

European Youth Voice



Participation and Journalism

www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu

An international online newspaper for young Europeans by young people
Documentation 2011/2012

Launched by aktuelles forum nrw, Germany



Content

About us Seite 2

Articels

Europe Seite 4

A great family
Competition and Morality in the European Union
European stationary
Generation 1992 to the main stage please!
My useful memories from Bruxelles
Strategies? Stop blubbering like a baby....
The Gypsy problem
Why should Romanians students
come back after studying abroad

Funny Stuff Seite 10

A sacrifice in the name of love
Carnival in Germany
Christmas folly
Folk dance unite
Gourmet Student

Media Seite 16

Are blogger the new journalists?
Book on paper or book on screen
Books and Radio together
Personal online identity, why and how?
Radio Funkhaus Europa
Steve Jobs
The Social Networks Era

Music Seite 24

2 in 1 Engineer and DJ
Emotional journey with soulful traveller
Estonia – the country where people sing
The festival turned Tartu in a capital of culture
Quest for music with George Quest

Politics Seite 30

Belgian soldiers on the visit in South Bohemia
Bucharest the be(a)st from the east
Concentration camp Majdanek
Imperialists out of Africa
Meet an Afghan
Nigeria
The Bottom billion
The show must go on – greek revolution
The Syrian Revolution and Italy's Contribution in conflict
communication
The Waste is gone with the Wind
There is a strength in us

Society Seite 40

21 words tha cannot be translated
As a human beeing remember...
Bilingualism
Europeanized education
For democracy and laicite
HIV in Estonia
It's Christmas time
Life on the street
Participatin by children and youth in the Czech Repbulic
The fear of a national identity
The story of US space shuttles

Sport Seite 50

How I built my first kayak
Sauna marathion in Estonia
Spot an human rights
What is your relation to national sports?

Studies Seite 54

Having a job while studying
Life of a Computer Science student in Estonia
My EVS in France
Say yes to EVS
Student life in UK
What I feared before about Erasmus

Travel Seite 62

A cozy way to world peace
A little adventure in summer
Aachen
In praise of flight
In search of perfect destination
Post holiday tiding
Pre Departure Stress
Upside down
Voce fala Portugues

Participants Seite 70

How to join! Seite 71

Impressum Seite 72

About Us

aktuelles forum nrw e.V., Germany

The project Participation and Journalism 2011/2012 was initiated by the aktuelles forum nrw e.V. in Germany. It's a non-profit association for civic education. Aktuelles forum was founded in 1968 to offer a forum for political discussions. In seminars and projects we talk about controversial issues of politics, society and culture. We are committed to social justice and more democracy. Aktuelles forum isn't party-political oriented. Rooted in the Ruhr area in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, we work nationally and internationally for a European dialogue and understanding. The title of our program in 2013 is called: „Europe: economic, ecological and socially fair?" On the website www.aktuelles-forum.de you will find all informations on our seminars and projects. The current European projects are:

- EuropeanYouthVoice (www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu)
- young workers for Europe (www.youngworkers.de),
- network of villages of Nazi crimes (www.aktuelles-forum.de)

The Project

The idea of the internet newspaper EuropeanYouthVoice was launched in 2006. The main intention of this project is to create a 'Young European Public' and to promote peaceful living in Democratic Europe. It is a platform for a new European youth contemporary journalism. Each year the project has a different topic.

This booklet

This booklet contains a selection of articles that have been written during the project period of the young authors independently. Young people from 11 European countries took part. The website www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu is open to everybody. You only need a login.

Your words, your opinions, your text online

This is the slogan of EuropeanYouthVoice: Your words, your opinion, your text. Authors can write their own articles about young people and for young people in Europe. Meanwhile it is also possible to publish video clips and radio reports on the website.

Supporters

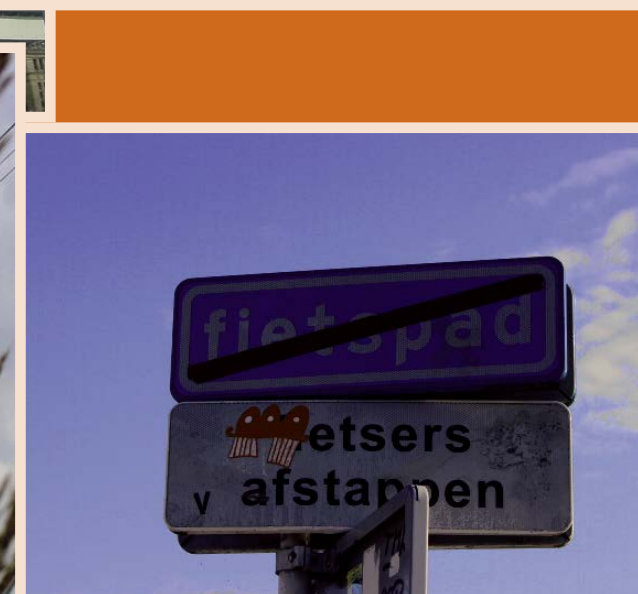
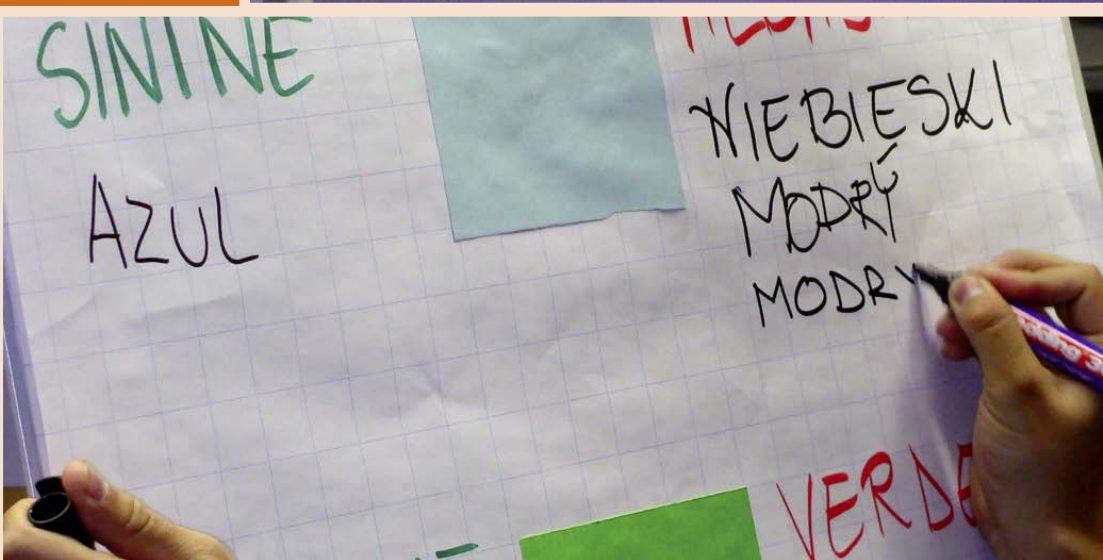
This project is financed by the EU – youth in action program and the local headquarters for political education in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany.

Contact

aktuelles forum nrw e.V.
Hohenstaufenallee 1
D- 45888 Gelsenkirchen
Germany
Tel: +49 209 155 10 - 19
Mail: info@aktuelles-forum.de



EUROPEAN
YOUTH VOICE
Makeover



Europe:

A great family – Europe

Every day we hear talking about the “European Citizenship”, but I wonder how many of us really understand this concept. It may be too complex or too simplistic, but I consider really necessary for every single person to understand this topic, in order to achieve a sense of belonging.

While the EU is neither a state nor is it expected to turn into one in the future, European citizenship policy has always been linked to particular, albeit differing ways of thinking about the state. We are born in different countries, with different traditions, with different cultures. What brings us together is that we live on the same planet, first of all, but then, is that we are from Europe. We are always thinking of USA as the most united country, if we can say so, in the world. We dream of a united Europe, but, practically, what do we do?

The pursuit of equity and social cohesion has been a growing political priority over recent years at national and European level. Encouraging citizens, particularly young people, to actively participate in social and political life has been seen as one of the principal means to address these issues; education has, consequently, been identified as a major lever in this respect.

Education, as part of long-term development, is now very fond of this new topic. As European Youth Forum pressed, every European Member state has integrated the citizenship education in school curricula. Considering the increasing role that the youngsters have in policy issues, this new scholar topic is of crucial importance for democracy. Involving teenagers in school governance at any age makes them more responsible and aware of the social issues. The sense of belonging to a community is developed better and easier, because they learn by practicing, providing them with social skills as making choices or taking decisions. The report published by the European Commission implies that these regulations could



play an important role in encouraging real-life democratic practices within school.

The sense of belonging depends also on the yardstick it is measured by. If we are taking in from national to multi-national, we may find ourselves in a controversy, a long-lasting one, because no one will give up his particularities to achieve a new, general, European one. But if we talk firstly in general, we can see that the history and our ways of perceiving politics and society are very similar, due to a co-development. During the years, in every country from Europe there was a partnership with another one. We grew up together, we influenced each other and you may be surprised how many things we have in common.

As we can see, traveling abroad strengthens the European identity. It is just the same as with your friends and family: you don't miss them until they or you are gone. This was a topic of discussion on Debating Europe, where people, especially youngsters, express their opinions. Scrolling down the comments, you will be surprised that the sense of belonging is well developed in the youth population. They feel like they are European in every corner of the world.

But, as we seek deeper, we realize that the process of citizenship is a dynamic one. We find ourselves facing a utopia, because not every one of us enjoys the benefits of being European. Some of us do not even know what was changed since they became citizens. New rights? New liberties? New

debts? Maybe the last one or maybe none of them. The social impact of being European is low and the mass-media may be blamed. We are focusing on youngsters, but we should see if the young adults are aware of their belonging to a great family, called European Union.

In spite of all these, we can see that there are also some persons that do not admit that there is a European Identity. Their reasoning is somehow fair, because, if you travel in Western Europe, you'll find out that the awareness of the Eastern or Balkan situation is almost inexistent. As a Romanian citizen, I am disappointed to discover that my country's society and culture is practically unknown and I am sure that this is not the only case.

To summon up, I consider that, even if we do not admit it, the European Identity exist and makes you re-evaluate your opinion about life and society. So, you realize that there are other persons out there, with a different culture, but with a different perspective of life. The sense of belonging exists at any level, but what varies is the degree.

Anna-Maria Anghelescu, Romania 2012

Competition and Morality in the European Union

The article is intended to draw attention on the possible incompatibility between two of the cornerstones of the European Union: competition and morality. My observations are going to be made from a economic – ethical perspective by using comments of prominent characters like: M. Weber, A. Smith, K. Marx, F. von Hayek.

I come from the generation and from that particular corner of Europe, where we grew up with the dream of the Union. Under the current developments, I cannot help feeling a slight twitch inside me, like somebody constantly grabbing my stomach with his fists and turning it upside down. Therefore, to

relief myself a bit of the stress of tomorrows exam in Ethics & Economics and of my accumulated frustrations on the above mentioned topic, I decided to write this small articles.

Max Weber wrote in one of his work from 1905: “the capitalistic economy [...] is an unalterable order of things [...] that has come to dominate economic life, educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest. It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of the market relationships, to conform to capitalistic rules of action.” Basically as Karl Homann, also remarks on the same passage, the capitalistic economic order is grounded in self-interest and corrects itself in accordance with its own laws: the market and competition. Consequently, it threatens the individual with the elimination from the market process, if he refuses to come out of this competitive order. The concepts are best described by Adam Smith: “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.

Further on, Homann contrasts morality as being about solidarity, love and altruism, and it demands from the individual that he or she subordinates his or her interests to those of others. Sounds familiar? This solidarity poem, has become more like a national hymn of the European Unions politicians. It has so much been iterated, that it is interesting to see it in contrast with the other iterated leitmotiv: competition.

Now, to get to the point, I introduce yet another name, Götz Briefs, that perfectly describes the problem I want to describe: “in competition it is those with the lowest moral standard who survive in the long term, because in conflict situations compliance with higher moral standards brings with it competitive disadvantages.” Taking the case of the European Union, I sense that we have a bunch on the verge of being eli-

minated completely, being stripped completely of their competitive advantage and basically crucified in the name of market efficiency. On the one hand, the reason might be that those guilty of crime did in our case not necessarily obeyed the ‘higher moral standards’, but kinda went on and bent the limit morality the legally recognised limits. On the other hand, it would be nice to follow into the future and see who are going to be the ‘survivors’ and ask them if we are in the end, they play the solidarity cards or they play the low morals hands.

Karl Marx claimed that competition is inadmissible as the orienting mechanism of a truly humane economy. But I ask myself, if competition is the main cornerstone of the European Union, wasn't Marx right that this is no humane economy? And that we are actually building a rather more European Empire? Does it mean that if we do not see other options to capitalism, that does not mean that there aren't other still to be developed? What made us quit searching for alternatives? Further on from the economic perspective, Friedrich August von Hayek once argued with the respect to morality and competition: “efficient markets allow moral action only to extent that it turns out to be profitable.” Applying this on our patient, the union child, I would conclude that morality and subsequently solidarity, are definitely not trait of character that characterizes him, for it suffers from far too much debt.

A nice axiom indeed is that the economy ought to serve human beings. In our case the European citizen. Should we take the case of poor Greeks, we will conclude there is a lot of misfortune going on. The only game now in EU is on who has the money, the banks or the state? Ironically, nobody has a clear idea of who lends who? Does the state lends the banks the money which on the other side he lend from other banks? Money that in the end belongs to the citizen, meaning your voters? Which you should not get angry? Too complicated

for this hour of the night/morning. I will end now on Immanuel Kant's note: “What should I do?” and leave you with Homann's persistent question for you to chew on: How can moral norms and ideas be asserted under market and competitive conditions?

For more information and the original discussion paper please see: “Wettbewerb und Moral” (1990), Karl Homann

Ioana Dinu, Germany 2012

European stationary

The smell of ancient bureaucracy hits you as you enter the European Parliament building. Stacks and stacks of brochures, mountains of pens and the high density of European officials per inch square is more than enough to make you take a step back and stop inhaling. Not that it's a bad place to be. It's just that after a while it tends to creep up on you, like rheumatism. But beyond a generally depressing first view it's a nice place to see. And even though it's among the biggest drains on the European tax payers pockets there are a couple of good points to consider. After all a common single market, high level of cooperation amongst countries and a practically zero chance of war among member states is not something to take lightly.

But the way things are starting to look like, given the financial troubles the eurozone is facing, the everlasting question of a Greek collapse and not least an increasingly irate German taxpayer, we can definitely find probable cause to take the system apart in an attempt to find the broken pieces.

What's your take? Are you a Euroskeptic all the way? Do you think we should all pack up and leave? Or should we try to hang on through the rough patches and see the EU through?

Thatcher, 2011

Why should Romanian students come back after studying abroad?

We can see an increase in the rate of discussions about the exodus of Romanian students to universities in Europe and the US and a decrease in the numbers of students that are coming back to Romania after that.

Without going astray, we can conclude that the stories of Romanian students that remain abroad are mostly success stories while those who come back to the country of origin are sometimes daunting.

Undoubtedly, the fact that Romanian students have access to more and more stipendiums, scholarships and university exchange programs is a positive phenomenon. This opening of university borders has been the goal of extensive integration efforts and brings benefits to the students, the teachers and the society as a whole.

It is less important from the society's point of view if the study experience became a reference point in the student's life or if this enlarged their spiritual horizon. Of vital importance though is if the time spent at other universities (spending state public funds and European funds) has created specialists in a specific field, specialists that once integrated into the labour market will increase the value invested in them.

Public opinion says that this does not happen or is not happening as often as it should in order to produce benefits for Romania. When we joined the EU we had to give up on geo-centrism and to cope with the fact that the investment is not returning in a direct manner.

Even though these young people do not become active on the Romanian labour market, the fact that they are working somewhere and they are using the years of studying as efficient as possible by their own standards is a good enough benefit on its own. Unfortunately, the present situation in Romania makes it hard to rely on the fact that if you come back

after studying abroad you will have a suitable job, within your field of expertise, as it might be the case in other countries.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that this job will serve the interests of the society and not just the petty interests of a particular firm that will export the value produced to their overseas headquarters either way.

The Romanian students that don't come back serve the interests of Romania by becoming ambassadors of the intellectual specificity of Romanians, or the Romanian strive to follow their dreams and desire to fulfill themselves professionally as efficient as possible.

Those who do come back, do it because they feel that opportunities are better here in their field and therefore are applying the same strategy as those who don't come back.

On a decentralized work market like the one we have today, the behavior of both those who do come back and of those who don't, brings a tribute to Romania's image regardless of the position they occupy, seeing that their studies in Romania and completed abroad are further used for the intended purpose.

Sabina David, Romania 2012

Generation 1992 to the main stage please!

The European Commission has launched a creativity contest through which young people that are exactly 20 years old can make their own vision about the European common market known. The contest is called Generation 1992 and it marks the passing of 20 years since the unique European market was established. Now the European market unites 27 countries and allows free circulation of merchandise, capital, people and services.

The articles expected for submission should be from the following categories: education and citizenship, work places and entrepreneurship, culture and free time or consumers and the

environment. Being a contest where imagination can roam free, the participants are encouraged to share their own view and experience. The youth interested in this contest can use as means of expression the pen, the brush, a photo camera, a computer, a tablet or a mobile phone.

The competition was opened in April and will be ongoing until 9th September 2012 when 20 finalists will go to the European Week for the Unique Market held in Brussels.

The award ceremony will take place on the 15th of October and the winners will be invited for 4 weeks in one of the European Institutions for a short internship. Of course, there are some prizes involved like tablets, smart phones, cameras and MP3 players, travel tickets and much more.

More information about this great opportunity can be found on Generation1992 Unfortunately I am over the age limit but I wish those that qualify the best of luck and feel free to show the big guys in Brussels how their decisions have changed your life so far.

Sabina David, Romania 2012

My useful memories from Bruxelles

After we had returned home from Aachen, I've started to take more attention of nations which were participated. I can better judge the national political situations, because I know personally their characters.

I see the biggest benefit in monitoring the European crisis. We can rudly talk about German-Greek economical fights. After we've visited the European council with our guide, it really contributes to gain comprehensive picture of the whole situation. I don't want to slander someone, who is responsible or the bad one. I'd like to say: I can understand how it is possible that somehow arises the CRISIS.

I see the complicated bureaucratic but reasonable structure of European union and totally different minds of German and

Greek nations. These nations can't understand each other. They can envy each other, blame each other but never solve together the started troubles. Mix of these elements causes the crisis. The European union united nations who can't mentally understand each other.

I see the point of these troubles but I can't find a solution. Projects like this might help. I really appreciate this opportunity and I hope it helps us to understand each other.

Pavel, Czech Republic 2012

Strategies? Stop blubbering like a baby.....

As a youth worker, I find myself in the position of deciding which of these two is better: the local level or the European level. The second issue is „strategic thinking”. Tactics overwhelm strategies. Pragmatism overwhelms patience. These are my main topics and I would very much like to tackle them as strongly as possible and I will combine them into a major subject – the importance of strategy.

As a Romanian citizen and a youth worker, things are getting clearer and clearer in my professional life: Romanian experts don't use long-term strategies because it involves a lot of work, research and long-term responsibilities. The reason for this problem is the lack of strategic practice in high school and college.

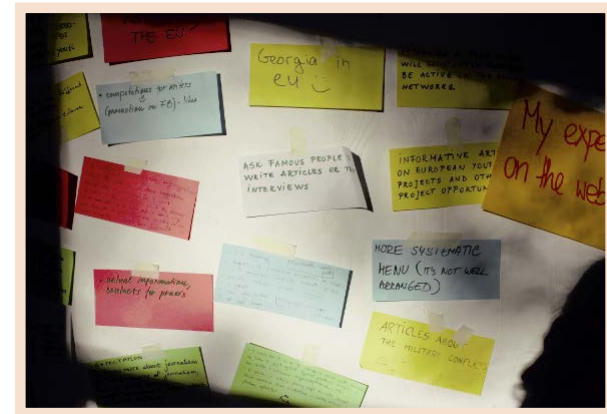
Also, how come people don't know how their problems are resolved? Well, the answer is quite simple. They don't ask and they are not asked. One of the solution we proposed in Romania, Bucharest is Global Research Summer School.

Global Research Summer School is an International Affairs project of the organization VIP Romania, project that relates to students interested in document analysis, strategies, policy-making and who are eager to continue their studies

or their career in foreign affairs field (geopolitics, globalization, diplomacy).

The project aims to develop complex learning methods which combine theory and practice, formal and nonformal education and also on active and continous participation system which helps students to achieve skills such as critical and strategic thinking, debates and argumentation capacity and achieving of soft and hard skills.

Ada Barbu, Romania 2012



The Gypsy problem: is there any solution?

On Sunday evening, 15th of April, 15-years old Peter walked through Czech town Břeclav, when three men asked him for a cigarette. The boy refused and consequently was brutally beaten by men, later identified as gypsies. As a result of his injuries, one of his kidneys had to be removed and his liver was damaged.

Three years before similar situation happened in the Vítkov village, however with reverse sites. Four young radicals threw Molotov cocktails into the house habited by Roma family. The

house was immediately burnt down and two-years old girl Natália sustained serious injuries.

