

# YOUTH VOICE

80 YOUNG PEOPLE DEBATE FOR EUROPE

**TOGETHER**



**France**



Youth Voice spreads over Europe By Luc Wendling President of Together



The Youth Voice conference brought 81 young people from all the 27 Member States of the European Union came to Metz, France on 11 – 16 October 2009 to celebrate together the values of European citizenship and youth participation. They participated in a unique European-wide event which gave them the possibility to express the Youth Voice of young Europeans.

Contrary to many other youth forums, this event brought together young people from diverse backgrounds, with diverse experience. They were not just young people with a university degree, involved in the youth policy and with experience from many international conferences, but real young people with real life stories. All of them appreciated the opportunity to represent the youth of their country and each participant contributed to the success of the project. Already before the conference, participants undertook a research about youth participation reality in their country, filled in survey questionnaire about this, recorded video interviews with other young people to get diverse opinions about the topics and also got into contact with you, politicians and decision-makers from the EU Member States.

During the 5 days in Metz, they participated in a unique participation process. They met with politicians on local, regional, national as well as European level and exchanged their views. They discussed among themselves about the topics of youth policy. And they participated in a Giant Open Space where each of them could propose a topic of concern to him/herself and discuss it with 80 other young Europeans. At the same time, participants had a great chance to discover the cultural diversity of all the 27 EU Member States, make new friends with people all over Europe and feel like real Europeans!

In this newsletter, you can find the outcomes of the Youth Voice event – articles by young people, conclusions of various workshops as well as greetings from European politicians who accorded their patronage to the project. So please check this newsletter and listen to the voice of youth.

**Mister Jerzy Buzek,  
president of the European  
Parliament**

Thank you for your kind letter seeking the patronage of the European parliament to the project "Youth Voice" and the meeting in Metz between 11 and 16 October 2009.

Your event, which brings together 81 young persons from all the 27 countries in the European union with the aim to discuss European citizenship and youth participation, reflects the concerns of the European Parliament. Our Institution is well known for its commitment to youth and active citizenship and it is therefore with pleasure that I lend its patronage to your event.

I wish you  
and the  
participants  
all success.



## Innovative Youth Workshop

The major aim and outcomes of this workshop was to see what kind of opportunities youth co-operation can bring to our own reality. In the first round participants shared their ideas about projects, run successfully in their environment. The participants discussed the possibility to implement these projects in different countries.

Then they looked at what ideas can be generated by a groups of young people from different countries by putting their heads together. The outcome was full of ideas about new projects, new business opportunities, and new solutions. The participants agreed, that by starting one's own business, one is more able to defeat economical downtimes, just as we could see recently.

Finally the participants raised the topic to create a "thinking network". The question was:

'How can we create a network, which can think?'. Complex issues need complex solutions. These complex solutions are more likely to come from many different point of views concentrated in one answer. Therefore the participants really welcomed the opportunity to share ideas.

The young people came up with a concrete plan how to share good entrepreneurial ideas throughout the EU countries, too.

First, the **Project bank** should be established , talking providing information about projects which are already successfully running in different countries. Another platform which is now being developed by the participants is the **Ideas bank**, which will be focused on sharing ideas and where a huge discussion board will be available. Participants also plan to organise meetings among each other, so that the contact is not only virtual.



## Motivating Luxembourg By Janne Jaagant (21 years old) Estonia

At 15. October 2009, youngsters from 27 countries are gathering in a beautiful Luxembourg. Together project like "Youth Voice" gives very unique opportunity to visit The Parliament of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. The visit is in all meanings special, being hosted in the place that is open for chosen persons.

Being hosted by Mr. Xavier Bettel, we as the participants, got the time we could never expected. We were introduced with the work of parliament by someone who is a role model to all of us, who is doing something with heart and passion. Besides the interesting facts about the Luxembourg and the different systems we all felt that we got answers to our questions that where straight and honest. Mr. Bettel made us, the young Europeans, feel important and necessary to European Union and to the world. For example me as the Estonian, had a chance to compare Estonia with Luxembourg- both small countries, both being occupied in history, both trying to get the best for EU. I am thankful for the feeling that I got from useful answers for my questions about Estonia from someone from another country, and the fact that a young politician from Luxembourg is so well informed about Estonia, gave me hope that the Estonia is not alone.

