’s strategic plan includes five strands of work: (i) networking those who are thinking about the field at a meta-level; (ii) strengthening coexistence policies; (iii) working with funders; (iv) exploring the relationship between art and peacebuilding and (v) work within a particular, yet-to-be decided geographic region.

### **Background**

The development and implementation of coexistence policies within governments and organizations can contribute to sustainable coexistence both within and between communities. In the absence of comprehensive, effective and sensitive policies, coexistence issues may be neglected, and efforts to improve inter-group relations can be sporadic and ineffective.

This line of work is designed to encourage the development and coherence of coexistence policies within different areas of government and international organizations. The work will also serve to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience between coexistence practitioners and policy makers, and to strengthen the ties and communication between them.

Activities within this strand of work will contribute to an increased understanding of how different policy areas are addressing the issue of coexistence, an awareness of the current coexistence policies being developed and implemented, and the lessons learned to date including an assessment of the impact of different policies and the methods of holding agencies and persons accountable. During the first three years of CI’s work (Phase One), the policy strand will focus on two distinct groups: (i) Governance and Democracy; (ii) Police, Military and Security. In Phases Two (years 4-7) and Three (years 8-10) other policy areas will be considered.

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**Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this strand of work, as stated in CI's Strategic Plan, is to encourage the development and coherence of coexistence policies. Policymakers at all levels (local to global) in government, educational institutions, INGOs, professional associations, and public, private, and civil society sectors will be encouraged to develop and implement policies reflecting CI's vision of coexistence.

Corresponding to these goals, the following objectives have been identified for years 1-3:

1. To identify and work with policymakers from specific sectors to promote awareness of coexistence and to develop advocacy strategies.
2. To create and disseminate documents on policy and advocacy strategies to further promote coexistence.
3. To develop an informal network of like-minded policymakers from specific sectors and encourage strategic partnerships when appropriate.

**Activities**

During the next three years, we envision carrying out research on the state of coexistence policy within the area of Governance and Democracy and Police and Military and Security, engaging in an exchange of ideas with key individuals from these areas, and producing a best practice publication.

At a next stage, the publication would be more widely disseminated, and used as a vehicle for sharing good policy and as a tool for advocating policy change. Further workshops would be held to support this purpose and new policy fields would be adopted (eg. education, sport).

In the longer term CI expects to see good coexistence policy being widely implemented and developed and a working group of professional associations and policymakers from select areas established.

Activities in **Year One** include:

- Identify the key organizations promoting Democracy and Governance throughout the world.
- Research and analyze the policies of democracy organizations towards coexistence.
- Draft a document summarizing the findings of said research.
- Convene one-on-one meetings with identified organizations and individuals.
- Conduct initial research on indicators of successful governmental coexistence policy.

Activities in **Year Two** include:

- Organize a workshop to examine research and lessons learned about coexistence policy within the Governance and Democracy field.
- Produce and disseminate a booklet on *Models for Coexistence Policies and Pitfalls to Avoid<sup>1</sup>* for the Governance and Democracy field.
- Similar work on Police, Military and Security initiated.

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<sup>1</sup> Working title

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Activities in **Year Three** include:

- Produce and disseminate a booklet on *Models for Coexistence Policies and Pitfalls to Avoid*<sup>2</sup> for Police, Military and Security field.
- Plan for similar processes to be initiated in other policy field.

For additional information on this area of CI's work, or about CI more generally, please contact Jessica Berns, CI Program Manager ([jberns@brandeis.edu](mailto:jberns@brandeis.edu)).

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<sup>2</sup> Working title