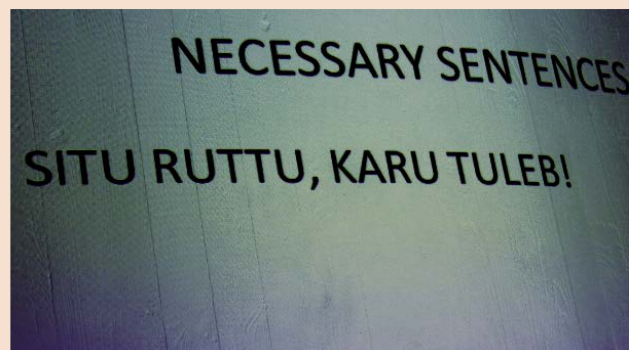
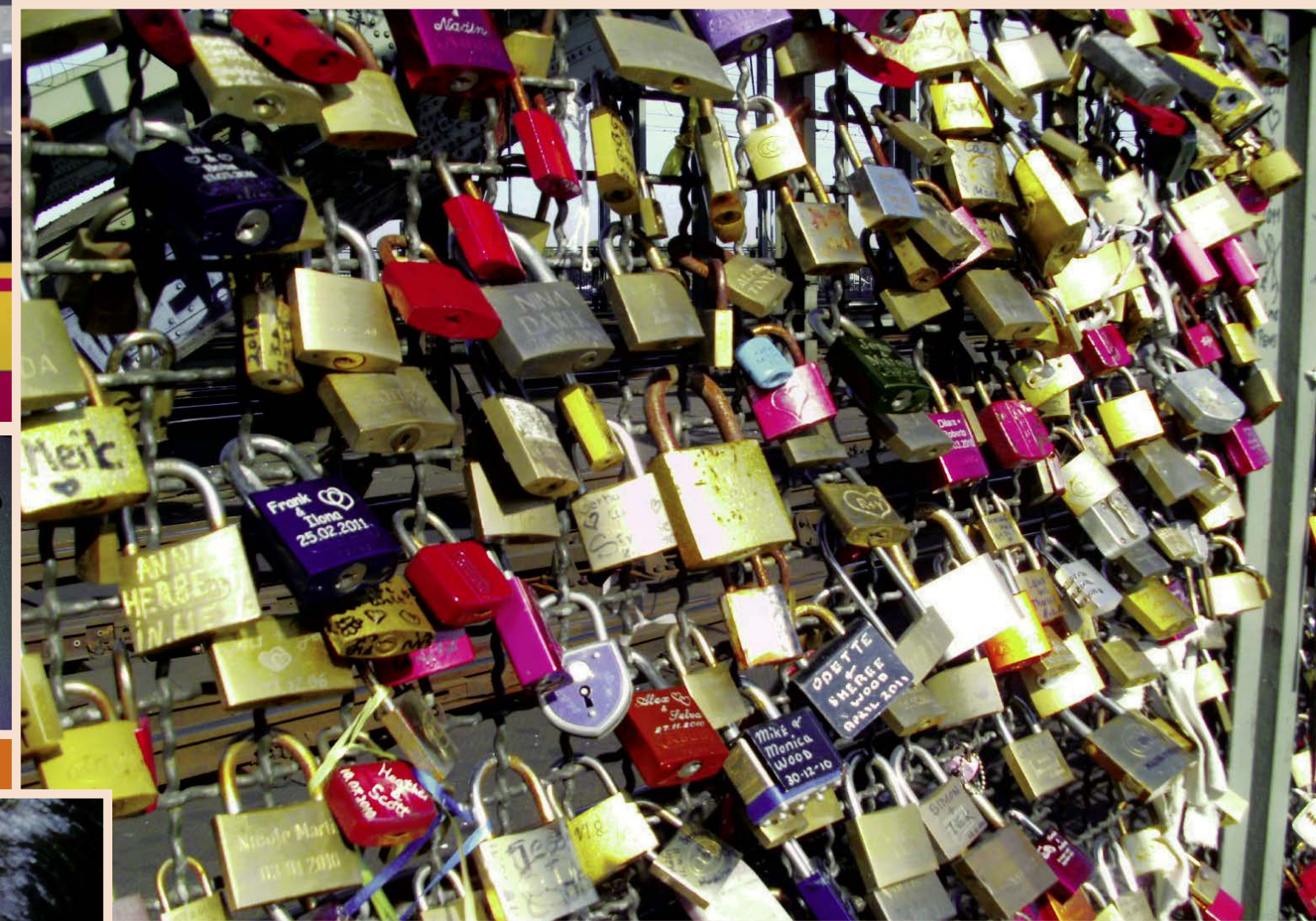
Both incidents caused wave of protests and disillusion in the inflicted countries. Friends of the assaulted boy from Břeclav wanted to organize a demonstration in his support criticizing the Romani community. Meanwhile the cabinet discussed the issue of racism and far-right extremism. Violent incidents like this are regularly spreading hate through countries of Middle and Eastern Europe and worries rise about the estimated 800,000 Romanies in both parts of the former Czechoslovakia.

In 1997 the European Union excluded Slovakia from the first wave of would-be members because it was not “democratic” enough. The biggest problem were minority rights. Over 20 years from then on, problems remain in Slovakia, as well as Czech republic, Hungary, Romania and others.

People concerned about these questions are divided, one group share liberal point of view calling for tolerance and integration and others promoting radical extremism. To achieve satisfying compromise seems to be more than hard, if not impossible quest. While people argue how to deal with spreading hate on both sides, gypsies have to face discrimination and segregation from other people. Romani children are often sent into special schools regardless their mental abilities and their parents are under special conditions when asking for unemployment benefits and family benefits. These common phenomenas cause bigger marginalization and ghettoization. Magic circle is becoming stronger and stronger.

The fact is that nobody can expect quick solution. Only strength and patience is needed to reach acceptable outcome. The difference in culture, way of life and social background has to be taken into account, so that we can find right way. The solution always exists.

Alena Fricova, Slovakia 2012



Funny Stuff:

A sacrifice in the name of love or something else

Everything that has a beginning has an ending. Day turns into night. Summer fades into fall. We know in our hearts so much as we would wish it otherwise. In a world set within time, there can be no beginning without an end.

It's the same with the holidays. We feel this way after Christmas, New Year's Eve... Like too much noise for too much silence after the party. Life is like a party. Has a beginning, has a pick time, has good and bad sides, some of the "party people" are cool, other are just only for the party. After the party you can see not much people who are helping you to clean the party place. But it really doesn't mater that you might be disappointed by some people or your life or Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve party or Valentine's day. As human beings we want good moments all the time. We want party all the time. We dream of the perfect Christmas present from Santa, we imagine the perfect dress for the next event, we dream of the perfect guy. We are in a battle with ourselves, because sometimes it is too difficult to accept that life is a circle of good and bad moments, party and work. We want our life to be our imaginary reality. We live in our imagination, but we come back to the reality because we can't live in a "dreaming-of-everything" condition all the time. Trade a fantasy for reality, and you might feel like Alice back from Wonderland. The world may not sparkle and shine, but the ground will always be solid beneath your feet, and your eyes will be open to all the adventures that wait right for you in the real world.

That's why everything that has a beginning has an ending. Just as every ending creates space for something new to begin... The wonder of second chance, the miracle of new life, the joy of new love. Because I started with "life" and "party", may be you are trying to catch my mind. My

point is that all holidays are basically connected with great sacrifice. And we celebrate the sacrifices because they give us a chance to believe and to live. I would like to say something about Valentine's Day. We celebrate the Day of love – the 14th of February. But not much of us know that Valentine's Day isn't only the day of love, but it is also the day of people with epilepsy. Saint Valentine has been the keeper of the epileptics. He has been helping them. But according to one legend, St. Valentine's Day is meant for people to remember a brave man, a martyr whose name was Valentine.

He was a Roman Priest at a time when there was an emperor called Claudius who persecuted the church at that particular time. He also had an edict that prohibited the marriage of young people. This was based on the hypothesis that unmarried soldiers fought better than married soldiers because married soldiers might be afraid of what might happen to them or their wives or families if they died.

Polygamy would have been much more popular than just one woman and one man living together. And yet some of them seemed to be attracted to Christian faith. But obviously the church thought that marriage was very sacred between one man and one woman for their life and that it was to be encouraged. And so it immediately presented the problem to the Christian church of what to do about this.

The idea of encouraging them to marry within the Christian church was what Valentine was about. And he secretly married them because of the edict.

Valentine was eventually caught, imprisoned and tortured for performing marriage ceremonies against command of Emperor Claudius the second. There are legends surrounding Valentine's actions while in prison.

One of the men who were to judge him in line with the Roman law at the time was a man called Asterius, whose daughter was blind. He was supposed to have prayed with



and healed the young girl with such astonishing effect that Asterius himself became Christian as a result.

In the year 269 AD, Valentine was sentenced to a three part execution of a beating, stoning, and finally decapitation all because of his stand for Christian marriage. The story goes that the last words he wrote were in a note to Asterius' daughter. He inspired today's romantic missives by signing it, "from your Valentine."

Although it is not known whether this legend is factually true, it is a good story anyway. It is nice to think of someone who believed in marriage and was willing to risk death to do what he believed was right.

Ivelina Todorova, Bulgaria 2012

Carnival in Germany

Let me talk to you about this strange event that changes Germans.

German are famous for their disciplined way of life: never late, never wrong, precise, quality is always here, ahead of high tech and of environment innovations in comparison with a lot of European countries. People often criticize their coldness. But everything changes when carnival is coming!

Red noses and pirates are out. You can talk with Maya the Bee and Mario and Luigi in the same train; have a drink with a giant beer and a jet pilot. No one knows the name of the person who you are talking with, his social position, his job... because you actually don't need it! Carnival is songs and costumes everywhere. The crowd screams "Kamele" to draw the participants' attention on the colorful floats to get candies... You can see people fighting to get as much candies as possible on the floor even if it is snowing. And everybody is there, babies, teenagers, parents, grand-parents. The streets become a huge garbage despite of the strict rules for the environment. People kiss and hug other people and drink beer all the night together. You are not allowed to drink another sort of beer which doesn't come from the area! Policemen and rescues workers are there and know that they will work a lot this day.

But the first goal of this event is to have fun, to meet people and to have good memories. The day after, everything returns to normal. The streets are clean. People go back to work. No more kisses. No more songs. Just the memories and the patience to wait to next year.

Few people explained me this event. I didn't believe them before living it...

Amélie Gaudemer, France 2012

Christmas folly

How can you not like Christmas? With it's long lasting appeal (it's been around for hundreds of years in one form or another), it's world wide grip (they're even celebrating it in China) and it's everly increasing litany of traditions (ten years from now we'll be eating candy out of yellow



water balloons). Don't get me wrong, I don't have a problem with a holiday invented to satisfy pagan traditions* and make their transition to Christianity easier. I don't even have a problem with a fact that we're celebrating something that influences our entire view on chronological historical events five years ahead of schedule**. It's just the sheer size of human gullibility that gets to me. Whether you view it from a European or an Asian perspective, whether you look at it as a religious celebration or an excuse to get a paid vacation, it's a mass byproduct of our incessant need to own, spend and consume. Something we've managed to do to every single holiday in our calendars.

For those of you who think my words may be a tad too harsh I have but one word, well picture. Look at how every single retailer, producer or manufacturer bases his or her entire earnings schedule on the holiday season. And for

those of you still looking for a bit of hope I've got one thing that might just put us back on track: Terry Pratchett's Hogfather. Whether you actually read the book or are too lazy and decide on the SkyOne movie version try and get back to the root of this holiday, whether you call it Christmas, Hogswatch or just plain winter festival. Still filled with references to presents, food and jolly it takes a crack at showing us what it's really about: believing in things that aren't real so that they can become real. And celebrating all this with stolen greenery.

* Turns out JC was actually born in June but the story was altered a bit to coincide with winter pagan festivals.

**It also turns out he was born around 5 BC. Talk about irony.

Thatcher, 2011

Folk dance unites!

Ever heard about relay dance? If you're not an Estonian then probably not. Ever heard about relay run? Sure. Try to picture relay runners dancing, remove industrial stadium atmosphere and you have the Relay Dance – an event which was held in Estonia this summer from 20th to 28th August.

The idea was to promote folk dancing through organising a massive event which had more than 6000 participants. Event, organised by Estonian Folk Dance and Folk Music Association, was part of European Capital of Culture Tallinn 2011 programme and carried an idea of dance as connective activity (slogan of event "TeateTants – tants ühendab!" – "Relay Dance – dance unifies"). Dancers did connect and were dancing without a break.

Dance on the route of 1000km was never stopped during the 8 day period and all of 15 counties of Estonia were danced through that people from every corner of Estonia could join as the event was ran from Tallinn to Tallinn. The route was divided in to some 200m meters per couple, so the relay-part of event came to effect when dancers gave their rhythm and emotions over to next couple.

The emotions and feelings were high both on the road, by the road and even in the convoy which provided security and music for the dancers. "Nagu tantsupidu oleks koju kätte toodud," said one spectator in Abja, near Latvian border ("Like the dance festival has been brought to home"). The organisers' idea of unifying Estonians sure was accomplished.

The author hereby was a volunteer by the event and worked in the convoy for running the event.

Sten Otsmaa, Estonia 2011

Gourmet Student

As I anxiously turned the key to my new bedroom, I could barely contain the excitement I felt at the thought that this would be my new home for the next six months of my life. Once we laid our bags down in our individual bedrooms, we all nodded agreeably towards each other that this would undoubtedly be a great place to live in. However, there was one place I still had to check in order for me to be fully content with the new place – the kitchen.

Back at my home in Malta, where I still live with my family, my mother has one fundamental rule that one must not dare breach, and that is to stay away from the kitchen and all the ingredients in it. My mother loves her kitchen and cooking is her passion. Hence, using her kitchen and any ingredients that God forbid, she had planned to use some-

time soon, would have catastrophic consequences and lead to a very unhappy mummy! Therefore, this Erasmus experience has given me the golden opportunity to have my own kitchen, with which I could do as I please and cook whatever my heart desires! Thankfully, my roommates are compliant with this arrangement, and so I have cooked here more than I have ever cooked in my lifetime.

Dishes ranged from pasta with bolognaise, carbonara sauce, tuna and mushroom sauce and various other sauces, chicken breast stuffed with ham and cheese with baked potatoes, chicken legs with my famous broccoli and parmesan recipe, lasagna, macaroni cooked in the Italian way (not the American poor excuse for this dish known as their famous macaroni and cheese), marrows stuffed with minced meat and many other dishes, each one, remembered meticulously through thorough observation of my mum's



work back at home, as never did I have the chance to practice my skills. This small kitchen in Germany was my haven for creativity and I enjoyed every minute of it.

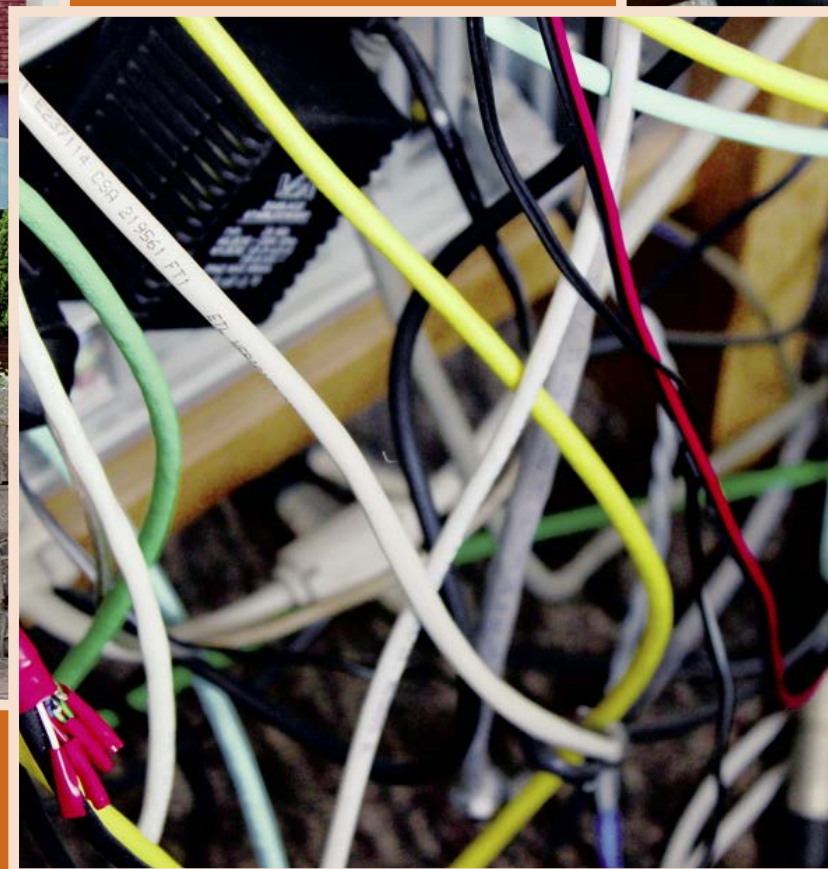
Obviously, absent practice at home, some dishes did go wrong. I recall my attempt at cooking a fish pie. This pie consisted of pieces of fish mixed with spinach and other ingredients, which combined produce a heavenly taste. Making the filling of this pie was a breeze; however, the pastry was a quest, a battle with this sticky substance that no matter what, would not achieve the consistency I needed. It took two men and I and about 2 hours of constant kneading to get this pastry to look like a pie. Miraculously, the final result turned out to be great. However I never did make that dish again...

Shopping for the ingredients I needed was another challenge. Many ingredients in Germany differ to the ones we usually purchase in Malta. Hence, the final result was not always what I expected, either in texture or in taste. My method is to keep on adding ingredients or modifying the recipe till it is as close in taste to that of my mum's cooking, and so far, this method never let me down. Moreover, I had to keep our budget in mind. Usually, when shopping for ingredients, we add up the total amount of expenditure and divide it between the three of us. Consequently, keeping everyone's desire to spend as little as possible in mind is quite tricky at times. Since I am the one that cooks most often, I tend to lean towards some products that are a bit more pricy as I know that the final result would be better. However, my roommates are not always that keen on spending more for better quality as the cheap no-name products are most often also of good quality. Therefore, we came to a compromise and only buy more expensive products when we know the difference in quality is substantial.

Cooking these dishes has had many positive effects on me. Apart from cooking for my roommates and providing them with a healthy meal as often as possible, it also helped me as I got to create a 'taste' of home which kept me from getting homesick, or missing my mum's cooking and I got to share these recipes with my friends. Erasmus has provided me with the chance to improve my cooking skills and appreciate food on a whole new level.

Sarah Gauci, Malta 2012





Media:

The “Social Networks Era”

Without a doubt the younger generations grow up on the “social networks era”! The majority of our friends and relatives have an account either on facebook or twitter etc. and use cyber means in order to act and communicate!

But how is it to live in such way and by such means?

First of all social networks or technology in general made things easier and quicker! Now you can chat with your friends as long as you want, share pictures and music and as a “school tool” you can search and find any information you want with just one “click” on your keyboard!

These sites allow you to keep in touch not only with your friends but also can be a tool to promote your business cause due to the huge number of people who regularly use networking sites it has found huge favours among advertisers.

The social networking sites also make it easy and faster to collect information on any subject from anywhere in the world. This way you can build a “network” of friends and colleges to share your common interests and activities!

However, lot of discussion has been made whether “social networks” are so “social” as they seem! It’s a fact that – not only the youth but also older people– who use this kind of communication and entertainment , have lost enough time from their leisure hours and hobbies , cause their computer has replaced them! Moreover, we must admit that “social networks” are addictive! Ask yourself how many hours and how many things from your life, you’ve missed because you “had to” be online! I hope the answer won’t disappoint you...

On the other side, there are lots of other issues such as the security of our personal lives and its exposition to the “cyber world”. Most of the people are not aware of the dangers that this lack of anonymity may have. Every day we hear about cases of cyber–stalking or harassment etc and the vic-

tims are a lot! However, technology has helped in a very high level to reach and react more accurate in many kinds of “web crimes” and still does a good work!

The Social Network Era is characterised by Freedom! However, this kind of freedom must be used very carefully! Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of social networking you can hold in a good stead as you never know when this “game” may become your worst nightmare! While the internet made the world a global village, the social networking sites brought the world within the four walls. It’s on your hands to handle your “social life” and control it!

ViVi Zapantiotou, Greece 2011

Steve Jobs – The advocate of the new changed education paradigms

SOSMEC or SOS for the Ministry of Education and Culture. This was my first thought after I watched one of the most popular educational videos on the internet, “Changing Education Paradigms”. The video is worth its six million views as it follows the creation of a witty comic based on Sir Ken Robinson’s Speech at the RSA, while the actual speech on the need of changing the education paradigms on which we built an entire system is heard on the background.

As the video was playing, ideas began to link like pieces of a puzzle. “We need a new educational system that...” seemed to be the key element. I found only 6 pieces, but they enabled me have an overall view. This new educational system must not be based on standardization, conformity and production–line mentality. It has to get over the old conceptions about education and focus on collaboration, which is the key to growth. It needs to prepare future professionals that would successfully adapt in a less stable environment. It has to keep motivated students who now

start to find no meaning in getting a university degree, as this is not a guarantee for becoming a part of the workforce. It should make students resonate with what they study through offering them an aesthetic experience and it should enable students to keep their cultural identity in this febrile process of globalization. No standardization, getting over the old, taking into consideration the less stable environment, giving a meaning, providing an aesthetic experience, keeping the cultural identity. These are the directions on which a new educational system should develop. SOSMEC.

The need of new education paradigms came as a result of the actual economic and social environment. Nobody should consider that the paradigms under which our grandparents and parents were educated are a complete failure or that they brought no added value. In fact, almost everything we know now is the result of the work of great people educated in this spirit. Indeed, some of the most respected and talked about people of our century are people who, somehow, rebelled against the system and did things their own way.