Few hours with one very inspirational politician, Mr. Bettel, inspired us all. Who would have thought that the discussion over world and problems in a political environment can become emotional like this and move some of us till tears of happiness that we are not alone and if there is at least one who give everything from his heart to do the best, then there must be others. I think I can say for most of us, that we felt really special and important for the European Union and we all left with the inner sunshine from The Parliament of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg out to sunny Luxembourg city.





### Madam Angelika Werthmann, MEP Austria

I welcome and encourage the project "Youth Voice" and therefore I am very pleased to support this project with my Letter of Patronage.

In my view it is of paramount importance that young people come together and discuss political issues in a free atmosphere. Europe needs young people who value democracy and active citizenship -- values that are much needed.

## Demonstrations as a way of protesting against the government, and making your voice heard.

This workshop was held by the Greek group who wanted to raise the question how far demonstrations can go and how effective tool of communication with the government it is. This was based on their experience from Athens, Greece, where immense demonstrations were taking place not a long time ago.

After exchanging different experience from their countries, the young people came to a conclusion that when people are disappointed, it is natural to express their disagreement and that it is obvious that especially young people want to be heard. However, they agreed, that it should not overstep the limits. On the other hand, they also pointed They also referred to the phenomenon of police brutality, giving an example of what was happening in London, UK during the G20 meeting.

The conclusion therefore was that people do have the right to protest, however both sides, demonstrates as well as police, should not infringe the laws while having their voice heard.

### The access to university studies

This was a very wildly discussed topic, because being students themselves, most of the participants could relate to this topic with a lot of enthusiasm. The biggest question raised was, to what extent should the University studies be financed by the government and what should be only financed from private resource.

Young people also exchanged their experience with the entrance processes in different countries of the EU. While for example in France there are no entrance exams and the decision of being enrolled is based on results from previous studies, Czech Republic is one of the countries, where entrance exams still play a significant role.

A very heated debate was led about the question if the EU should make a common framework for the University studies to guarantee the same level of all graduates from the EU Universities.

Participants concluded that a certain level of University education should be financed by the state, to make sure the education is available for everybody. However, there is no reason why to limit the private sector. As for the idea of establishing a common European Universities, even though the participants are aware of the advantages of having a unified standard, they know, it would be extremely demanding to guarantee the same level of difficulty for all the Universities.



## Open Space in the Cityhall in Metz

On the 14th of October, youngsters from 27 European countries got together in the town hall of Metz. The meeting was part of Youth Voice project, which took place in France. In the town hall of Metz youngsters had 5 hours to discuss about different topics that they themselves thought of, there were so many topics that we had to set the time limit for the length of the discussion, which was 30 minutes. The topics were about different things that the youth was interested in and the topics had one common factor, they were about topics that involve the European Union in one way or another.

I personally was most interested in the topic that was about youth entrepreneurship. The discussion involved questions about different types of programs aimed towards youth, which help and support students in the process which ideal goal would be that students create and operate their own businesses. There were a lot of examples from Portugal, especially about entrepreneurship in universities. For example, big companies contact universities so the professors from schools can give the students the chance to work in a large company, get to know the general build of enterprises and get connections from there. But the problem with that was that this doesn't create innovative ideas because the students are given the task by the company that they have to follow. So the main question derived from this - Is this really the best way to increase the amount of new young entrepreneurs? This type of opportunity is good for students, but it has a major flaw. Students do not get paid for their work, the professors get all the credit and money for finding the person who will be interested in working in a big company.

There were also examples from other countries, for example in Estonia they have a project called Junior Achievement which gives the students from all ages (including basic schools) a chance to create a student company from scratch and later on make it into a real working company and participate in the national and international competitions. These competitions only involve student companies and help them to set their footing in the world of entrepreneurship.

In overall you could see that the topic is really important and brought up a lot of questions and people discussed them deeply. We had 30 minutes to discuss about this topic and there were 15 persons who actively discussed about this. The topic induced so many ideas that the conversation about this topic went on even then when we were finished talking about it in the official time limit.

By **Indrek Hirsik (Estonia)**



## Macedonia and Greece

What is history? Is it an agreement between two countries? Or is it a long term process of events? This question has not been solved at least between Greece and Macedonia. In our group we had a very interesting discussion about this issue.