Steve Jobs was one of them. His Stanford Commencement speech given in 2005 is now part of our contemporary conscience. Emphasizing issues of lifestyle, life philosophy, education, social interaction, the speech is of great value, as people of different backgrounds can relate to it. As the speech consists basically of fragments of Steve Job’s life, it is quite difficult to make an objective resume, as people tend to see the story as a reflection of their own experience. The following attempt is no different and it also tries to briefly emphasize the common elements between Steve Job’s learning experience and the coordinates of the changed education paradigms.

To begin with, we learn that finishing college is not a guarantee to a life of success. Following your dreams is. The former Apple CEO was a college dropout. Shocking, isn’t it? The arguments standing at the root of his decision were price/value related (college could not help Steve Jobs decide what he was going to do with his life, while tuition fees were sky high.)

It is essential to never stop learning. One may never know when he needs a particular piece of information or how one can link that particular piece to another element and create something new. The distinctive complexity of the fonts for the first Macs was inspired by Steve Job’s calligraphy skills which he developed while taking a calligraphy course.

Failure and success are relative, as an ending can always be a new beginning. “The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again.” – Steve Job’s comment on what he felt when the Board of Directors fired him from the company he established.

Of course, it is hard to reach such conclusions in times of sorrow. You cannot connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. Through a reflective mindset, one can see how one past decision led to another and what was their role in the bigger picture.

Remembering that one’s time is limited is the most effective way of improving your lifestyle because it enables one to remember which are the things that matter and

prevents him to take decisions just for irrelevant reasons.

Steve Jobs’ Stanford speech ends with a quote: “Stay hungry, stay foolish!” In my opinion, this is an open ending, as this piece of advice leaves room for interpretation. It could be an advice to keep the will to start new things as you did not achieve anything until that moment and take the freedom to make mistakes in order to learn from them. Or to be keen on new experiences and to avoid taking things too seriously. Or...

Tina Rizescu, Romania 2011

Radio Funkhaus Europa

Funkhaus Europa is an international radio station situated in the city center of Cologne. It is a very professional radio station which is orientated on music and entertainment and has the aim to inform its public about news in the world of music, people and culture.

The web pages of Radio Funkhaus Europa show a wide choice of different categories which are current and discussed, accompanied by nice and original artistic photos. The lovers of good food and life can find there tips on various places and advices, perceptions from abroad and pictures which should attract the public.

One thing which is obvious while looking on the image of the web pages are graphics. The pages and brochures propagating Funkhaus Europa are made in really a creative way which makes this radio station unique and recognizable from the others. I should point out that the photos are really original and metaphorical which is on thing that makes the pages really different from the others. We have visited the radio station Funkhaus Europa together with the

European Youth Voice team during the seminar in Aachen and we had a really interesting session with the journalist. During the discussion we have get known how the journalism has developed with the years and have been informed about various types of practices which Radio Funkhaus Europe offers.

Radio Funkhaus Europe is really a professional station where I would like to do my practices.

Katerina Vojtechova, Czech Republic 2011

Personal online identity, why and how?

I remember when I first started studying social media during my internship in London, at Chelgate Public Relations, in 2007. I was assigned the task to prepare a short presentation on why and how social media could impact their activity.

As a web developer, I have witnessed the evolution of social media right from the beginning: starting with the first blogs and the concept of RSS feeds, followed by the phenomenon of bookmark sharing through Digg or Delicious and up to micro blogging with Twitter and the almighty Facebook Page.

In a nutshell, social media is the interactive communication between communities, organizations and individuals through the online medium. And for this to happen, any real person would create for itself an online presence.

But why would you turn your online presence into an identity?

There are many reasons to do it, but the main word here is career. For instance, if you're the creative type, having a personal online identity would help you showcase your work and boost your success. You could be studying to become an actor or a model – the online gives you visibility. Or you simply want to be in charge of what future employers can find

out online about yourself after they read your CV.

Even if none of the above applies to you, there is always the opportunity to save time while presenting yourself in an organized manner to your audience when you turn your presence into an identity.

What about the privacy?

Your privacy is something that you should take very seriously, always. Anything that you publish online is bound to stay there no matter how hard you wish to remove it from the Internet. Indexing engines, including Google, crawl your content and create copies called cache. There is even an internet archive that might keep copies of your website after you delete it.

Furthermore, always make sure you have the copyright for what you're about to publish and be aware that some social networks gain copyright over your content once you post it.

Nevertheless, never publish sensitive data like Social Security Numbers, full postal addresses, photos of your travel documents and even the dates while you are away on holiday.

Techniques that will save you from headaches

Now that we covered the why and some important don'ts I can move on to how. Here are three simple steps to help you build yourself a strong online identity:

- set a goal
- pick the right tools and networks
- create, share, embrace feedback and keep evolving

Continue reading about each of the three steps in the following article!

Alexandru Stanica, Romania 2012

Books and Radio together

I have always seen reading books as quite a personal moment. Just you and the text in front of you. You decide the pace of reading. You stop for some breaks for consideration. You choose the right book and the right time for reading. And you are reading the particular book!

I have heard of book reading on the radio as well as audio books but I have never given a try to any of them. The thought of having unknown voice reading my book has seemed quite strange to me. I have considered it as an alternative of reading on your own which has some fans but the huge amount of people opt for the typical reading. I suppose that listening to the book instead of reading has scared me with the fact that at the moment when the voice starts reading the reader loses his power. The voice is the third party in the reading process which leads you page after page; which stops for a second of breathing; which emphasizes on the important points... It is a transformation process in which the reader becomes a listener.

I love the radio. I believe that it certainly has its place nowadays. Radio has a significant history as it has always met tastes, needs and expectations of the audiences at any particular moment. Radio has been developing very quickly with the change in the preferences of the listeners and in the technological field as well. Bearing in mind this at some moment I accepted that radio reading is out-of-date. But this idea of mine turned up-side-down just for several seconds at Radio Station Lublin. As a participant of European Youth Voice I visited the radio station and attended the presentation there. One of the things that have kept in my mind from the visit is the information reading. Our presenter shared with us that radio theatre and audio books had been quite successful for the last years. She explained that this success was connected with

the fact that people love books, but they do not read. These two controversial statements of "loving books, but not reading" have turned into one wonderful opportunity – listening to books!

The concept of radio reading has dated for many decades. It was extremely popular at the time when the radio was the main source of information. And now it has returned its stardom.

Nowadays we have three general options for exploring a book: to read it, to listen to an audio version of it or to

choose radio reading. Unlike the first two options, radio reading has some quite specific characteristics. First, you can't choose the book which you are going to listen to at the particular moment, as it has been set by an editor or through a customer survey or any other way. Second, you listen to the radio reading according to the radio programme. For example, it could be once or twice a week for about 30 minutes. Third, because of the radio schedule you can't go further in the plot and see what will happen with the characters, as you could do that when you are

using an audio book and with just one touch on the screen you can skip tones of dialogues and description and reach directly some concrete part. These are just some simple differences distinguished books on the radio from the other forms of reading.

I decided to use them as a starting point for my journey of exploring the attractiveness of listening to radio reading. For that purpose I started with the choice of a radio station. At first I was not familiar with the set book on the radio at all, but it seemed quite interesting. It did not take



long to find myself revising my notion of radio reading. Even if it was not my choice the set book was good, really good. The voice of the reader was confident with cunning manner of taking your mind far away from the daily thoughts. The duration of the reading was quite short – about 10–15 minutes but absolutely enough to make you feel calm and relaxed following the plot. In addition, there was something appealing in the idea that you have to wait until the next reading show to learn how the plot

is going on. At time when we have a quick access to almost everything, it is really tempting to know that there is something such as radio reading going beyond that contemporary reality.

The advantages of radio reading are enormous. I can't even count or name all of them, mostly because they are connected with the personal perspective and experience in that field. I still prefer the standard way of reading, but at the same time I see radio reading as a great supplement

to it. Radio reading can give a different sense of perceiving the book, it can provoke in you different types of emotions, and it can help you go into the book world after a tough day at work. If you have not listened to book reading on the radio yet, now is the right time to do it! Switch the radio reading season on!

To learn more information about radio field, listen to the interview at Radio Station Lublin.

Maria Gogova, Bulgaria 2012



Book on paper or book on screen?

When you have seen and enjoyed a film or a TV programme that has been made from a famous book, you may decide to read the book.

Then what happens? You get the book and, it's more likely, you get a shock as well! You turn ten or twenty pages, and nothing seems to happen. Where are all the lively people and exciting incidents? In the end you will probably throw the book aside and give it up. Now, why is that?

Well, perhaps the author was writing for adults and not for children or the opposite. Perhaps the book was written a long time ago, when people had more time for reading and liked nothing better than a book that would keep them entertained for weeks. Or just the mouse has already eaten the book.

We haven't got enough free time and we use internet at work, at home, at the cafeteria and etc. We also read

newspapers on-line or if we haven't enough time to do it, we just watch the news on TV when we came back home after long day full of work and different emotions. Then, after work I mean, we are so tired to read and it is normal in our days to prefer visual information than something on paper. With visual information, I mean video plus sound, because it is already proved that this kind of information is easier to accept, because we are so overloaded with so many digital things, information sources (and sometimes we are wondering which source is reliable, and this moment could be awkward and confusing), work etc. and we've got so many choices how or with what to entertain our fun needs. But also it's a fact that you can read on-line of course if you want to read. And here is the question: What do you prefer – book/newspaper on paper or book/newspaper on screen and why?

Ivelina Todorova, Bulgaria 2012

Are bloggers the new journalists?

Are bloggers journalists? Bloggers are more and more present and begin to play an important role – not only since the riots in the Arab world. The FBI thinks about adding prominent bloggers to members of the press. But are people who write without a formation and without guidelines really journalists?

Some time there has been a fight between Lina Ben Mhenni and the Tunisian authorities. The young woman from Tunis was feared by the mighties. She wrote on her blog in French, Arabic and English about themes which were unusual in the Tunisian media like oppression and censorship. Therefore her blog, a Tunisian girl, was soon

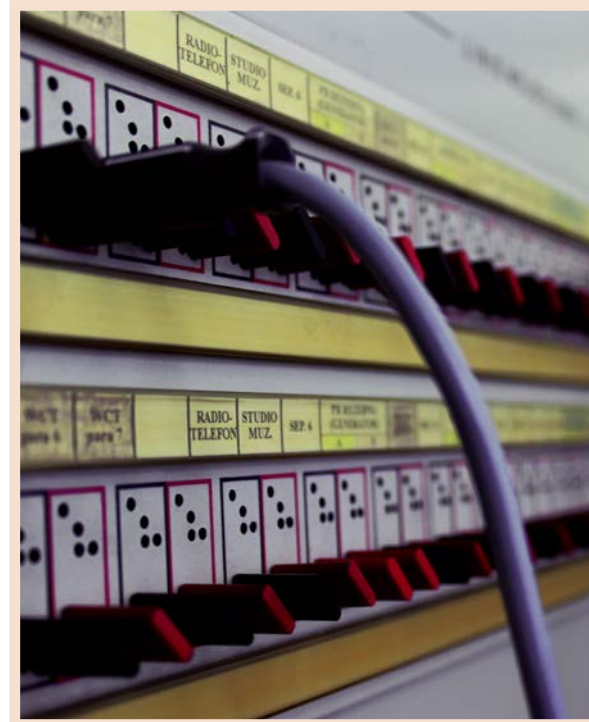
forbidden in Tunisia. But she went on to criticize the policy of her country by finding supporters in other countries who helped her to publish her articles. There are people who say that it was the blog of Lina Ben Mhenni which had a strong influence on the fall of the Tunisian government, because she informed about the events in her country and organized protests.

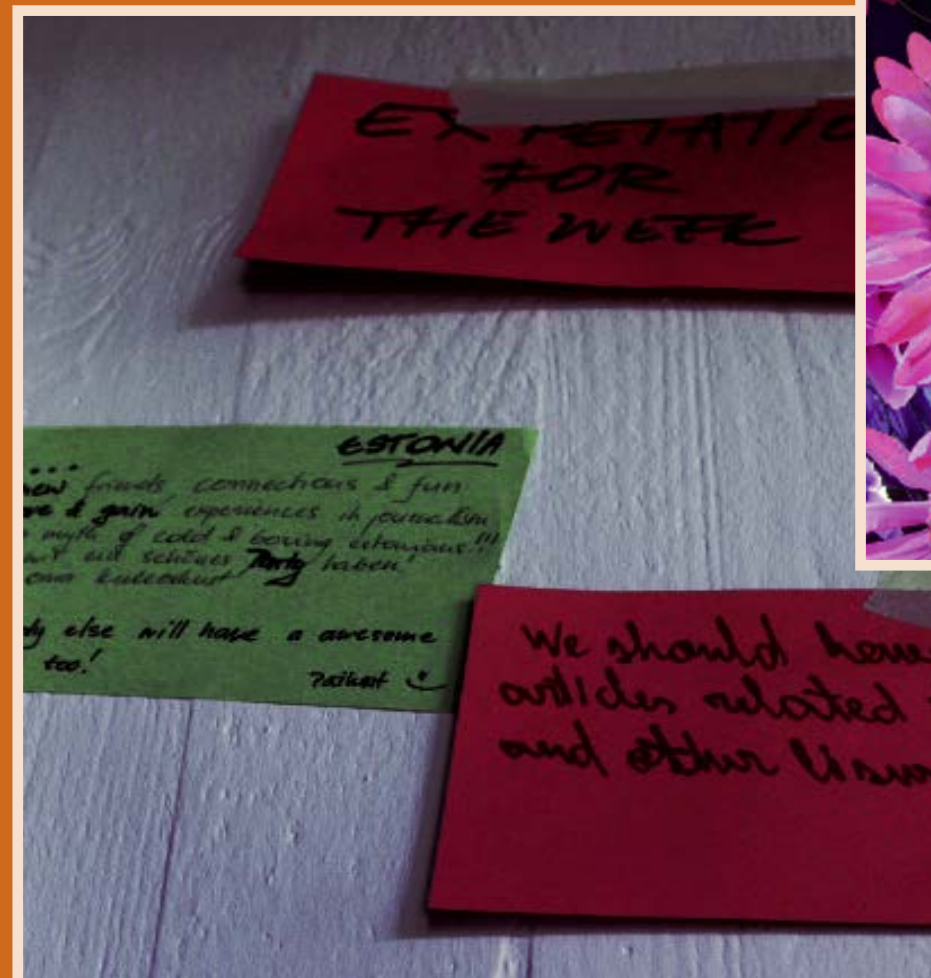
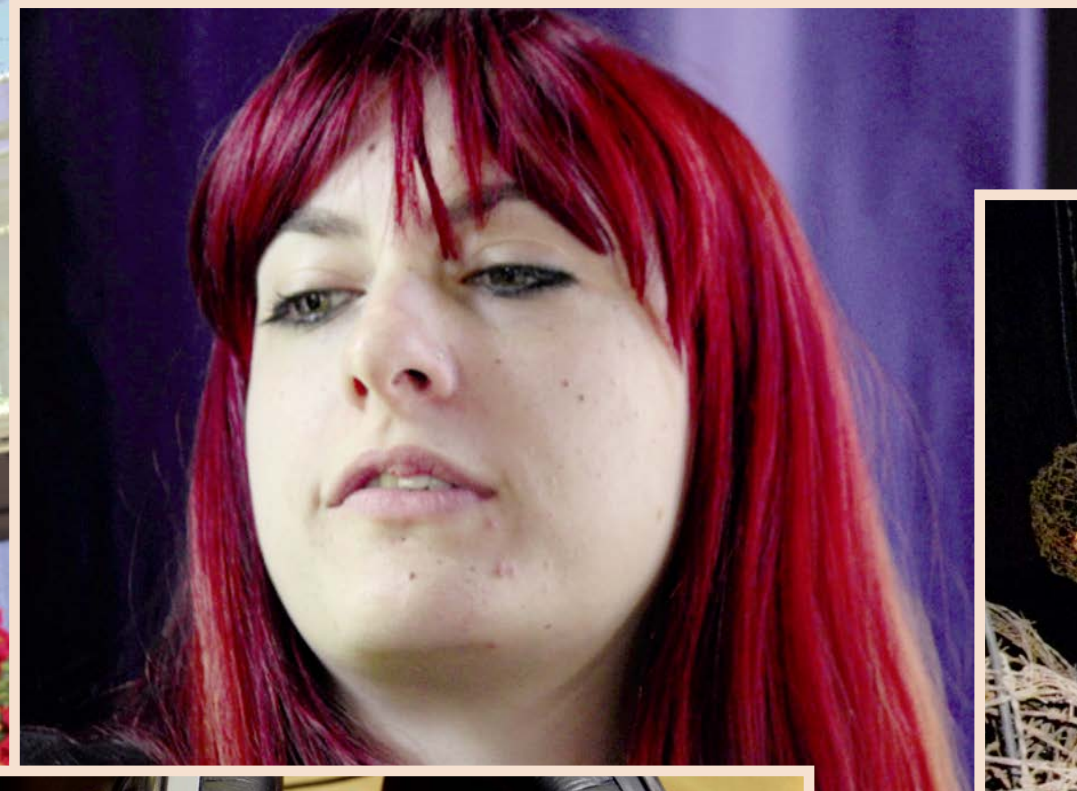
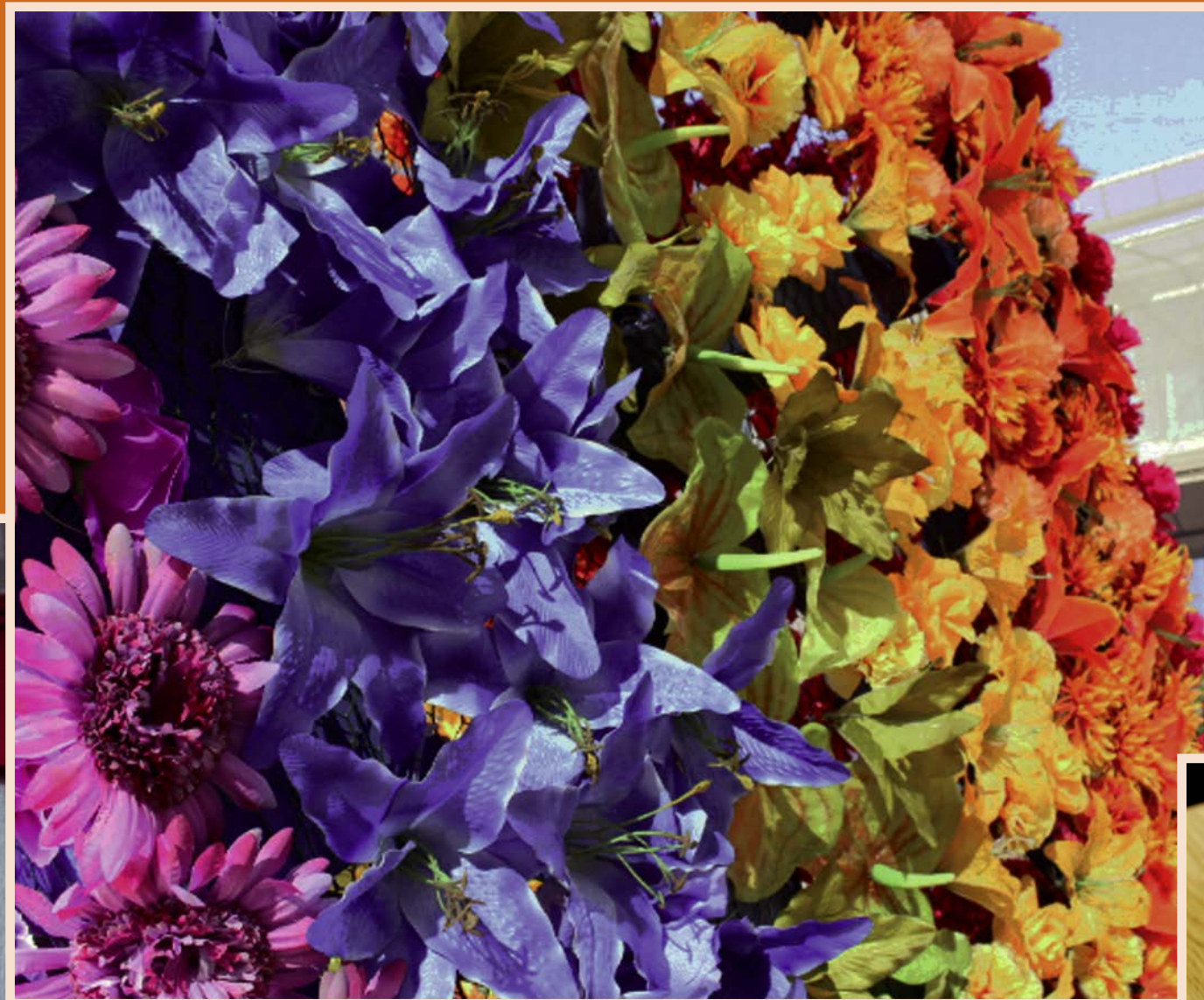
Lina isn't a journalist. She began after a high school year in the United States with blogging, only for writing about her daily life, her experiences and feelings. After a while she started to write about political topics. She never learned the tools of journalism.

However can she be seen as a journalist? Is it not the task of the media to inform the public and to give them the possibility of opinion formation? Bloggers don't have to take care about qualitative or ethical guidelines. Now it's possible to argue that Lina didn't write about something – she wrote against something, the politics of her country. Therefore she is more like an activist than like a journalist. But perhaps the information from bloggers are sometimes more objective than in professional media, because bloggers aren't dependant on stakeholders. There are some people who trust more in the information from blogs than in the news of professional media. How reputable the role of bloggers today is, shows also the fact that the FBI thinks about adding prominent bloggers to members of the press or the fact that they are sometimes invited for press conferences.

Lina has left the committee for reformation of the Tunisian media, which the new government has created, – she continues to write independently about her point of view on her blog.

Rebekka Khaliefi, Germany 2011





Music:

Three festivals turned Tartu into a capital of culture

In August 6–11, university town of Estonia, Tartu, hosted three festivals at once, turning the city into a real capital of culture. Tartu Love Film Festival tARTuFF, Tallinn Music Week and literature festival Prima Vista joined hands to hold a huge city festival.

Tartu Love Film Festival tARTuff, organized by the International Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, was held already for the seventh time. For six days a big screen was set up in Town Hall Square, giving people a chance to watch 12 films in the open air for free. In addition 12 documentaries were shown in a local cinema. Although the evenings were cold and rainy, the festival gathered approximately 18,200 people. For three evenings, Tartu literature festival Prima Vista, asked various writers to join musicians in Town Hall Square to discuss and imagine films that has never been made.

In addition to films, people had a chance to enjoy music

for two days. On August 9–10, Tallinn Music Week, organized a music festival “Tartu muusikanädal” (Tartu Music Week), which was held for the first time ever. New Estonian music from more than 20 fresh artists was played all over the city centre, in clubs, bars, cafes, courtyards. Music festival also featured lectures of music business for bands and event organizers and a pilot project of a new music festival Indiefest, organized by young newcomers in music industry.

A week full of culture brought the local people out of their homes to the city center to enjoy good films and music, no matter how bad the weather was.

Andry Silla, Estonia 2012

Quest for music with George Quest

When someone speaks about their country, they usually focus on the nature, the people, or the most beautiful places. But I want to share with you something different; something unusual; something about the music in my

hometown – Bulgaria. “Why is this so unusual?” you would ask. It is, because I will tell you not about our national folk music, but rather about our electronic music.

Have you ever felt, while listening to music, that the sounds and lyrics elevate you and take you flying? You fly inside your dreams and visit amazing places, experience great love, and enjoy precious moments... Sounds so beautiful, doesn't it? I have got my music and my music makes me feel awesome! This music is deep and soulful and is mixed by my favorite DJ, who is from Bulgaria, and his name is George Quest. If you want to know how his mixes make me feel so great and how he does it, I will tell you – with love.

You will agree that his music is made with lots of love. “Somewhat Lovely” is a good example and is, in fact, one of my favorite George Quest's mixes. His music is a very special blend of R&B, soul, jazz, funk, hip hop, house and other electronic sounds, which is amazing, because of the unique mixture of so many and so different genres. That, in itself, is sufficient proof that the ability to feel the rhythm and the music is a gift from God.

Before telling you more about him, I will speak a little bit more about his mixes. Why with love? Because if you're not in love you cannot make deep and soulful music. You don't have to be in love with somebody. I think it's enough to be in love with the music. So, for me George Quest has the sense to feel the music. In the mix “Quintessential” you can find a different point of view about the vision of life and nature. There is one phrase “Think green”. When I heard this phrase for the first time I started to think about nature and how precious our planet is. I started to think about the woods, the beaches, the mountains... It was amazing!

When I was a little girl I played the violin and everybody asked me how it was possible for me to do it. I always told them “I can, because I'm inspired by my love for music!” I

fell in love with the violin from first sight, and I think George feels the same way about his music. For me there is something cosmic and impressive to make mixes. Maybe because I can't do it myself, but it's difficult to believe that somebody else does it with such ease... it seems like George has been doing it since he was born! The sensation that flows through my body when all tracks sound so compatible is very nice. It can be said that all the tracks in George's mixes are brothers. Tune to tune, sound to sound, lyric to lyric – it is a very special mixture from the music genres to the idea behind the mix. Even though the emotional charge of the lyrics is usually the most important thing for me, if you really listen to his mixes, you will hear every sensual, perfectly matched, lovely, deep and soulful part between and within the tracks.

And now, I want to present to you this great person, let me introduce you to George Quest! George Quest (Georgi Eliseev) is known for his funky touch behind the turntables – he manages to play the funkier, groovier music and to create an eclectic mix of various electronic genres that takes people on the dance floor on an eclectic trip. Always modest, he has nevertheless played some of the most noteworthy underground venues in New York, including: Sullivan Room, Love, Purple, Pacha (basement), Shelter (basement), Cafe DeVille, Bembe, Vault at Element, Bar 13, Stay Lounge, National Underground, and so on, and has shared the decks with some of the greatest names in underground house and electronic music, such as Mark Farina, Derrick Carter, Kevin Yost, Joey Youngman, Onionz, Slum Science to name a few. While his live gigs are usually focused on house music, he has remained true to himself and has continued to create mixes in various genres, always keeping it fresh, eclectic, different, and inspirational.

Have a nice trip with “Somewhat Lovely” by George Quest
http://georgequest.podomatic.com/entry/2011-05-14T15_17_44-07_00
To be continued...

Ivelina Todorova, Bulgaria 2011

Estonia—the country where people sing

The Estonian Song festival is a tradition which Estonians have managed to maintain through decades. It is a very big festival where hundreds of choirs come together and sing national songs. It is also said that it's one of the biggest choral events in the world. People come together in every five years in mid-summer on the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds. The first song festival took place in 1869 in Tartu. In the first three festivals only men choirs and brass orchestras participated and the total number of participants was 845. Starting with the fourth festival, mixed choirs were also participating and now there was 2700 people who took part. Since the 1947 children's and boys' choirs started to take part and the number of participants rose to 25 000 and above.

The joint choir usually consist of 25 000 participants but in 2009 it was over 30 000 and it performed to an audience of 80 000. It was the biggest festival through the years. During three days 154 000 people were there.

Since 1962 there is also youth song festival. The main performers are young people from schools and these are held because it might happen that the choirs from smaller places might not get to the big festival due to lack of space. Everyone is given a choice to take part of this big festival. The biggest youth song festival was in 2007 where there was 35 400 participants. The total number of people was about 80 000.

Estonian Song Festival is a really big traditional concert and Estonians are really proud of it. In 2003 it was added to UNESCO's list as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The next Estonian Song festival will take place in 2014. Make sure you will be there!

Margot Tiru, Estonia 2012

Emotional journey with Soulful Traveller

From the depths of emotions, she comes. From the depths of his soul, she comes. She comes... his music. So full of emotions, so deeply touching our souls with sweet, lovely whispering lyrics of all his mixes. She tells us a story about love, emotions, feelings. About how important love is. About how important is who you are. And there he is – Soulful Traveller (Nikolay Panov).

This time I don't want to follow the conception of introducing someone with his biography. This time I want to represent an amazing person, with big P, via his music only. I will just tell you that he is from Sofia, Bulgaria. As he says, he's not a DJ, he's just music addicted and represents his feelings and emotions with the music. He also works in the field of aviation, which is his passion after music. If you have already listened to some of Soulful Traveller's mixes, then you know for sure about his love of music and the way he represents his feelings. I have the greatest pleasure to present to you his latest mix and I can say as always he will lead you for a unique musical journey through the valleys of Afro, Deep, Dub and Soulful House music! In case you're tired of the radio hit list and hit charts, here you are in the right place to get your dose of amazing underground tunes



and some rare & unreleased productions/remixes!

The specific in his mixes is his affinity for Afro Deep Sounds which is kind of exotic for me. Because of these deep vibes, while listening to some of his afro deep mixes, I feel like I am on a safari in Africa. There are so many different natural sounds – birds, animals, water, air... like you can feel every sensuous, perfectly matched tune from the beginning till the end of the mix like it comes from inside of you. His music is so close to me, and I bet – to everyone too, so I can say for sure that this music reminds me that I am a human being and the most important thing for me is not to forget my human nature – to love other people, to love nature, to love animals, just to feel and love from the depths of my heart and soul.

The new mix begins smooth, then soulful and Deep and again smooth at the end. It's a little bit different from the typical Soulful Travellers' Afro Deep style. It is inspired by soulful lyrics, instruments, life as we know it, love and especially how the music could totally change a person and what you are possible to do when you fall in love. How the words of one man transmitted through music lead him to a new emotional beginning again and again.

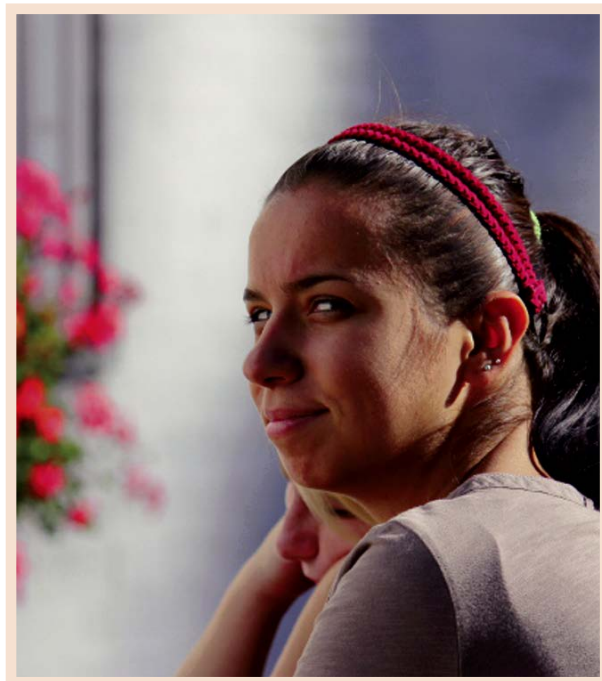
About his music Nikolay says: "I always try to find and mix not so much familiar tracks in my mixes, to stay away from any charts, etc., and I think that there isn't new or old music; it is just one that touches your soul and brings you a wonderful mixture of feelings." There is one track in this mix – "Hear my soul". I wonder, listening to it, how many young people today live a trully spiritual life; how much they are focused on the material as they have forgotten how nice and pure it is to love somebody. Where has the true emotions of music, of going out with friends at night gone away... How many young people today want their soul to be heard, understood? How many of them want to show their true feelings..."

To the question what makes him happy when he releases a new mix, he answers "For me it is not important to have a

billion fans. It's enough for me and makes me happy if just one person finds out himself into any of my mixes. For some people maybe my work is not good enough, for others maybe is the best, but the main idea is to represent to the world a mixture of different feelings and emotions in my mixes. And this rule doesn't work only for me, it is the same for all the artists in the world".

I would like to wish you to find out a piece of you in the mix "Rejoice of Life" by Soulful Traveller and your day to be fulfilled with possitive emotions and as he says: "Open you minds and your souls. Let the music and lyrics take you on a spiritual journey and lead you to your inner, to your hidden soul and do not forget that life is beautiful! Love, peace & music forever!"

Ivelina Todorova, Bulgaria 2012



2 in 1 – Engineer and DJ or just Jivko Yordanov a.k.a. Artone

Artone is the nickname of the young and talented producer and DJ from Sofia, Bulgaria – Engineer Jivko Yordanov. Original, deep, related and interesting are just a very small part of all the definitions of his style. He has many musical projects behind his back and with these projects he has assembled a remarkable "guard" of musicians. He works with Bulgarian and World's labels like FLC Records (BG), Funktion Music (BG), Bastardos United (BG), Artefact Records (MK), Fairlads Digital (HU), Bloodsugar Records (DE), Sony Music Entertainment (DE) and etc. He started his monthly radio show on Vibes Radio with the name "All I need". "All I need" is also the name of his upcoming first author's album, which is expected in 2012.

This is the second part of my rubric about Bulgarian electronic music and Bulgarian DJs. I started this article with a description of Jivko Yordanov a.k.a. Artone. But before I tell you more about his music, I want to tell you how much I am surprised at the fact that he is an engineer and a DJ at the same time. Lots of math in engineering and lots of feelings, sounds, lyrics, love. He is one of my good friends and he always tells me that music and love are one and the same thing. So that's why his Deep and Soulful style, with lots of lovely lyrics and female vocals, makes me feel like I want to be in love all the time.

The most special thing about his work is his passion to make music not only with digital sounds, but also with real instruments. Artone is not only a DJ, he is a producer, and he knows very well how to make the perfect sound with the mixture of digital, electronic sounds, live instruments and voice. Because of his work as a producer, he has got more tracks than mixes. But this is not a problem for him, because he has a big success in Europe as you can see in his biography.

I asked him to describe the feeling before standing behind the DJ deck, and he said "You know .. for me every single time, but every single time when I go onto the stage and behind the decks ... ALWAYS but always I have the same feeling .. like I will do it for the first time for people! My legs are trembling, my hands are sweating, my eyes are playing, all shaking, my heart is beating frenetically, my breath stops.. every time when I go onto the stage .. For the first time!"

For him the feeling to be there among the people, to take care of their good mood, to touch them with his music, to show them his love, to sink them deep into themselves and their emotions, thoughts and sensitivity... this feeling cannot be recreated from anything else .. Just relax, dance .. Allow the music to show you who you are. This is the true beauty of being a DJ, to create this music, to create a harmony of the simplest sounds.

Jivko Yordanov a.k.a. Artone is a talented young producer and DJ from Sofia, Bulgaria. He has been into music since he was 16. He has gone through hip-hop, jazz, lounge which can be explained with his passion for live instruments (and they do take part in his projects). But in 2007 he decided that house music is what he will concentrate on for the future.

Artone's style cannot be defined accurately, because he works very well with live instruments, as well as with digital sounds. He likes to experiment, sometimes without knowing what the final product will be. At times his music resembles Soulful and Funky House, other times he emphasizes on the deep melancholic moods.

His first serious house project is "The Butterfly EP" in which all instruments except the drums and violins were recorded live and then skillfully arranged by Artone, who tells us one so' full of love story. He himself has played the piano and

bass parts, accompanied by flute, guitar and vocals.

Artone, however, has another side in his music which is so close yet so far from his lyrical Soulful side. That is his deeper, his more silent side – a side which expresses itself, blending live sound with the sounds of the future – the Deep House side.

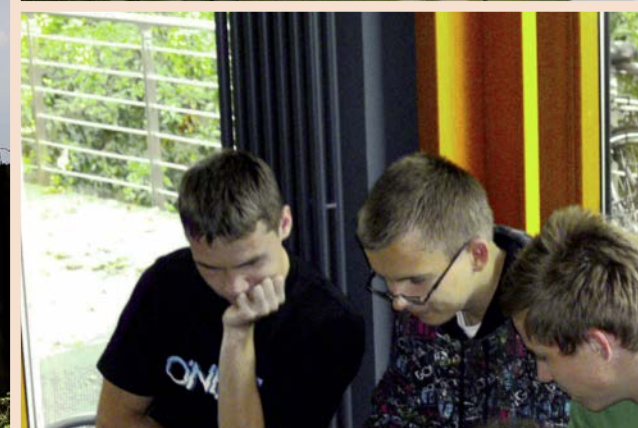
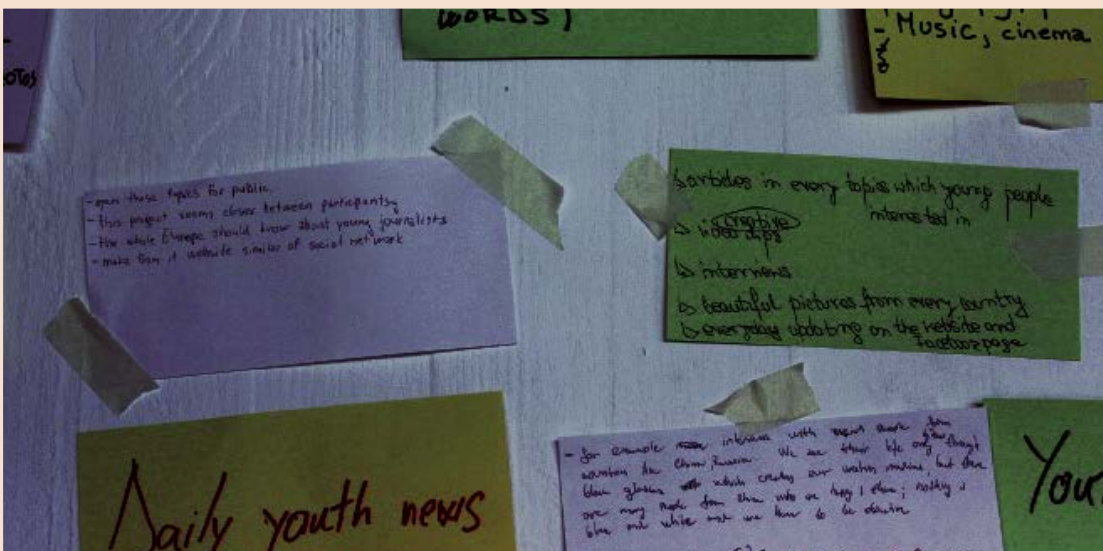
He also likes to chill the things down by producing lounge and trip-hop. In these fields he is known as "The Wetwax project".

To the question if he defines himself as a musician, Artone replies: "Keeping in mind that I barely know the notes, no, I'm not a musician. I am one guy who makes music with a pc."

Have a nice day with Artone's music

<http://soundcloud.com/artone/tracks>





Politics:

The Syrian Revolution and Italy's contribution in conflict communication

In the spirit of european principles and the EU's latter actions to take control over the Arab Spring, to support people's rights and opinions and to stop governance's abuse of power, the European Union should examine Italian private activities that violates various human rights in Syria in order to put an end to all those who try to foment totalitarian leadership in our time, especially in Syria.

First of all, over the last year, more than 3.500 lives represented the cost of Assad's regime. Nonetheless, italian technicians from Area SpA, a surveillance company, have installed an equipment that records every e-mail, tracking every person in Syria. The italian engagement to provide and to use persecutive methods on Syrian people is frightening no matter what their goal might be and it is even more frightening for people if the information was made public.

Second of all, while the European Union has established a series of sanctions against Syria since May, including a ban on arms sales, the measures don't prohibit European companies from selling Syria the sort of equipment in Area's project. All work on the system had already been suspended for more than two months, but we have to make it a permanent decision.

It should be proposed the permanent withdrawal of all the installed recording gears inSyriawith the co-operation of Human Rights Watch. The European Union should put pressure upon all the countries involved in this commercial project to remove their equipment fromSyria, hence we will not encourage economic issues against human rights and social security.

In conclusion, we all must support the EP's decision and express our solidarity to the struggle of the Syrian people for freedom, democratic changes and the end of the Assad's authoritarian regime and strongly condemns the "escalating

use of brutal repression against peaceful protesters and journalists taking into account the siege imposed on cities like Daraa and Jish al Shoughour including the mass arrests and the extrajudicial killings, the arbitrary detention and the torture; welcomes the UN Human Rights Council resolution to decide to send a fact finding mission to Syria to investigate the human rights violations perpetrated by the Syrian security forces".

But this is just my utopian point of view.

To be continued...

Ada Barbu, Romania 2012

The Show must go ON! greekrevolution

"Empty spaces, what are we living for...?" These lyrics of the famous song by Queen – came to my mind recently after reading an article from a Greek journalist about the current situation in Greece! His article describes a very pessimistic view of the economic and social state in Greece, which is now suffering from a collapsed system that so far reproduces decay, corruption, justice impunity and the worst of all the danger to bankrupt not only from money but also from values and ideals! I'm naturally very optimistic and so far nothing could stop me from believing that no matter what difficulties we face in our daily life, we should always expect for the better things to come!

However, last months were very tough not only for me but for my country! And this situation made me fear for the first time in my life about my future and my children future! It's the first time in modern history of Greece that we face such a huge problem which slowly becomes a matter of surviving!

Yes, Greece wasn't the richest country in the EU or wasn't unaware of what was going to happen, but previous and current governments lied to us! They made us believe that "We

have money"! And what frustrates me more is that we believed them! The majority of people, due to personal "connections" voted and supported politicians that now say that "We spend the money together"! I can't agree and I can't stand this! I belong to the "indignados" protesters, those who fight and raise their voices against these cruel conditions!

During summertime most of us didn't went on holidays! Not only because we couldn't afford to spend money but also because we were gathered in squares all over Greece protesting for our basic rights! "Food, Education, Freedom, Dignity"! These "voices" and "demands" were always up to date.

Our protests and our struggle were massive! The Syntagma Sq. – heart of Athens city was over filled by people from all ages ! No political parties involved only people like you and us who demanded for common things! We protested peacefully for many days, however our efforts were not broadcasted from TV channels, everyone was against us, they said we were just punks and our protests won't have any result! They tried to destroy us with violence. Only then, TV channels showed scenes were the police with extensive use of chemicals –even inside metro station– attacked innocent people , kids and animals ... Seems that TV loves violence more than the truth! Seems that the words and pictures lost their true meaning! Seems that we lost our trust ... but not our hope!

This distortion of events of course made us angrier! Day after day, protests are becoming more and more. People refuse to accept that we have to pay for a dept that was taken without the citizen's approval! Greece is under the supervision of the IMFs (International Monetary Fund) and that's scary for the whole EU institution. Euro zone's in Crisis! And things are running very very fast!

Whatever will happen in economy ... the real victims will be innocent and poor people! Those who now don't know what to fear and what will happen tomorrow! Will they lose their jobs or their houses? How they can afford living

with lower salaries, what's their children future? Who's to blame? What can we do? Unemployment has led lot's of young people to abandon Greece and go abroad in order to find work cause there the salaries are much better and of course the cost of living and the quality of life is different. That's the last choice and sacrifice for a better future!

I'm not sure if bankruptcy is going to be my country's complete destruction. I'm trying to figure out what is going to be dropped off. Because, in fact I believe that the question is on what are we really afraid to loose?