First, the name of Macedonia is not an acceptable name from the point of view of the Greek side. The problem is however much deeper than that, because there are huge disagreements about several history issues some of them having their origins at the times of Alexander the Great.

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the name of the country which has been independent since 1991, at that time there were a lot of politic crises in Greece and that is why Greece has not made a big arguments concerning the name, but now, when Macedonia is about to join the EU, the old problem became the everyday reality and now this problem made a huge gap which might stop Macedonia from joining the EU.

These were just a few examples of topics discussed in the Townhall of Metz by the young people. To name a few more, the participants also talked about the role of the youth in the world and how to motivate people to participate in the democratic basis or how to bring the non-formal education to everybody. Many of those workshops were not led by the young people, but by elected people who were experts in their fields. This is another factor, which made the Youth Voice so unique, giving the opportunity to young people to share their ideas with people who are actually responsible for implementing new features in many issues which were discussed.



Comments....

Usually I really don't like politicians, but Mr. Xavier Bettel who spoke with us in Luxembourg was more than great. I believe that he is a good politician, but more important is that he is a really good person. He spoke with us like with people, not like with just some kind of youngsters. I personally feel very happy to meet people who are in love with life and in love with things they are doing. It always inspires me.

by Guna Pursele (Latvia)



By Jirka Peterka

Topics covered in Open Space

- **social entrepreneurship**

Participants shared their experience from their own countries and compared different possibilities young people have in different parts of Europe.

An idea which is now being discussed in Scotland was also introduced. The basic principle it works on is that there are community businesses whose profit goes to the local municipality, who redistributes it further to volunteers, who work in developing countries. Those volunteers are usually young people, who apart from helping less developed countries also get a lot of experience thanks to this system.

- **employability**

Participants agreed that non-formal education should be significantly more recognized by employers.

- **youth and new technology**

This topic was suggested by one of the Participants to learn about possibilities in different countries. Maybe surprisingly, the strongest output of the discussion was that the best availability of modern technologies such as fast internet connection is provided to youth in Estonia.

- **Lisbon Treaty and the situation in the Czech Republic**

This workshop was held by participants from the Czech Republic with the aim to explain what is happening in the Czech Republic and what are the official reasons for the Czech president to linger on signing the treaty.

This topic was very actual and well appreciated by everybody, because it gave the participants an unique opportunity to have the issue explained by Czechs themselves, not through any kind of media, who tend to misinterpret.

- **Information as basis for citizenship**

The main idea discussed at this workshop was the question how to bring all people to the information they need. No matter how much money or education those people have. The paradox is, that even though they say we live in the "information era", people who don't have money have a difficult access to information, too.

- **Structured dialogue between youngsters and decision makers**

The workshop was suggested by Janne (Estonia) who worked in a youth center and she wanted to know how to improve relationship and partnership between youngsters and politicians. Participants agreed that there is a general need to break the ice between politicians and youngsters.

The power of the media should be used. They need to give more opportunities to let youngsters talk.

- **Citizenship and participative democracy**

how to make the people participate in the civil and political life

- **Discrimination in Europe**

Participants discussed discrimination generally, first defining it as the situation of "Two people in an identical situation not being treated equally" More importantly, they shared their unique experience from their home countries. For instance lack of jobs and college places for Muslims in the French community or women not being employed in countries like Romania or Bosnia, because they have or will have families. The conclusion was that it is necessary to build tolerance and sense of justice from the very early age through school system.

- **Youth Crime**

This topic was suggested by Tony from London, UK, who is very concerned about the increase of youth aggressiveness in his hometown. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to learn about different approaches throughout the EU.



**Miss Marian Harkin, MEP Ireland**

As a Member of the European Parliament - I am delighted to have the opportunity to support „Youth Voice“ - a European-wide event which will bring together 81 young people from all the 27 countries of the European Union to express the voice of European youth.

Getting young people more involved in local, national and European communities and fostering active citizenship is an extremely ambitious and worthwhile project - it is important that the views of all young people are heard by policy makers. In 2008 we celebrated 20 years of Youth Policies at an EU level and it is important that we continue to build on this over the next 20 years.

I look forward to hearing the outcomes of „Youth Voice“ and reading the declaration adopted by the all the young people involved in this project.

Kind regards,



**Debatte in municipality Metz**

80 young people debated with the major of Metz, a french deputy, a vice president of regional council, a representent of economic and social council and a representent of Luxembourg.



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