That's not MY country! I'd prefer to have less corruption of the institutions, less bureaucracy, less fake promises ... I choose and hope to a better educational and health system, social institutions that focus on citizens! That's the meaning of real democracy. A term that has been discussed a lot this year, not only in Greece but in all countries that face difficulties.

"The Show must go on" ... Despite the general feeling I advice young people not to lose their faith! We must be optimistic and against all odds seize the chances inside this crisis and create! All we need is to believe in our selves, believe in our power and never give up! Keep the faith!

"Empty spaces, what are we living for...?" These lyrics of the famous song by Queen – came to my mind recently after reading an article from a Greek journalist about the current situation in Greece! His article describes a very pessimistic view of the economic and social state in Greece, which is now suffering from a collapsed system that so far reproduces decay, corruption, justice impunity and the worst of all the danger to bankrupt not only from money but also from values and ideals! I'm naturally very optimistic and so far nothing could stop me from believing that no matter what difficulties we face in our daily life, we should always expect for the better things to come!

However, last months were very tough not only for me but for my country! And this situation made me fear for the first time in my life about my future and my children future! It's the first time in modern history of Greece that we face such a huge problem which slowly becomes a matter of surviving!

Yes, Greece wasn't the richest country in the EU or wasn't unaware of what was going to happen, but previous and current governments lied to us! They made us believe that "We have money"! And what frustrates me more is that we believed them! The majority of people, due to personal "connections" voted and supported politicians that now say that "We spend the money together"! I can't agree and I can't stand this! I belong to the "indignados" protesters, those who fight and raise their voices against these cruel conditions!

During summertime most of us didn't went on holidays! Not only because we couldn't afford to spend money but also because we were gathered in squares all over Greece protesting for our basic rights! "Food, Education, Freedom, Dignity"! These "voices" and "demands" were always up to date.

Our protests and our struggle were massive! The Syntagma Sq. – heart of Athens city was over filled by people from all ages ! No political parties involved only people like you and us who demanded for common things! We protested peacefully for many days, however our efforts were not broadcasted from TV channels, everyone was against us, they said we were just punks and our protests won't have any result! They tried to destroy us with violence. Only then, TV channels showed scenes were the police with extensive use of chemicals –even inside metro station– attacked innocent people , kids and animals ... Seems that TV loves violence more than the truth! Seems that the words and pictures lost their true meaning! Seems that we lost our trust ... but not our hope!

This distortion of events of course made us angrier! Day after day, protests are becoming more and more. People refuse to accept that we have to pay for a dept that was taken without the citizen's approval! Greece is under the supervision of the IMFs (International Monetary Fund) and that's scary for the whole EU institution. Euro zone's in



Crisis! And things are running very very fast! Whatever will happen in economy ... the real victims will be innocent and poor people! Those who now don't know what to fear and what will happen tomorrow! Will they loose their jobs or their houses? How they can afford living with lower salaries, what's their children future? Who's to blame? What can we do? Unemployment has led lot's of young people to abandon Greece and go abroad in order to find work cause there the salaries are much better and of course the cost of living and the quality of life is different. That's the last choice and sacrifice for a better future!

I'm not sure if bankruptcy is going to be my country's complete destruction. I'm trying to figure out what is going to be dropped off. Because, in fact I believe that the question is on what are we really afraid to loose?

That's not MY country! I'd prefer to have less corruption of the institutions, less bureaucracy, less fake promises ... I choose and hope to a better educational and health system,

social institutions that focus on citizens! That's the meaning of real democracy. A term that has been discussed a lot this year, not only in Greece but in all countries that face difficulties.

"The Show must go on" ... Despite the general feeling I advice young people not to lose their faith! We must be optimistic and against all odds seize the chances inside this crisis and create! All we need is to believe in our selves, believe in our power and never give up! Keep the faith!

ViVi Zapantiotou, Greece 2011

There is strength in us, the power is in us – view of the “Majdanek” concentration camp in Lublin.

It was 1941, when on the area of Lublin lands was been created German Nazi death camp. Infernal machine of evil designed to eliminate the painful and humiliating

race Jews, Poles and Soviet prisoners of war. Within 3 years of operation were killed in the, “Majdanek” more than 875 000 people. We do not intend to show the same story, we want to show the strength of spirit that lies within each of us.

“Majdanek” harsh reality for many during World War II and painful trauma for the survivors. What really was the key to survival for people who had faith in freedom. It was a great hope and very strong will to live. Thanks to the strong character despite the horrible and inhuman conditions in their head all the time sparkled a glimmer of hope which gave new strength every day to continually fight for the greatest gift to men that is life. Those who lose as a result of her passion to stay in the German death camp often the first to die. It is sad how a person can pick up the second unit will to live. Despite his many years on the planet will lose all faith in society. The strongest mentally managed to survive despite the many months of oppression and torture. The whole determination, which had given them faith was the power that lies within each of us. Sometimes it can be revenge, a desire to gain something new and especially is this will to live. This shows us how today we cannot give up despite the difficulties that every day they are placed in our way. We believe that we should fight for the slightest thing because we are the architect of our own life.

To understand what it really was a concentration camp “Majdanek” we want to show photo gallery today as it looks to be more aware of what the great disaster was sent to all convicts. I realize how many great people were dying and losing faith. What word did not show a picture will understand. Photos of three young photographers: Amadeusz Starzak, Łukasz Oflus, and Maciej Całus.

Amadeusz Starzak, Łukasz Oflus, Maciej Całus, Poland 2012



The Waste is gone with the Wind

The world has seven billion people. The figure of human being is increasing and the resources are low. Scientists are telling since many years that the water will be very low in future. Do we have also enough to eat? An enormous food waste has to be stopped immediately against the environmental pollution and to alleviate the world hunger.

After a Quotation by the German federal ministry of agriculture, alimentation and consumer-protection (BMELV) every German throws food with an economical value about 300 Euros into the garbage. More than 20 million tons of food ends in waste. There are no detailed figures not yet.

That Wasting of food has its very high price – Money, resources and prospects for life. The BMELV prepares a national dump-study with exact figures, which should inform and show possible solutions.

The Government in Great Britain had already done this study three years ago. In the whole Kingdom was figured out, that 4.4 million of apples, 7 million slices of bread and 1.3 million yogurts are going to waste. Only that should be bad enough, if there is also the disposal of waste, which takes an amount of 1.2 billion Euros.

Additionally the wasting costs more than money. Because of the food production the used energy causes the Carbone Dioxide (CO2). Also the water deficiency will be increased worldwide.

The Swedish Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) is a policy institute that seeks sustainable solutions to the world's escalating water crisis. That institute figured out three years ago how much water gets lost only in the United States through the waste of food. About 30 % of food is going wasted. Some researchers are saying it is like open the water

tap and let flow 40 trillion litres of water to the discharge.

Bye-laws and Rules are responsible for the wasting. The Supermarkets have to watch out for their best-before-dates, because two days before out of date the products going to waste. If the products could not be sold with a little discount they will be disposed. Some of the supermarkets and bakeries are concurring with the soup-kitchens or similar public facilities. About one million people in Germany are getting this way their daily requirement of meals and food, they cannot afford normally. These facilities are supported by private or private commercial charitable donations and the people are honorary employees, which are working there to help.

The German supermarket “Lidl” provides their vending machines for the deposit of bottles and cans with the motto “Anyone gives what he or she can”. You can choose if you want your sales slip for the changed bottles or to give “a donation at push of the button”.

To make sure that the “poor men” really get help, the people have to show the aiders their documents for unemployment benefit or something like that. In Germany one million persons are working and don't get enough earnings to live from that, so they are getting additional payments.

Many politicians are working for social equity to reduce this problem.

Björn Kiesel, Germany 2012

The Bottom billion

There's nothing like a picture of a malnourished child from sub-Saharan Africa to turn our stomachs around, makes us pity their situation for a matter of 5 to 7 minutes,

at most, and then flip to the next stumble upon page to make us feel better again. Around 5% of us will actually take the time to donate 2 \$ for some cause that deals with such problems. But beyond that, what do we actually do? Pretty much nothing that's what. There are all kinds of state set up agencies and programs, in all of Europe and at EU level, but most citizens never even take the time to fully understand the situation, let along get involved.

So here's somebody's “two cents” on matter. Somebody who understands the situation and, more importantly, actually offers a solution. Not the solution, you could argue, but it's a start, right?Paul Collier @TED is a short but insightful talk by the Oxford professor, that should put us on the right track. And if the TED leaves you with more questions than answers post them here and you'll get an answer during a videoconference with the professor, on November the 4th.

Thatcher, 2011

Nigeria – Telling stories is one thing, sharing them another

In terms of revolutionary movements and active resistances against inequitable governments, laws or actions, the Social Media is indeed a tool to inform people. Information that could be easily manipulated or even censored in the newspaper and TV news channels, find its plain way through the Social Media. The blossom of the Social Media era has reached its height. Once stamped as a menace or even worse a mental enfeeblement to society, Social Media is now considered to be a reasonable chance to spread out important – maybe world changing information as fast and

effective as possible. It was nearly impossible sharing underground information with so many people from different parts of the world, before the discovery of the valuable source.

The so called “Arab Spring” set the beginning of reporting on what is actually happening by the use of the Social Media. People start to have the courage to raise their voices against the government. A short look at Nigeria: With a 117 per cent rise in fuel costs, the Nigerian government went to far. Nigerians made their way up to the streets to protest. Of course there is a lot more behind the rise of fuel costs, which seems to be the general media headline. It is implicated with complex political actions. But concentrating on the the way Nigerians try to tell, more essentially share their story, a network have been build up called ChopCassava (“chop” is Pidgin English and means to eat with immoral or criminal greed – a provocative allusion to the government). Connected with facebook, for instance, they have reached a lot of Nigerians, including the diaspora. The protests in Nigeria are documented on a video blog at www.chopcassava.com including interviews with the citizens and direct views of the marches. Police violence against the peaceful people are been revealed. This documentation wants to tell a story and wants to expose violent actions ordered from the government against its own people. ChopCassava is sharing a story, that must be seen and discussed, because telling a story is one thing, but sharing it is another. The more stories you share, the more society gets access to knowledge about injustice from the government. And knowledge is power – power to rebel against an unfair and violent system. And as Francis Bacon once said:

For knowledge, too, itself is power.

*Olajumoke Elisabeth Omobolanle Adeyanju Omonga,
Germany 2012*

Meet an Afghan

Can you imagine you being a citizen of a country which threatens your own life and the life of your family and friends? Not feeling the freedom in this country, only feeling the miserable atmosphere and living in a constant shivering with fear for a possible death. Such a country is Afghanistan.

The salvation from all this is escape. Many people have already done this, they have rescued themselves. Such is the fate of refugees and I am going to write about an experience which stock my mind with knowledge about the life in these circumstances.

In the beginning of August 2011 I participated in an international seminar called EYW (European Youth Weeks) and the leaders of each country decided to include a visit to a refugee camp in Mainz. When I entered the camp I saw some Vietnamese kids running and playing around with joy, some women from Iran strolling carefree. And this place looked as if it was a safe place, a paradise for them although it was fenced with thick walls and looked like a prison to me. But the most interesting part came when we had the chance to talk to an Afghan refugee and to ask him whatever questions we had. We were all standing in a circle looking with curiosity at the Afghan. He was a middle-aged man with an unexpected smile glowing on his face. The director of the camp, a Brazilian, was there, too.

Before starting his 2-hour thrilling story the Afghan thanked the director and welcomed us in a kind manner. His English was really good and we could understand everything he meant. He started to tell us about his status. He told us that when he had landed in Germany he was referred as asylum seeker. Then he was approved as a refugee which carried him more rights but he had to stay close to the camp. We asked him why he left Afghanistan. With an ironic smile on his face he told us that he loved his country

and he didn't leave Afghanistan but it made him do so. Then he stopped for a while awaiting for some questions and afterwards continued. He told us everything about his life story in Afghanistan. That he had been born in average-ly poor family and when he had been studying law at university his father had passed away. And when he shared that he was the oldest child in the family everybody from us understood that all responsibility had been passed to him. At that time he had the important decision to choose whether to work in order to help his family to connect the two ends or to continue his law studies.

“The job was obligatory because without my family I would have been begging on the street. So, I had to do both. I slept few hours, without free time, only studying, working and had my will to support me. And now, here I am in front of you, educated, away from this chaos.” He also added: “Your life in Europe is a normal, straight line, no danger, no terrorists. While in Afghanistan it is a loose one with many declinations.”



He started telling us about terrorist attacks in Afghanistan: “I have recently watched on the TV how some Taliban breaking into a bank with machine guns. They make a row of innocent people. Everyone – one by one takes a shot in the head. Also recently I have read about a little child which was hung again by Taliban. They are not people, this is not human”. While he was talking he was holding something like a necklace and he was counting its beads. He explained that this was a really popular item in the Middle East which made a man to relax and made his thought flow as water. He gave a really good example of this with the well-known football manager Sir Alex Fergusson and his habit of chewing passionately a gum.

All the time the Afghan was with us, a smile was glimmering on his face. We asked him why he was so happy after all these things which had happened to him. His answer was: “There is no other way to accept these bad things. If I am always sad and only repenting about this there won't be any sense.”

Just after that we had to leave the camp. We said good bye to him and continued the rest of our trip. I wasn't writing any notes while he was talking. His words were so intriguing that I managed to remember most of the part he told us. I have made many conclusions since this visit and have made many questions: What is the sense of killing innocent people? Why these brainwashed Taliban do this? Why these civil wars not only in Afghanistan but everywhere in the world still exist?

**“My hands are tied
For all I've seen has changed my mind
But still the wars go on as the years go by
With no love of God or our human rights
and all these dreams are swept aside**

**By bloody hands of the hypnotized
Who carry the cross of homicide
And history bears the scars of our civil wars”
Civil war, by Guns n Roses**

It is really strange to me the difference between people from Afghanistan and these from my country – Bulgaria. How insolent are the Bulgarians to complain about unimportant and material things such as low salaries, their car or not having a high-tech telephone. While the Afghans dream for only one thing – safety and freedom.

Lachezar Kotsev, Bulgaria 2011

“Imperialists out of Africa!”

I was invited to a very interesting event in Cologne. Next to the huge, ancient Dom there was a crowd listening to the voice of Mudjacka Mvunuku. “We want to have the independence to vote without any influence from Europe. Just the voice of the people! Uhuru”, he says through the microphone. On the 28th November the Democratic Republic of Kongo is going to vote a new president. It is assumed that imperialists like Europe or America always have their hands on the game. Literally spoken, they have a huge impact on the votings in whole Africa in order to profit on economic progress, oil resources and control. The Pan-african activist Mudjacka (26) pleads with a group of young African-German students for independence and freedom in Africa. “Imperialisten raus aus Afrika!” (Imperialists out of Africa) is written on their boards. People, maybe a few tourists, who just wanted to explore the Dom in Cologne pass and stop to listen to what the Uhuru Movement have to say. Uhuru is

Swahili and means Freedom. It is a political Movement. This movement spreads out and has reached it steps through Europe. The main aims are:

- Unifying Africa to one nation (former nature in the pre-colonial ages)
- Erasing the colonial borders
- Reparation from the former colonies holder (Europe and America)
- Defence and development of African culture
- Development of African personality and African self-determination

I spoke with Mudjacka (26) and Bonzenga (25), who are part of the Movement.

“Imperialists out of Africa!” is a central message today. Who are these imperialists and why do we have to take a critical view on them?

The imperialists are rulers of USA and Europe, who have a big influence on the politics in Africa, while we Africans do not bother about the votings in Germany for example. It is all about profit and power for the imperialists. In Ivory Coast it was the French who “voted” the president. Africa is still in need of Independence. It is a kind of neocolonialism. (Mudjacka)

But these presidents “voted” by the western world are also Africans. Could it be that Africa is also at fault?

The African rulers betrayed the interests of Africa and African people. These Africans are manipulated. They enjoy living in luxury than helping their own people. (Bonzenga)

The African governments are filled with marionettes from the western world. They are selfish, because they take bribe and forget their brothers and sisters. As WikiLeaks also reviewed this fact that Americans bribe Africans in a higher position in order to get what they want. And these Africans then

follow what the imperialists want to achieve: Money, Oil and power. (Mudjacka)

What kind of image does Europe has towards Africa? What do you think?

Europeans thought that they are a higher “race” than Africans, so they didn’t show any respect towards African culture, even worst: Our culture was trampled underfoot. Today many see in Africa the underdeveloped continent, because Europe is in a higher power position. Whereas Africans have a different worldview. We are human and want to be in control of our continent, and all of its vast wealth. (Bonzenga)

What is the first step to consciousness and how can Europe change this situation?

Europeans have to report about the real side of Africa. Africa is shown in another colour in the media. Europeans also have to include Clarification work in the schools. The education in Europe is somewhat connected with prejudices about Africa. And of course they have to let the African people decide. Europe has to lose the control. (Mudjacka)

What is the first step for Africans?

It is important to open the eyes of the people. We want to give a sign. We have to have the courage to stand up for our rights. We have to build up a revolution. Many youth think that we are powerless and we cannot move anything. So, we go on the street and try to touch more Africans. We have to build ourselves up! (Mudjacka)

Africa: One nation? Maybe a utopian thought, maybe an ideological idea or maybe a revolutionary way. But in this way Africans have to change their communication together, coming finally to one conclusion: the sense of unity. More essential even is a closer look to Europe as we Europeans don’t really consider our fault in the African misery. Blended by the media, we only have a little space for a critical view on Europe.

Elisabeth Olajumoke Omobolanle Adeyanju Omonga, Germany 2011

Belgian soldiers on the visit in South Bohemia

It is not difficult to become a soldier in the French-speaking part of Wallonie in Belgium. The young men born in the country need a short training in order to enter the army, these trainings are given them in a military area in Wallonie and in the military spaces abroad. Wallonian army is a group of 400 military men, divided into 3 units of approximately 100 people. Each of these groups is led by one captain and there are 3 other small groups which fall under the 3 main units. Soldiers know each other very well thanks to their longtime cooperation and travels in the different countries as Afghanistan where they help to resolve the war conflicts. The trainings in the military spaces in the countries abroad fix their friendship and enable the beginners to improve their skills thanks to their older colleagues and get know the military culture. In practice, everyone who is interested in entering the army, can accomplish it whenever he wants.

There is a military area in Boletice, situated in South Bohemia 5 kilometres away from Český Krumlov, which is designated for a special trainings of soldiers. The military space of Boletice, thanks to its advantageous position and a beautiful nature, is serving for accomodation of different groups of soldiers. In the surroundings, the soldiers can practise using the weapons on the special places which are dedicated to the construction of targets. We were translating the orders during the night exercises too. That was a different experience because the shots are red in the night and that was difficult with the lights on the terrain but finally it was good show.

My employment of a translator for the Belgium soldiers via Alliance française in Ceske Budejovice was to help the soldiers with the communication between the Czech civils

while constructing the targets and to accompany them to the military airports where they were picking up and dropping the other members of the belgian army. During my work we were living with two other French-speaking girls at the same place with the Belgian soldiers, which was an advantage because we have been receiving the orders from the army directly inside the house. The soldiers led us to the places where there were training and we were working as a mean of communication between the Czech civils and themselves.

As mentioned above, every group has its captain who is controlling the shooting. That means that everytime when we were sent to a special place with a group of soldiers, we have been in one tower with their leader and translating the orders. It was interesting to see the system of work of the soldiers and especially the training which was really showing the atmosphere of war. We could see that the soldiers are well-organised and the atmosphere which they created was really friendly, especially for the new ones. In the end the soldiers gave us the certificates as a symbol of thanks for a good cooperation and kept our names in the database for the future.

I am really grateful to Alliance française in Ceske Budejovice that I could have a possibility to be on one place with the Belgian soldiers and to try the military atmosphere. It is something completely different from the Czech army because the Belgians are really friendly and hardworking. At the same time they treat the civils in really a nice way, they respect the Czech culture and they have a special relation to South Bohemia because they already were there 10 years ago so they know the area very well.

KATEŘINA VOJTĚCHOVÁ, Czech Republic 2011

Bucharest, the be(a)st from the East

London, Paris, even Oslo and other more climate unfriendly places – these are some of the most popular destinations amongst students who choose to study abroad in state capitals and large cities. But have you ever considered Bucharest, one of the biggest cities in Eastern Europe, recently added on the must visit map of every thrill seeking traveler, fashionista and modern art addict?

Versatile since it was established, the capital city of blooming Romania is like a chameleon for the perception of those who visit it. “The Little Paris” of the beginning of the twentieth century leaves the western European tourists confused: “No, this is not little Paris...This is little Berlin!” and the American ones melancholic: “Oh, Bucharest...it’s like New York in the 60s, but with a different kind of fun.” One thing is for sure: Bucharest leaves a strong impression on anyone who visits it. The fascination with this grey giant transcends from its never ending contrasts: in a radius of half a kilometer (less than one third of a mile) you can see the limousines standing in front of the Radisson Hotel, as well as homeless people begging for lei (the Romanian currency, aprox. one quarter of an euro) at the corner of one of the streets nearby.

So...why Bucharest? It’s lack of popularity among youngsters from abroad coming to study here may speak for itself, but there are also a few who came here, liked it and decided to establish. L., 25, a young man of Asian descent from Western Europe, student at the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies explains: “I first came here 5 years ago in a student exchange. I was studying computer science in English back then, but it was not my thing. I started scouting opportunities to change my major and

found many top educational institutions I could choose from. The courses were in English and the tuition fee is low, so I decided to move here. Bucharest is cosmopolitan and it has an amazing night life, so it’s nice to live here. Moreover, Romanians are really warm people and I have lots of friends at school and not only. ” Other foreign students currently studying in Romania have strong arguments in favour of their choice. They point out the fact that living and studying in Romania enabled them to develop as persons by getting out of their comfort zone and trying an exotic experience, as Bucharest seems to be the place where Western culture meets the Eastern one. Furthermore, they find their academic life challenging, as Romanian students are world wide known as being hard working and competitive.

The never ending white noise, the thousands of passers-by, the lack of pattern in the city’s architecture, the famous institutions, the countless art galleries, pubs, the beggars and the über expensive cars, they’re all pieces of the giant puzzle that Bucharest is. Some may find Bucharest a place to grow old in, others may consider it’s not worth returning, either way, Bucharest it’s an experience worth living.

Tina Rizescu, Romania 2011

Concentration camp Majdanek

Historically, concentration camp Majdanek in Polish Lublin functioned from year 1941. It was a prison full of the Jewish, Polish and the members of the Soviet Union who worked there since morning until evening. Of course, not everyone survived in these hard conditions, so there were many people who lived in the camp only a few months.

The prisoners were given to eat only a soup, tea and coffee and were sleeping up to five people on one bed. Their clothes weren’t washed and they could take a bath only 2 times a year. When taking a bath, they had to put their head in the disinfection in order to give away golden jewellery they had in their mouths or stomachs.

During his function 79 000 people died there because of illnesses and lack of food. The Operation Reinhard lasted until November 1943 and during this Jewish were killed. The exact date is 3rd November and 18 400 Jewish were killed in total.

Nowadays, the concentration camps Majdanek is opened to public as a museum where the tourists can see in which conditions prisoners were living.

Katerina Vojtechova, Czech Republic 2012





Society:

The story of US space shuttles

The shuttle tomorrow is truly like laying the last spike on the transcontinental railroad, only much more so. And whether or not we're going to see in in the next 10 or 20 years, there are people alive today who will see manufacturing in space from moon materials or from asteroids."

— Jerry Brown, Governor of California, 1977.

It all started on 12th of April in 1981, when the first US space shuttle Columbia took off. The commander of the STS-1 was an experienced astronaut John W. Young, who was by the way the ninth man who walked on the Moon's surface. Young was assisted by an aerospace engineer Robert Laurel Crippen to who the flight was the first of his career. During the mission Columbia orbited the Earth 37 times before landing at the Kennedy Space Station. Bringing the space shuttles into play, opened many new opportunities to every space scientist in the world. Thanks to the shuttles, humankind was able to send on orbit different manned space labs and satellites. After setting up the International Space Station in 1998, US space shuttles were the main means of transport between the Earth and ISS. Space shuttles were able to carry a crew of seven astronauts and a payload up to 24 tons.

All five space shuttles (Columbia, Challenger, Discovery, Atlantis, Endeavour) were taken into space via two attached solid booster rockets what were attached to a massive fuel tank. Space shuttles were improved day-by-day: a lot of electronics was added, shuttles got windows, materials got better.

One of the biggest minuses in the STS program was the price of the flight (1.5 billion US dollars), only the maintenance costs of shuttles and rockets were enormous. For sure the price of the flight is important but the saddest thing about it is that 2 shuttles out of 5 crashed during the flights and astronauts died together with those scientific miracles. In 1986 Challenger exploded only 73 seconds after start due

to a booster's failure, Columbia turned into dust in 2003 after re-entering the Earth's atmosphere.

In thirty active years there were 133 successful and 2 unsuccessful missions. Over hundred different astronauts were taken into space.

The last spaceflight started on July 8, 2011, space shuttle Atlantis landed on July 21, 2011. Crew members who stayed at the ISS were taken back to Earth with Russian Soyuz spacecraft. As the shuttle program is over, USA is already planning new space flights with spacecrafts. Until their ships are ready, Americans are fully depending on Russians. Currently there are three companies who project and test spacecrafts for USA, the one who wins the contest, will be offered a contract by NASA.

Anti Haugas, Estonia 2011

Participation by children and youth in the Czech Republic

We can hear really from everywhere about participation in nowadays, but what does it mean? Are we able to participate or not? Sure, everyone can participate, lots of children and youth are scared of this word, but they do not know what does it mean, and what is it about. But then they know and when they can prepare some activities for the others and after that they have to say I have learned something new and I can use that in my future job, or in



future education, then they always say, that it was cool and that they learn and practise really good things.

In Czech Republic we can find a lot of forms of participation. We can start with explaining – what do mean children and youth parliaments. In the Czech republic there exists structure of children and youth parliaments, we can find there school parliaments, then city parliaments, then region parliaments and then National Parliament of Children and Youth. This structure is like a pyramid. The members can go through the pyramid to the top of it. These parliaments are discussing actual topics, e.g. the school parliaments are talking about choosing 2 meals in the school canteen, or about new windows, they are preparing parties for students. The cities parliaments are discussing with the chairman in the town. And so it goes on.

The National Parliament of Children and Youth (NPCY) has a big meeting every year, when there are children from all over the Czech Republic discussing actual topics, f.e. new school leaving exam, cyberbullying, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and so on, after that they make a resolution. The NPCY has a commission which is working all the year and which is working with the topics from the resolution.

And now about some activities, which are prepared by the children. For example now is starting a project (Don't let you sweep! – Nenech sebou zametat!), this project is about workshops for children between 12 and 18 and is about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, bullying and cyberbullying. The lecturers are talking with participants about these topics, what can happen, they are playing games on these topics too. This project will end with a conference, where should be presented the resolutions, which come from the workshops and it will end with a competition, in which should the participants make a video on one of these topics.

The other activities are for example: Youth exchanges about parliaments activities, or a ball. Then the NPCY was a

partner of one project which was about structured dialogue.

We can go back to the aim of all these parliaments. The aim is non-formal education of youth about democracy (they have to be interested in politics, and to understand what is going on, and what can they do and motivate them to participate in elections), it is also about teach them how to communicate (P.R., rhetoric), media coverage (how to write an article, how to propagate their parliament), and how to write and coordinate some projects and activities.

Tomáš Botlík, Czech Republic 2011

Life on the street

They are everywhere, in bigger and smaller cities. Homeless associated with Dirty, ragged and destroyed by alcohol. Who in reality are these people? Why they landed on the street? Is there no prospects for them?

The phenomenon of homelessness is not one universal definition. His understanding depends not only on the level of civilization, but the culture of a region of the world. However, the problem is getting worse.

Homelessness is an example of social pathology and marginalization. Common reasons are difficult social situation, alcohol and also the lack of prospects. Some are unable to find in society and choose to live on the margins, but people without prospect who are homeless due to unfortunate circumstances are a minority. They usually do not drink, try to get a job, sleep in hostels and shelters. If they have enough determination, they can exit from the state of hopelessness.

Usually we see them as alcoholics, smelly and dirty beggars, who spend every penny on alcohol. This is generally true, because most of the homeless are alcoholics addiction.

They landed on the pavement by a drunk but still drinking. For them, the day begins always in the same way: How, where and what to drink. Each of them has its own unique story, but it disappears.

Despite this, we should try to help them. Each of them is still a human. There is always a chance to start to exist normally. Never can we be sure that happens we will not touch such a fate. At any time we may lose everything. We should finally look at it from another side. We cannot isolate them from considering them as outcasts. We should be more sensitive to the fate of others.

Who knows, perhaps by helping them we help ourselves?

Maciej Calus, Amadeusz Starzak, Lukasz Oflus, Poland 2011

It's christmas time...

I was just wondering about Christmas. In the USA they believe in Santa Claus, but what about European countries? What is special for each country? How do people celebrate Christmas?

Well, I decided to tell you something about my Christmas. In Slovakia children don't believe in Santa Claus. They believe in Ježíško (Jesus as a child). He brings presents under the christmas tree.

In my family we decorate a christmas tree on Christmas Eve, especially I am the one who do that. The whole day we can smell a good aroma from the kitchen. Our christmas supper consists of kapustnica (soup from the cabbage with mushrooms and small pieces of sausage), the main dish is a carp with potato salad and we have small donuts gravied with honey with walnuts or poppy seed for dessert. We have cornets with honey too. After the supper we cut an apple in half from which we can see the future of our family.

ly. It's a tradition. Then we go outdoor to watch the stars to see if Ježíško is coming. We light some fire-crackers until we catch the bell. Then we come inside and see the presents under the christmas tree. The unpacking can start.

So this is my Christmas Eve, what about you and yours traditions? Feel free to write some comments about it. Also you can see the gallery. There are some pictures of our homemade cakes and our balcony (haha).

Michaela Lennerová, Slovakia 2011

HIV in Estonia

HIV (short for human immunodeficiency virus) is a lentivirus (the virus has a long incubation period) and causes AIDS (short for acquired immunodeficiency system). AIDS causes people to lose their immune system and so their organism becomes open to opportunistic infections and cancers. HIV is infectious and spreads by the transfer of body fluids.

According to National Institute for Health Development HIV's triumph in Estonia began in 1988 and since then the number of diagnosed HIV positives has grown. In May and June 2000 five intravenous drug users were diagnosed with HIV. In August 2000 HI-virus was discovered in eight drug-injecting youngsters from Narva and on next month that year the virus was found in a drug addict young woman who died after giving birth. On 14th February 2001 Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs declared HIV as an epidemic as the number of virus carriers had grown from 271 diagnosed cases of HIV per million people to 1067 cases. However, the good news is that next year – the year 2002 – there were less new HIV positive diagnoses – 620 cases per million people and the number of new HIV positives has decreased since then. This means that

the prime time of new infection cases of HIV was in 2001.

Fortunately, Estonia has taken HIV prevention very seriously and there have been many national campaigns and strategies from the beginning of 1990s. The most recent national campaign was signed by the government for years 2006–2015. The aim of the strategies is to decrease new cases of HIV positive diagnoses and to hinder the widespread of the virus among the people. There are various counseling centers in all the counties – counseling for drug addicts, for youngsters and for the people involved in prostitution. There are also many web-pages to increase the awareness and help find answers to HIV-related questions.

Although there are still new cases of HIV positive diagnosis every year, the number of them per year has decreased and Estonians are more aware of the disease and safety. It is pleasing that Estonian government has taken steps to help decrease the occurrence of new cases of HIV and helped to raise the awareness of people. HI-virus does not differentiate people, it can infect anyone. Most important is to always be precautionous oneself; supportive to those suffering from it and to never lose hope when having it.

Mariliis Huul, Estonia 2012

The fear of a national identity

When we talk about identity, we usually mean our personal identity. When we talk about European identity, we refer to our cultural identity in Europe. But what actually happens when we talk about national identity? Does it mean to celebrate your national soccer team during the world championship or to raise your flag in order to prove your national pride?

“Islam belongs to Germany.” German Federal President Christian Wulff expresses himself to the argumentative

Sarrazin debates (Thilo Sarrazin wrote a controversial book about integration and Muslim immigration in Germany) and the reproach, Germany fails because of the integration. For months it went therefore of finding out the meaning for this sudden knowledge. The knowledge that integration went wrong in Germany. Hidden behind the “multicultural phenomenon” and the fear of the identity loss Germanys way of the examination proceeds. Multiculturalism is called the magic word. But what exactly is culture in Germany?

Beer-drinking, Potato-eating with lederhosen and exceedingly on time; thus a European sees the typical German. The former Stuttgart lawyer Fritz Bauer (1903 – 1968) saw a deficit in the typical German:

“Unfortunately, it is a typically German quality to hold the obedience par excellence for a virtue. We need the courage of the convictions to say no.”

Well, where is the courage? Whereas culture concentrates on the set of meanings and the characteristics of a community, national identity means recognizing and identifying these qualities. National identity can therefore be seen as a sense of culture. But the Nazi Régime in the 20th century with its mass media propaganda and mind manipulation left a deep wound in modern Germany. Developing a national identity seems therefore difficult. Or even more, Germans develop a national sense of shame for their history in which Hitler takes apparently a big role. This feeling of guilt hinders them from perceiving characteristic features and qualities in their Community. A national broadcasting is forbidden in Germany (Deutsche Welle, for instance is broadcasted everywhere in Europe except in Germany), in order to prevent mass media propaganda like in the Nazi Régime era. Somehow, the fear of getting manipulated to support a mass murder of a minority or a religious group is very present. It is important to talk about this topic (especially in class rooms) and reflect about it.

The feedback from the outside seems to worry the German a lot. Nevertheless, by the fear Germans forget that cultures are always connected with clichés and thereby fall under influence strongly. Afraid to be connected with Hitler or called a Racist, they try to show up cultural interest and an open mind. So by taking a little step forward to national identity the German must look after the “luggage behind his back”.

Now, there is something new in modern society. The young generation is confronted with developing a European culture. With a look at the European map one recognizes fast the differences between north and the south which stress the religious tradition. Religion: A phenomenon, a conflict-preparing subject which searches somewhere its place in the European culture. Can there be therefore a common European culture? This continent is differentiated very much. The differences of the cultural and ethnic societies and communities lead to a unity with diversification, to a balance between differences and a kind of unity. Is the national identity endangered by a common European culture? What do you think?

Elisabeth Olajumoke Omobolanle Adeyanju Omonga, Germany 2011



For democracy and laïcité

I've been wondering lately why France is having such a hard time dealing with immigration and multiculturalism. When I compare my country with England, where I lived last year, I see all the many differences that oppose them. Sure, England is no saint, it has its issues as well, especially lately regarding alleged police racism. But what stroke me is the way it deals with “ex-colonies” citizens. When I look at England, I think of the cultural and religious diversity at Universities, or at the Sikh policemen who proudly wear their turban, and most importantly, are allowed to. But when I look at France, all I think about is the law that bans wearing ostentatious religious signs in public schools (and which clearly focuses on the Muslim veil, let's face it) or the headscarf ban that was implemented last year and that forbids all full headscarf public wearing.

For democracy and laïcité, says the French state. For the greater good of the French Republic. Greater good, you said? What greater good?

Liberté, égalité, fraternité, proclaims the national motto of the République française. Would this be equality, then? Ensuring to shape all citizens in the same French image, thus banning all foreign signs? But then, why do French people have a problem with Blacks and Arabs but not with, say Asians and Latinos?

It's been decades, very long and painful decades, that France has split up with its colonies. And yet, it feels like it has never really parted from them, that the problems the French state faced at that time are still very much alive. The relation France has with its ex-colonies is tricky. First, because of the way decolonization happened: in the unwillingness to let them go which triggered a bloodshed; second,

because of the relation France feels it mandatory to maintain, and of the French ghost that continues to hover above each of its ex-colonies. Having no idea how to deal with the mass of ex-colonies immigrants that settled in the country, the French state then thought it best to put everyone in the same traditional French boat so as to avoid clashes.

But the trick is that the issue doesn't lie in immigration per se: it lies in the aftermath of the decolonization process. Precisely I believe it lies in the resentment and hate that the French have towards ex-colonies citizens who moved there. Arriving en-masse in the late 60s, they settled at the peripheries of the big cities and re-formed what they had left behind: the typical bled (the hometown). Speaking their language, living their religion, eating their food, doing their business, this complete new way of life shocked die-hard French. Quickly then, immigrants from ex-colonies were targeted by the police, were accused of stealing jobs from the French, and were pushed away into “modern” ghettos, those huge areas of high-rise blocks of council flats. Sadly but quite logically, it created fierce reaction among them, which led to more hate from both sides.

Years have passed, Presidents followed one another, and yet nothing has changed. French-born people still refuse to acknowledge other cultures and religions, and fear the Black/Arab youth while the latter feel rejected and out of the society. Yet, I believe things could be changed. I mean, I just don't see how the actual situation – everyone on the same level of laïcité – does any good to France: it gives less freedom to people who “physically” practice their religion, which leads to more frustration and tensions; it triggers a false feeling of legitimacy among French-born people, who feel they have more rights than ex-colonies citizens; this to only demonstrate the supremacy of the traditional Christian

France over any other kind. But why couldn't Muslim wear their own clothes, why couldn't they practice freely their religion (i.e. street prayers) and speak their own language? I'm sure most of the people find it shocking and disturbing to see an Arabic girl wearing the hijab. But would they be as shocked to see an Indonesian girl wearing it?

My point is, French people have bore so much grudge in the past decades because of the mass-immigration from the ex-colonies that it has genuinely become a natural thing to distrust and suspect all Blacks and Arabs. You think I'm wrong? Then why do Blacks or Arabs always get their identity checked in the metro, whereas other foreign-origin (I won't even talk about White) people don't? It all comes down to that. It is all these historical causes that are responsible for the current plagues that hit France. And it is certainly not a divergence of religion, culture or language (as the French don't mind Pakistanis or Chinese for instance) but a divergence of power: they colonized and now, in a certain way, they are colonized.

But the French should know by now (thankfully some do) that their country is not a one-religion one-culture state anymore. It has and still is evolving toward a multicultural and multi-religion state that, if only tolerance and equality weren't missing, would set a wonderful example for the rest of the world. So let's only hope that the new President will bring winds of change in France, so as to put the past behind, at last.

I've been wondering lately why France is having such a hard time dealing with immigration and multiculturalism. When I compare my country with England, where I lived last year, I see all the many differences that oppose them. Sure, England is no saint, it has its issues as well, especially lately regarding alleged police racism. But what stroke me is the way it deals with “ex-colonies” citizens. When I look

at England, I think of the cultural and religious diversity at Universities, or at the Sikh policemen who proudly wear their turban, and most importantly, are allowed to. But when I look at France, all I think about is the law that bans wearing ostentatious religious signs in public schools (and which clearly focuses on the Muslim veil, let's face it) or the headscarf ban that was implemented last year and that forbids all full headscarf public wearing.

For democracy and laïcité, says the French state. For the greater good of the French Republic. Greater good, you said? What greater good? Liberté, égalité, fraternité, proclaims the national motto of the République française. Would this be equality, then? Ensuring to shape all citizens in the same French image, thus banning all foreign signs? But then, why do French people have a problem with Blacks and Arabs but not with, say Asians and Latinos?

It's been decades, very long and painful decades, that France has split up with its colonies. And yet, it feels like it has never really parted from them, that the problems the French state faced at that time are still very much alive. The relation France has with its ex-colonies is tricky. First, because of the way decolonization happened: in the unwillingness to let them go which triggered a bloodshed; second, because of the relation France feels it mandatory to maintain, and of the French ghost that continues to hover above each of its ex-colonies. Having no idea how to deal with the mass of ex-colonies immigrants that settled in the country, the French state then thought it best to put everyone in the same traditional French boat so as to avoid clashes.

But the trick is that the issue doesn't lie in immigration per se: it lies in the aftermath of the decolonization process. Precisely I believe it lies in the resentment and hate that the French have towards ex-colonies citizens who moved there. Arriving en-masse in the late 60s, they settled at the peripheries of the big cities and re-formed what they had left

behind: the typical bled (the hometown). Speaking their language, living their religion, eating their food, doing their business, this complete new way of life shocked die-hard French. Quickly then, immigrants from ex-colonies were targeted by the police, were accused of stealing jobs from the French, and were pushed away into "modern" ghettos, those huge areas of high-rise blocks of council flats. Sadly but quite logically, it created fierce reaction among them, which led to more hate from both sides.

Years have passed, Presidents followed one another, and yet nothing has changed. French-born people still refuse to acknowledge other cultures and religions, and fear the Black/Arab youth while the latter feel rejected and out of the society. Yet, I believe things could be changed. I mean, I just don't see how the actual situation – everyone on the same level of laïcité – does any good to France: it gives less freedom to people who "physically" practice their religion, which leads to more frustration and tensions; it triggers a false feeling of legitimacy among French-born people, who feel they have more rights than ex-colonies citizens; this to only demonstrate the supremacy of the traditional Christian France over any other kind. But why couldn't Muslim wear their own clothes, why couldn't they practice freely their religion (i.e. street prayers) and speak their own language? I'm sure most of the people find it shocking and disturbing to see an Arabic girl wearing the hijab. But would they be as shocked to see an Indonesian girl wearing it?

My point is, French people have bore so much grudge in the past decades because of the mass-immigration from the ex-colonies that it has genuinely become a natural thing to distrust and suspect all Blacks and Arabs. You think I'm wrong? Then why do Blacks or Arabs always get their identity checked in the metro, whereas other foreign-origin (I won't even talk about White) people don't? It all comes down to that. It is all these historical causes that are

responsible for the current plagues that hit France. And it is certainly not a divergence of religion, culture or language (as the French don't mind Pakistanis or Chinese for instance) but a divergence of power: they colonized and now, in a certain way, they are colonized.

But the French should know by now (thankfully some do) that their country is not a one-religion one-culture state anymore. It has and still is evolving toward a multicultural and multi-religion state that, if only tolerance and equality weren't missing, would set a wonderful example for the rest of the world. So let's only hope that the new President will bring winds of change in France, so as to put the past behind, at last.

Cécile Viault, France 2012

“Europeanized” education

Taking into consideration many political (more or less) gossips, the European Union is neither a global power, nor a power in decline. The European Union is transforming and developing into a powerful influence. In my opinion, there are three global powers: The United States, China and Russia – maybe India's on its way to being one.

Europe had to be its own general manager, and in 1957 the founding members of the community, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and West Germany, figured that out for the first time.

When the United States and Russia decided in 1945 at Yalta to divide our continent, I bet Europeans were starving for a bit of decisional power. As I was saying, since 1957, the European Union began to work out in order to develop agriculture, environment, energy, job placement, education and many others. First of all, the only domain I could refer to is the educational one. Let's not forget the PISA program –

me and its aim to raise the level of the European education – in comparison to the worldwide education – by evaluating mathematics and reading skills to those under 15 years old.

Second of all, the European Union carries on the Lifelong Learning programme that is Erasmus, Comenius, Grundtvig and Leonardo da Vinci as sub-programmes and Youth in Action programme. The EU's investments are about €5 billion for 2007–2013, all spent on study visits, student exchanges, seminars, trainings, courses and all sorts of social activities.

Third of all, nowadays, we can afford to study abroad, free of charge or very cheap! Two of these European countries are Denmark (no fees at all for EU member states) and the Netherlands (€1600 per year for EU member states), or Belgium and France (€400–€1000). The European Union also supports Bologna process, which is useful for a “Europeanized” education.

I conclude by saying that in 2011, we can proudly say that things have changed: the European Union gives every member state the chance to travel without visas, to cooperate concerning social, political, economical, environmental issues, it allocates European funds to every educational programme or any type of business idea, think-tanks, lobby and the list can easily continue.

Ada Barbu, Romania 2012

Bilingualism – advantages & disadvantages

Once upon a sunny day in Vienna when I was walking the Mariahilfer Street happened something intriguing. While going the street across me and a little boy passed each other quickly. Well, I do not try to get you think passing people each other is something fascinating, but while running after the mother this little child called her with a great accent: ‘Mom, don't go so schnell, I want some ice cream haben!’. My first impression was: WOW. I've never even heard a child speaking two languages in one sentence. Imagine, how his young little mind has to work to make something like that and it even makes a literally sense. I was too curious to let this wonder be. Irresistible curiosity told me to ask the mother. The thing was the child is bilingual.

Bilingualism it's where a person grows up in a family where parents come from another nations. Because of every parent who may speak to the child in their own mother tongue, it knows two languages automatically. In result, a child is able to speak more than one language and has two languages as its mother tongue.

Language bilingualism has also many advantages. Firstly, bilingual people speak two languages which come them easy and naturally without learning it by heart at school.

Such language ability is also ‘taken’ in the childhood with mother's milk. Moreover, there's always a possibility to practise a skill with a native speaker. What's surprising, it has been discovered that bilingualism improves peoples curiosity and concentration. Furthermore, human brain builds the majority of nerves in the childhood so bilingual children are mostly smarter, clever and learn more successfully than other children at school. There's no wonder that such language knowledge is very useful by getting understood abroad without any misunderstanding and mistakes. And at last – bilingualism can also be increase a chance by a job interview and help finding a better job.

In some situations those advantages can be also turned to disadvantages. Because of such plurality there's a danger that any language will be spoken fluently. From the linguistic side there may be a lack of f.ex. vocabulary. Some bilingual people think in two languages so it cannot always come easy to speak a language like a native. There's always this second language in which thoughts are made so it takes relatively more time to make sentences correctly and answer precisely. It can also make big difficulties at school learning orthography or grammar. What's more, such children may be sometimes discriminated because of their linguistic dissimilarity which actually leads to even more problems.



Nowadays, thanks to the needs of globalisation, cultural openness and the ease of access to information acquaintance with foreign languages is becoming a social phenomenon. That's why, bilingualism, as a natural skill is something valuable these days. In my view bilingual people should make the maximal use of their ability because it's a very valuable skill which belongs to rarities.

Well, and who doesn't want to have easier right from the start?

Adriana Dankiewicz, Poland 2011

21 words that cannot be translated

Find it harder and harder to locate a relatable knowledge base that can provide solid academic ground for research (or the result of other people research) while maintaining a close to the young approach.

"TED-ideas worth spreading" has been around since 1984 as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design and has naturally expanded into a global community with content of high quality on all related fields.

The two annual TED conferences, in Long Beach or Palm Springs and in Edinburgh, Scotland, bring together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives in 18 minutes or less. The result of this clash is often amazing and I have found myself on many nights tucked under the blanket with a hot beverage in one hand, a pen in the other and TED talks in my ears.

On the weekend before the latest TEDGlobal (June 24, 2012 in Edinburgh, Scotland) 22 volunteer translators got together for a quick workshop and made a list of 21 untranslatable words.

The list is fascinating in its diversity and the phenomenon of having untranslatable words tells a story about culture,

history and specificity, although I am sure it can be explained by anthropologists better.

The full word list has received the name of "21 Words Worth Spreading" and can be found below:

Dutch: pretoogjes: 'fun-eyes', the eyes of a chuckling person who is up to some benign mischief

Polish: bakalie: any dried fruit, nuts, and candied citrus peel used in baking or added to ice cream

Croatian: milozvučan: having a voice that sounds nice and sweet

Serbian: мeпaк: pleasure derived from simple joys, such as spending time feasting and merrymaking

Norwegian: dugnad: a planned (semi-)volunteer work session in/for a community or local interest group

Spanish: sobremesa: the time spent after lunch or dinner, talking to people you shared the meal with

French: savoir-être: knowing-how-to-be, soft skills, the relational equivalent of savoir-vivre

Czech: panenka: a trick to confuse your opponent, named after Panenka's surprising penalty in the 1976 European Championship

Bulgarian: чарoдeй: an arch-Bulgarian wizard, magician, sorcerer, necromancer, enchanter

Russian: тьмyтaрaкaнь: the back of beyond, the middle of nowhere, the underdeveloped depths of the country

Greek: φιλoтuмo: 'friend-honour,' to respect and honour your friends, the quintessence of Greeks

Italian: fattappaста: 'made-on-purpose': passkey of Italian conversation, can mean any object, especially when clarified by a gesture

Thai: tɛəj: sincere kindness and willingness to help others, even before they asked, without expecting something in return

Japanese: いただきます: a phrase to start a meal with gratitude to all: from cooks and farmers to lives to be eaten

Swedish: mångata: a roadlike reflection of the moon in the water

Klingon: Qapla': "Success" or "good luck" often used as an exclamation or in parting ("farewell")

Latin: aemulatio: Roman alternative to plagiarism: to show respect for literary predecessors by delivering an improved version of their work

Arabic: mo:ru:ʕ: the peak of manhood, a mixture of bravery and kindness

Chinese: yù: jade, a five-stroke character representing five virtues: benevolence, righteousness, bravery, wisdom, trustworthiness

Armenian: խախքա: 'cross-stone', a carved, memorial stele bearing a cross

Urdu: goya: a contemplative "as-if" which nonetheless feels like reality

I have made it into a personal goal to get to talk with a native of the mentioned nationalities and have them explain in their own words what I am missing out on, a sort of a linguistic bucket list If you may. Can you think of words in your language that would be hard if not impossible to translate?

Sabina David, Romania 2012

As a human being remember that you share a common destiny with other people

Κοινή γαρ η τύχη και το μέλλον άόρατον» «As.. fate is common and the future invisible»

Our era is characterized by large disparities even when technological development is rapid. This kind of develop-

ment has helped some parts of the world to live in prosperity. And I am not referring to the, lately multi-advertized, (especially in the Land of Falseness) 1% of the population, the high-tec wealth-accumulator, but to significant large parts of the world population, which saw their living standards to rise sharply.

At this point I differentiate from the beloved aphorisms of journalists, academics and coffeehouse habitués, who claim that always the rich get richer and the poor poorer. This view is probably based on obsolete economic conditions simply not existing any more in our world, as I explain below.

For centuries the technological development all around the world has been just too slow, the productivity growth as well. Standards of living of a Western Europe citizen in the Middle Ages was remotely differing from those of an ancient Athens inhabitant. The increase in real income between years 1 AD and 1600 is estimated at only 50%, followed by frequent variations in periods of wars, invasions, epidemics or natural disasters.

This situation combined with the lack of individual rights protection, means that in those times the game of acquiring wealth was often zero-sum. Paraphrasing Hobbes, people's life was consistently nasty, brutish and short and the only exit from this fate was connected with injustice towards others. To become rich someone else was forced to become poor.

Very often was noticed the phenomenon the rich to gather power and get richer, at the expense of the poor which became poorer. Kings were leading an easy life, people were suffering. Kings wanted to grow their kingdom to ensure greater riches; thousands of people were losing their lives in the relevant wars.

Our world has changed a lot though. Since the Industrial Revolution and afterwards, we have done huge leaps for-

ward in productivity, technological development and wealth produced in the world, both per capita and in total. The average real income in Western Europe has risen from 1600 to 2003 by 22.2 times, i.e. 2,220%! An average Western citizen enjoys an inconceivable material wealth; his life being richer than the life of the past kings.

A simple and understandable example is how scarce toilets were at the Versailles (!!!) while in a modern house the non-existence of at least one toilet is not even considered as a possibility. (Not to mention the possibility of constant hot water provision, electricity, cars, mobile phones, satellites, internet, heating, etc.). Even in the -so-called -Third World the income growth has been, lower, but nonetheless, impressive.

But alongside the rapid technological development, there have been some institutional changes that allowed this technological development to be reflected on the consequent increase in living standards of the many. Changes and variations in systems (political and economic), mainly through revolutions and wars, which are the locomotives of human history, managed to reduce the personal regimes and the lawless exploitation by castes of "bio-rulers", progressively allowing more and more people to participate in the decision-making process, hence in the wealth distribution.

Technology itself, however, brings uncertain results (typical example is atomic energy); social organization is, or, at least, should be, the guiding lever. I do not even dare to quote the huge sums spent on military equipment and means of destruction, while a large part of the world's population lives in destitution. (Compared to the "developed" part of the world, and, certainly, according to internationally recognized organizations, and common sense as well!)

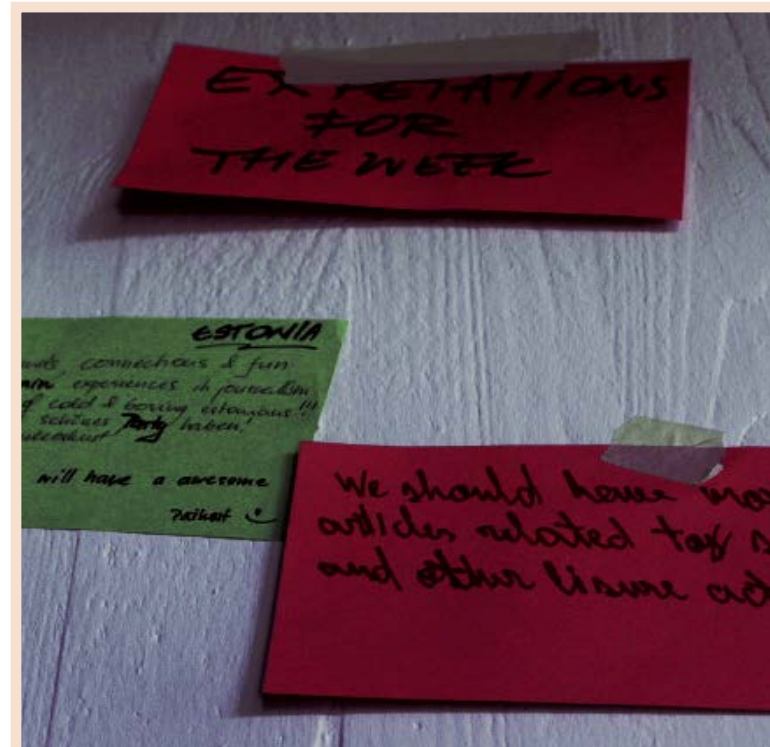
This proves that we march ahead using the wrong compass. In a world where the future is common ("Being

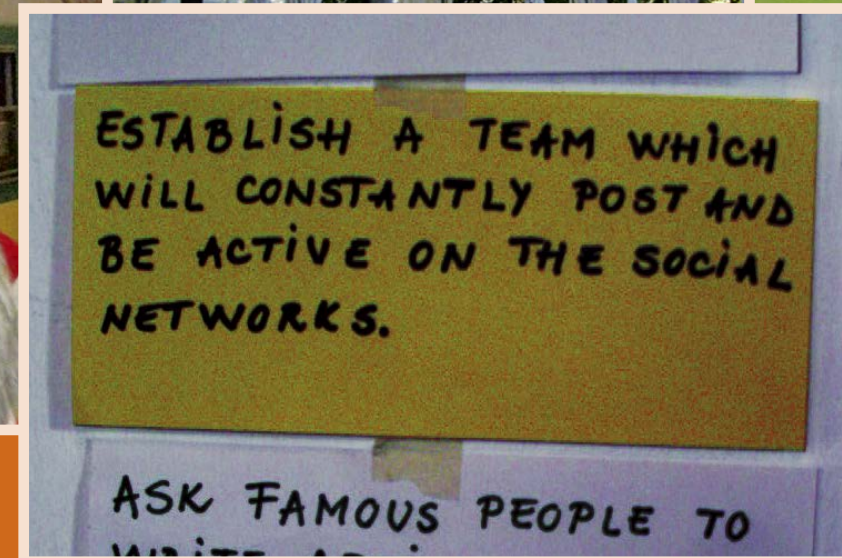
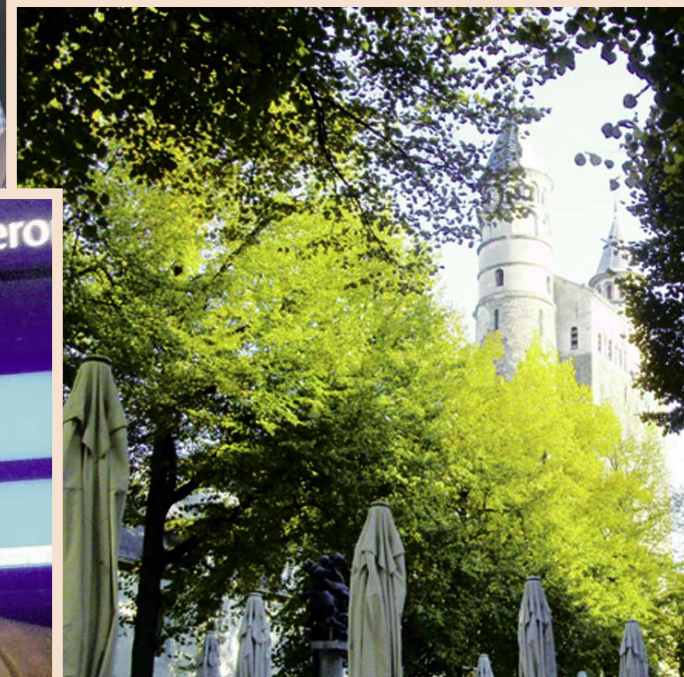
human remember that you share a common destiny with other people" see.1),it is inconceivable to aim at the destruction of those around us, either through our indifference towards their vital issues, either through the means of destruction that we develop as a major priority.

The technology therefore gives opportunities for a more humane world, but this is not possible only through technique. It's necessary to create a human-centered society. First and above all we should put man and life; in fact this is the very message that Hemingway gave us through his novel "For Whom the Bell Tolls."

We all must act, no one can remain aloof to what is going on, and we must set our priorities assuming our obligations and exercising our rights, realizing the significance of the times. The camps are obvious and everyone is summoned to pick. Ding-dong , lads, ding-dong ..

Christos Papas-Kemmydas, Greece 2012





Sport:

What is your relation to national sports?

People from different parts of the world think different things about their national sports. I asked young people from different countries of Europe about their relations to the national sports and how they feel about it.

Maria from Bulgaria – Our national and the most popular sport is certainly football. The national team does not participate in 2012 UEFA European Football Championship, but people in Bulgaria love football and hope that the Bulgarian team will be a part of the another championship.

Nicolaus from Greece – In Greece we have two most popular sports, football and basketball. Basketball is our national sport, but the most of the people like watching football. Personally, I like more basketball and my favorite team is Phanatinaikos Athens. However, I'm really glad that Greece takes part in 2012 UEFA European Football Championship.

There is one thing in the sport which I don't appreciate, e.g. a lot of very good basketball players in Greece don't want to join the national team, because it is not so profitable for them. I think this is wrong. For this reason our national team loses great players and they are so bad role model for the young players. I know it is really physically difficult for them to play in the summer, but it is still wrong attitude.

Danny from Germany – The main national sport is football, for sure, because it's the most popular sport in Germany. About 13 million people in Germany play football and we have really good football education and schools. Football is also my favorite sport. I am a big fan of FC Schalke. I think it will be very difficult for German national team to get to the final on 2012 UEFA European Football Championship, but I hope we'll get as far as possible.

Alena from Slovakia – Well, I can say that the most popular sport in Slovakia is ice hockey. However, I'm not such a big fan of sport in general, the Slovaks really enjoy the ice

hockey and this year during the IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship broke out hockey madness in Slovakia. People went out with flags in the streets to watch the matches on the big screens and really enjoyed that our national team won the silver medal.

Amadeusz from Poland – Three most popular sports in Poland are volleyball, football and handball. People in Poland are very proud of the national teams, it doesn't matter if they win or lose. People are very happy that 2012 UEFA European Football Championship takes place in Poland, it's a great chance to organise such a big event. I like more handball than football, because I'm a handball player, but still I cross my fingers for Poland at the championship.

Viktor from Czech Republic – Our national sport is ice hockey and for the Czech fans it's really important. I'm not such a big fan of ice hockey, but when our national team played final at IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship I was watching it in the pub with my friends.

Anti from Estonia – Our national sport during the winter season is definitely skiing, but there are many popular sports in the summer, e.g. football and volleyball are getting more popular. My favorite sport is snowboarding, but in the summer I also like playing volleyball.

Ada, Sabina, Bogdan from Romania – The national sport in Romania is Oină, which is the father of baseball. Very famous sports in Romania are football, gymnastic, handball and we have very successful sportsmen in diving. A lot of people in Romania are interested in football. A new football arena was opened this year. Handball and basketball is getting more popular at high schools, especially girls who don't like football can play these sports.

Michaela Lennerova, Slovakia 2012

Spot on Human Rights

Where does it lead to, when important international events take part in countries where human rights are disregarded?

Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) 2012 in Azerbaijan, UEFA championship 2012 in Ukraine, Winter Olympics 2014 in Russia and FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar. Currently the UEFA championship takes place in Poland and Ukraine and a few weeks ago the ESC was celebrated in Baku. The discussion on human rights connected to the host countries of events like that started again.

In Baku the government disregards human rights and suppresses the opposition. While the ESC took part and Europe celebrated a big party, opponents of the government got forcibly arrested by the government during peaceful protest demonstrations. Like in Baku the government of Ukraine arrests the opponents of government as well. In the prison they have bad conditions for the prisoners. Especially Julija Timoschenko, the former leader of Ukraine's government, was discussed and criticized in Europe's press. Now we are celebrating the UEFA championship there. Human rights are inviolable everywhere and for everyone.

Let's have a look in the future. Winter Olympics and FIFA World Cup in Russia, where democratic elections are not taking place in fair conditions. And in my opinion the top of the mountain is the FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022. Women have not the same rights as men and homosexuals are not allowed to live a free life. As well I think it is irresponsible that people talk about climatic effects in our world and discuss how to save the world and at the same time people decide to host a World Cup in Qatar, where stadiums will be with air condition. They will be build up in the desert and influence the nature.

For sure it is important for people in the countries to host



such important events and feel these events in their own country, but I think we are not honest to ourselves if we support nations, where human rights are not respected by giving them the host of these important events.

What do you think about that topic? Is it ok to host these events in those countries? To hear some opinions please look at the audio reports from Anti Haugas.

Danny Piel, Germany 2012

Sauna marathon in Estonia

On 12th of February something extraordinary happened in this Nordic country – people competed in going to sauna. All participants had to visit a total of 18 saunas, swim in ice-cold water and do it as fast as possible. Before the start each team was handed a map with points they had to visit. The

fastest team managed to complete the race in three hours, but there were also lads whose time passed the 10-hour mark.

This year the sauna marathon took place for the third time and hosted more than 450 sauna fans. For the organizers wonder there were even participants from places like Nepal, China and Spain. Rohan, who visited Estonia for the first time admitted that Estonians are one crazy nation and it was probably the coolest thing he has done in his whole life. Temperatures in regular Finnish sauna reached the maximum of 100°C, but the course included also a couple of steam, smoke and hot tube saunas. Every sauna visit culminated with a brief soak in an icy water.

Ancient Estonians believed saunas were inhabited by spirits. In folk tradition sauna was not only the place where one washed, but also used as the place where brides were ceremoniously washed, where women gave birth and the place where dying made their final bed. Nowadays there is

a sauna in almost every private house and people use it on every Friday or Saturday to relax from a long and hard week.

Sauna marathon was organized as a pre-event for the 63km long Tartu skiing marathon that takes place on the 19th of February in Otepää.

Anti Haugas, Estonia 2012

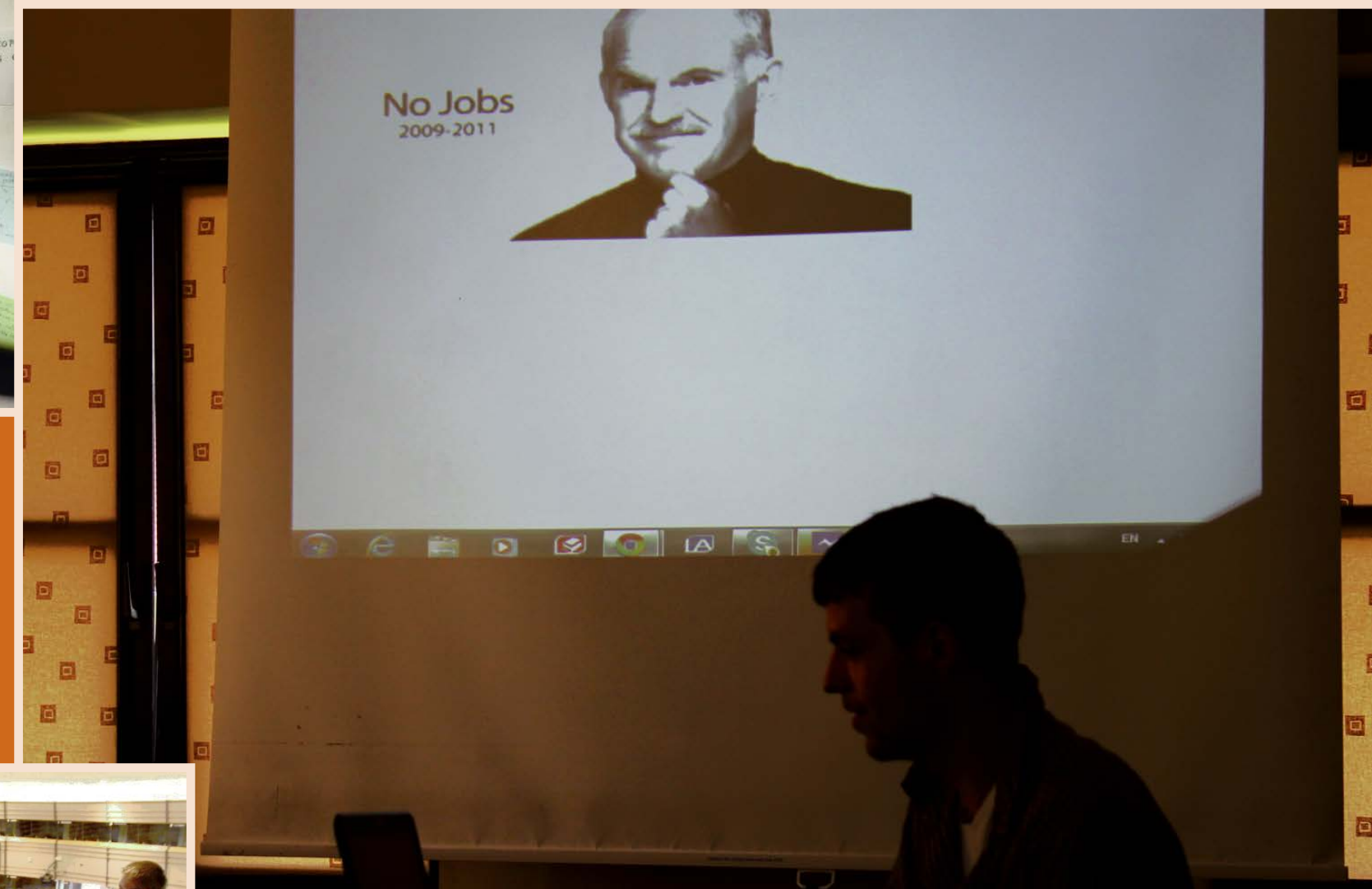
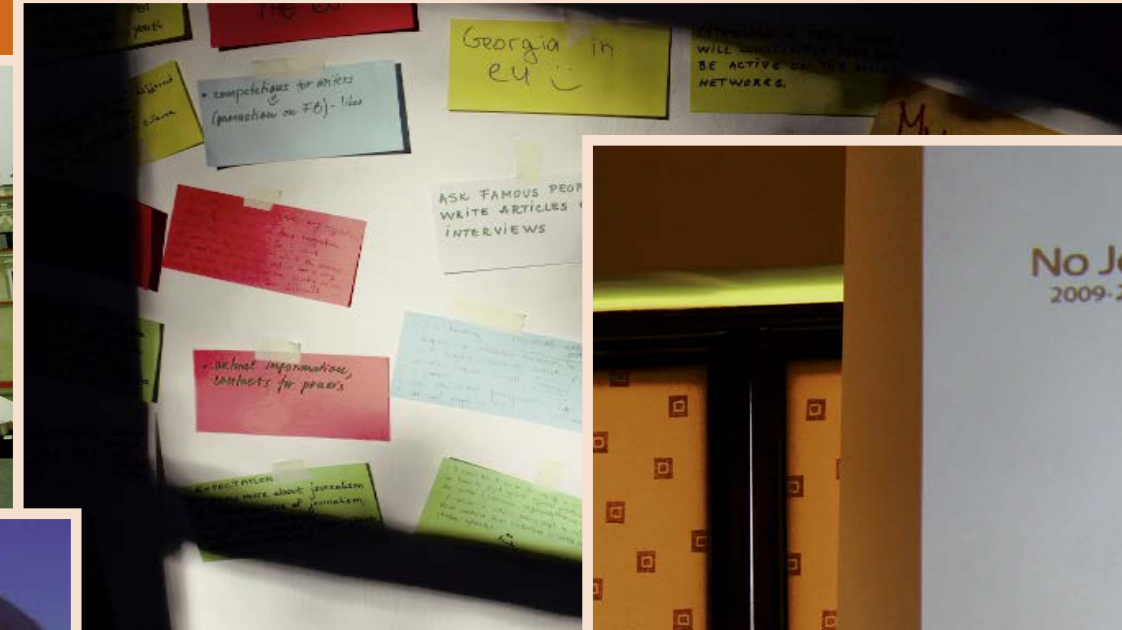
How I built my first kayak

I have been very keen of water and I liked idea about being close to water and being able to touch water from vessel I am paddling. Kayak was exactly what was able to offer me that. I didn't want to actually buy kayak, but I thought about building one. So firstly I started to look for kayak plans online and I found beautiful kayak plan: 5,5 meter S & G Night Heron. Kayak was in stitch and glue construction method, because of that kayak was pretty easy to build. The tools were very little needed. I ordered the plans and after a while I was able to study those plans and purchase all the materials I needed.

Having all the tools, materials and workplace, I started to build my kayak. It wasn't too difficult to build it, but it took some time. Due to a fact I didn't work with it every day I was able to finish my craft with 2,5 months or so. I just took it like a fun little summer project. I think everybody who are little bit interested about building kayak can do it, just with having enough research for some prior knowledge.

I think people should make more things with their own hands, because in my opinion that makes people happy when they see that they are able to do something real by themselves without always buying everything from shop.

Kalev Kriis, Estonia 2011



Studies:

What I feared most before Erasmus

Had a late night last night and had to wake up early for the 5th consecutive day to do a 10-minute errand with my fellow ERASMUS mates that couldn't wait until the afternoon. Makes me wonder whether they think everyone likes to wake up at 8am on a free day to get out of their comfortable, warm beds and go straight into the blistering cold of the German winter.

At least I won't be sleeping past breakfast, or at least I get to eat breakfast at breakfast-time for once. As I enter the kitchen I find it in a mess as is normal protocol lately. I sound the "roommate call", which is really just an exclamation of the three words: "Oh my God!" followed by the name of the accused "Samantha!" but before you can say the words "What's for breakfast?" we're having breakfast together in a still messy kitchen (procrastination galore). It could be worse. I could have a psychotic roommate who likes to cook smelly foods like fish and keep the kitchen heater on the maximum level and the kitchen windows and door closed so that the already bad smell becomes unbearable to work in.

The choice of breakfast today was a nice cool bowl of chocolate nougat cereal. I didn't need to spend much. It only cost me 2 euro from the supermarket down the road for a big 500gr box of this crunchy, delicious wake-up food. Milk doesn't vary a lot in price whether it's of a high or low quality, so it's not worth mentioning. All in all, this breakfast cost me around 3.50 euros and I've got enough cereal and milk to last me a week.

For lunch and dinner, as I'm not big on cooking myself, I like to have a good stock on bread, ham, cheese, eggs and perhaps the occasional bacon strips to fuel up in the afternoon. At dinner time, my choice of food is mainly pasta, which is not too expensive. For 1 euro you can easily find a 500gr packet of spaghetti which is enough to last 3 or 4

days. The sauce I like to add most is normal tomato sauce, and some tuna to give it some extra taste. I like to have a supply of grated cheese for my pasta, and occasionally, especially when I'm feeling down or home sick, I invest in some minced meat, garlic and onions which combined make my favorite pasta dish: Bolognese. Of course, I'm not much of a cook, and on these occasions I ask Samantha to prepare the meal. I promise to wash up afterwards, in return for her cooking for the both of us.

The cost of lunch would be around 5-7 euro per week for



bread, ham, cheese and eggs. Dinner costs me around 5-7 euro weekly also. So finally, it can be said I spend less than 20 euro per week on food. It wasn't always this cheap. I made many mistakes when shopping in the beginning of my ERASMUS experience.

I manage to keep the costs this low as I always buy the cheapest products. In Malta I don't like to buy the cheapest foods, but it's different when you're a student with a part-time job still living under your parents' roof. In Germany I had to change some things in my lifestyle. I needed to adapt, and it didn't take long as the products I would consider cheap and of low quality in Malta, do not compare to the cheap and supposedly low quality products the many supermarkets in Gelsenkirchen offer. Through the initial shopping mistakes I made in the beginning of my first experience of real independence, I learned a very important thing. The lower quality products that I purchase are of almost the same quality as the higher quality ones. As most of my purchases involve necessities like bread, milk, eggs, ham and cheese, I saved a few cents here and there from each product buy opting for the no-name product rather than for the big-name ones and this saved me tens of euro in the past 5 months.

Therefore, my first tip is that you should not dismiss low-priced products before trying them. You never know if that product is the same quality of the next product which could be 25% higher in price in many cases.

Second tip would be to always go to the supermarket with a strict list of what you need. I'm not much of an impulsive buyer, but even with a list, it is difficult to stick to it without buying something extra. This helped me a lot also in the beginning of my experience, when the product names and types were still strange to me. In this way, those products which were unsatisfactory could be listed to be avoided from re-purchasing, and those lower quality products which were satisfactory could be listed for repeat purchasing.

I haven't kept myself to a very strict budget, though I've heard that many do so in order to keep their finances under control. With the way I eat and what I choose to buy every week, spending less than 80 euro a month on food leaves a lot of money saved for other luxuries. Admittedly, my diet consists of very cheap foods so I don't truly need to budget, but I believe it depends on the personality of that person. Some people like cooking, and are patient with food. These people are those who most likely have a healthier, more expensive diet than I do. Although I like eating a lot, I'm more of an "eat-to-survive" kind of person. I prefer to reserve my money for partying in the weekend and travelling around Europe.

It will definitely be easier when I'm back in Malta, where my mother handles the buying and preparing of our everyday meals, but living alone in a foreign country for 6 months has taught me that the thing I once was most nervous for (shopping and preparing of my own food) turned out to be the least of my problems. I now know I can make it alone and if another similar opportunity comes along, I'll look forward to it with excitement, rather than count the days until I must leave my home with stomach-aching nervousness.

Jordan Bonnello, March 2012

Student life in UK

Many young people from Europe dream about studying in the UK. Cultural diversity, freedom of expression, creativity and world class modules are some of the many reasons to pick a university in the UK. But is the real life of an international student really this fun in the UK? Let's find it out!

We asked Markéta Zezulkova, originally from the Czech

Republic who studies in the UK to answer a few questions related to the topic. To begin with, let us introduce Markéta; she is 24 years old and already holds two MAs (with distinctions) in Advertising and Marketing Communications from Bournemouth University (England) and Tomas Bata University in Zlin (Czech Republic). As a part of her Czech master degree she has also spent a whole semester studying Advertising Creativity at the prestigious Sup De Pub in Paris. She is currently a PhD student at the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice (The Media School, Bournemouth University). She has been awarded with a three years full scholarship to conduct a research on the Philosophy of Media Education that focuses on media education of primary school children growing up in different cultures.

Why have you decided to study in UK? Why not in any other country?

Originally I wanted to do a master degree in the USA, however, the process of applying, selecting, and scholarships required are complicated and long and I wanted to be able to start my masters immediately after finishing my bachelor's degree. After thorough research I found the perfect course at Bournemouth University and to add cherry to the cake, the place is located in a seaside coast. The fact that the master's degree in the UK are only for one year also helped my decision to pick the UK over other choices.

Do you think people in UK are friendly to foreigners?

I cannot judge how English people behave towards all foreigners in general but I can say that on the South of UK people have always been extremely nice to me and my other foreign friends be it the local shops, transports, leisure centres, walk on the street and mainly at the university. Our tutors were always empathetic of the fact that it is hard for an international student to leave behind their family



and friends to live and study in a new country and they offer a very personalised academic support tailored to each student. However, I have to say that it is a bit harder with young English people who tend to avoid contact with us and rather stick together, but of course, not all of them. Some of them are amazingly kind and helpful.

What took you the most time to get used to?

In my academic life, the biggest challenge was to re-orientate myself to critical and reflective thinking instead of

descriptive one to which I was led in the Czech Republic. It was hard work to begin with but it didn't take me too long because Czech educational system taught me to study hard and strategically organize my work To prepare myself I borrowed many books, read several articles, looked at previous students' works and that helped me learn a lot quicker. Now I love critical and reflective thinking!

In every day life, what is still hard for me to understand is a simple and very common everyday greeting "how are you?". Normally in my home country these questions are very reflective and we tend to go into detail discussions. In the UK, however, the question is not meant to be personal and people generally expect a short answer back rather than a long. I find it strange and I use to feel stupid to have such a conversation (laughs).

What character property of English people annoys you the most?

There is nothing that annoys me in particular but the thing that concerns me the most is how young British teenagers dress and drink without any concern for responsibility! They say that young eastern Europeans drink a lot but I feel we are much more responsible than young British people.

Why should students study masters or PhD in the UK?

What is one of the biggest contribution to both personal and professional life is the international environment offered by the majority of the UK universities. You meet people from so many different cultures which forces you to rethink all your learnt behaviours and current views on many major issues such as life values or life style.

Tutors and supervisors are another important element. From my own experience, they are very kind, supportive and friendly but at the same time very strict and one can gain a lot of knowledge and skills. Curriculums are well-established, teaching is learner-centered, and there are always many opportunities to develop additional skills.

At the PhD level, what I enjoy the most is a possibility to work on my own project but with a big support from my supervisors and colleagues.. In addition to this, there is a constant encouragement to publish new work, present at conferences, and an opportunity to teach which is however not obligatory. I simple love it!

Last but not the least, very generous scholarships that are available also to international students. I would say that the doors of British higher education are open to everyone who is passionate about their subject, who is hard working and ready to devote every free time to reading, researching and writing. But also to be honest, it has been a lot of fun too and I would never change my opinion to come and study here.

What would you recommend to those interested in applying to British universities?

There are few main rules which help a lot!! Having good marks, interest in extra curricula activities, self motivation, precisely written application, and of course financial sources to pay the fees and living expenses. Nevertheless, there are many many other things about which I could talk for hours (laughs).

Markéta said she is always happy to answer all questions and give recommendations. So do not hesitate to post a comment if you are interested in studying in the UK, or even in the Czech Republic or France. Each educational system has their pros and cons and it is reasonable enough to find out as much as you can in advance before applying anywhere. So do not hesitate to post a comment if you are interested in studying in the UK, or even in the Czech Republic or France.

I hope some of you find this article helpful and I wish you the best of luck in your future studies, work, and life

Barbora Heresová, Czech Republic 2011

Say yes to EVS

Usually when something is over we've got so many questions like "And now what? What's next?". I asked myself the same question after my graduation. And now what? What's next? When we have just finished school we also ask the same. We all are wondering what we want to study, to work, but may be after the university you really realize that you're adult and this makes everything quite complicated. The first piece of mind is "Oh my God, I am a grown up person!", but then you realize that "adult" or "grown up" doesn't mean "old" and there is no case to be old. Actually you think that you're just grown up, but adult... I don't think so.

I had the same dilemma after my graduation. The problem is that you have studied for something 4 years after then you realize that perhaps this "something" isn't yours. It is more complicated if you have to think about your Master's degree. What Master's degree could I choose if I'm not sure that my Bachelor's degree was what I really wanted to study? And for one moment you find a light in your mind which is not connected with what you want to study... In fact, the point is to find yourself.

Actually one of the most important things in our lives is exactly to find yourself. What I mean, my point is you can't continue with nothing in your life if you are not clear with yourself. I saw how important is. And my first "crash" with this was after my Graduation.

It happened that I went to a seminar in France, where I met one Bulgarian volunteer and she had chosen Montpellier for her EVS. Then I decided to ask her to tell me more about EVS. EVS or European Voluntary Service offers young Europeans the chance to make a real difference to the world and to their own lives – through the European Voluntary Service. The European Voluntary Service (EVS) provides young people with the unique chance to express their

personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country within or outside the EU. In this way, it seeks to develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance among young people, thus contributing to reinforcing social cohesion in the European Union and to promoting young people's active citizenship. After all I heard I made my personal point of view that EVS was exactly what I had been searching for and could help me to find myself and to become aware of what I really wanted to do. Evgeniya, the Bulgarian volunteer in France, told me about her experience, difficulties, the good and the bad moments. She told me about how many new people she had met there and that she had explored the French culture very closely. Her words made me understand that "my place" wasn't my place and I probably needed that kind of adventure.

I was thinking about what would be the most interesting for me and with what I could be helpful if I become a volunteer. It wasn't difficult for me. I can work with children with health problems like epilepsy. I am also an epileptic and for the last 8 years I have been searching for more and more information about all the medical and non-medical methods of healing and what could be helpful for the children with epilepsy to become more sociable, communicative and the most important thing, to make them feel not sick and not rejected. I decided that I have got the basic and maybe the most important– I know what I want to do and can do as a volunteer and I started to search. My first wish was Italy. But in one moment I started to participate in seminars and conferences too often and there I met volunteers from other countries, and I realized that I want so much to be a volunteer. And then...we came here in Aachen as participants in this seminar in the field of jour-

nalism. Groups with young people from seven countries, visits to Maastricht, Brussels, Cologne, Bonn! Amazing experience, but totally changed my first wish about EVS in Italy.

At this moment I'm writing this article from the room where we all are doing the same thing. I'm watching the participants and I'm wondering that may be Germany is my inspiration or may be I feel the nostalgia because this is our last day in Aachen all together. I'm wondering that maybe it is because of the people and different cultures. For sure all that makes me feel more confident than I have never been before about what I really want, but my inspiration is still Evgeniya – the girl who was in France for four months, but changed my life only for four days.

Ivelina Todorova, Bulgaria 2011

My EVS in France

France is famous for its refined wines, delicious cheese, castles and culture. What I discovered, however, is that France is much more than that. I went there as an EVS

Volunteer in a small town in the south of France – Ganges and spent 4 months there this spring.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) is a programme of the EU that gives all young Europeans between 18 and 30 years, the chance to live and work as volunteers in another country for a period of 2–12 months. Being interested in French culture and speaking fluent French, I decided to go to France and get closer to its day-to-day life. I worked in Social-cultural Center Agantic which proposed different activities for people of all ages and I was lucky to find friendly working environment. Being a Psychology graduate, I was interested to be part of this center and apply in practice what I had been studying in the university.

During the 4 months I spent there I met interesting people, travelled a lot around France and had a lot of fun with other volunteers in that region. My roommate Alexandra was also a volunteer from Spain and she brought the spirit of Spain in our home. So, I had the chance to get to know two different cultures at the same time – French and Spanish.

I feel that the best effect of my EVS experience is what I



have learned. I became more self-dependent, got used to working and living in international environment and communicate with people of all kinds of national and ethnical background.

If you want to go abroad, meet a lot of new people, learn a new language or practice the ones you already speak, and have an unforgettable experience, I recommend that you become an EVS volunteer. It is totally worth it and is a once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity.

Evgenia Meserdzhieva, Bulgaria 2011

Life of a Computer Science student in Estonia.

We, Estonians are proud of our IT accomplishments. When we meet a foreigner then one of the first things we usually say to somehow position ourselves is that “We made the Skype”. That’s true and we also have properly working e-government, e-banking etc.

Life seems to be all like flowers and rainbows as we have internet everywhere and everything can be done online.



That puts a lot of pressure on developers and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) students as expectations and demand for more is high.

I am in my final year in Bachelors studies in Computer Sciences (basically same as IT) in University of Tartu and I can tell you that it has not been easy two years. Not because of the curricula but because of the education system and the environment.

First point, education system, is easy to explain: if one studies well enough to get scholarship then you would assume that life is manageable without going to work during school. Scholarship though is 55,93€ per month – that will only get you fed for that period. But you also have to live somewhere (cheapest way if you don’t live with parents is dormitory – 95€ per month) and I personally would like to visit my parents at least twice or thrice a month (bus tickets in total ~30€, though transportation compensation from government in 28,13€, so that will do). To manage while studying well one does still have to work/get money from parents/take a study loan. For me, to start adulthood with taking a loan sounds quite wrong, but this is the way the government sees it to be right I guess.

The second point, environment, is quite well linked with the first point. Student would need money from parents or go to work to manage somehow during studies. Fortunately or unfortunately there are a lot of companies that are in need for more IT personal and students are tempted by them from the first year in University (mailing list full of job offers and posters in faculty building). Of course from a glimpse it looks good – students need the money and place to work and they are offered that. The dark side of the situation is that as students are well enough paid (though the numbers would not satisfy them years later), they start losing interest in studying and don’t finish Bachelors studies because of that. Some statistics – in last few last years around 20% ICT students finish their Bachelors with nominal 3-years. That though leads to lack of true IT professionals which is the problem that originally University was supposed to eliminate.

Although as ICT students don’t have to worry about their financial future, they have to make choices from the first year of their studies. Unfortunately in larger perspective one has to choose between bad and worse until changes are made in the system.

Pätris Halapuu, Estonia 2012

Having a job while studying

It is very common among students that when they go to collage, to also get a job. Before you start one it is very wise to personally analyze both negative and positive sides which can affect your studying and further life. All depends grandly on how many hours you have to work and on that how much a person can take.

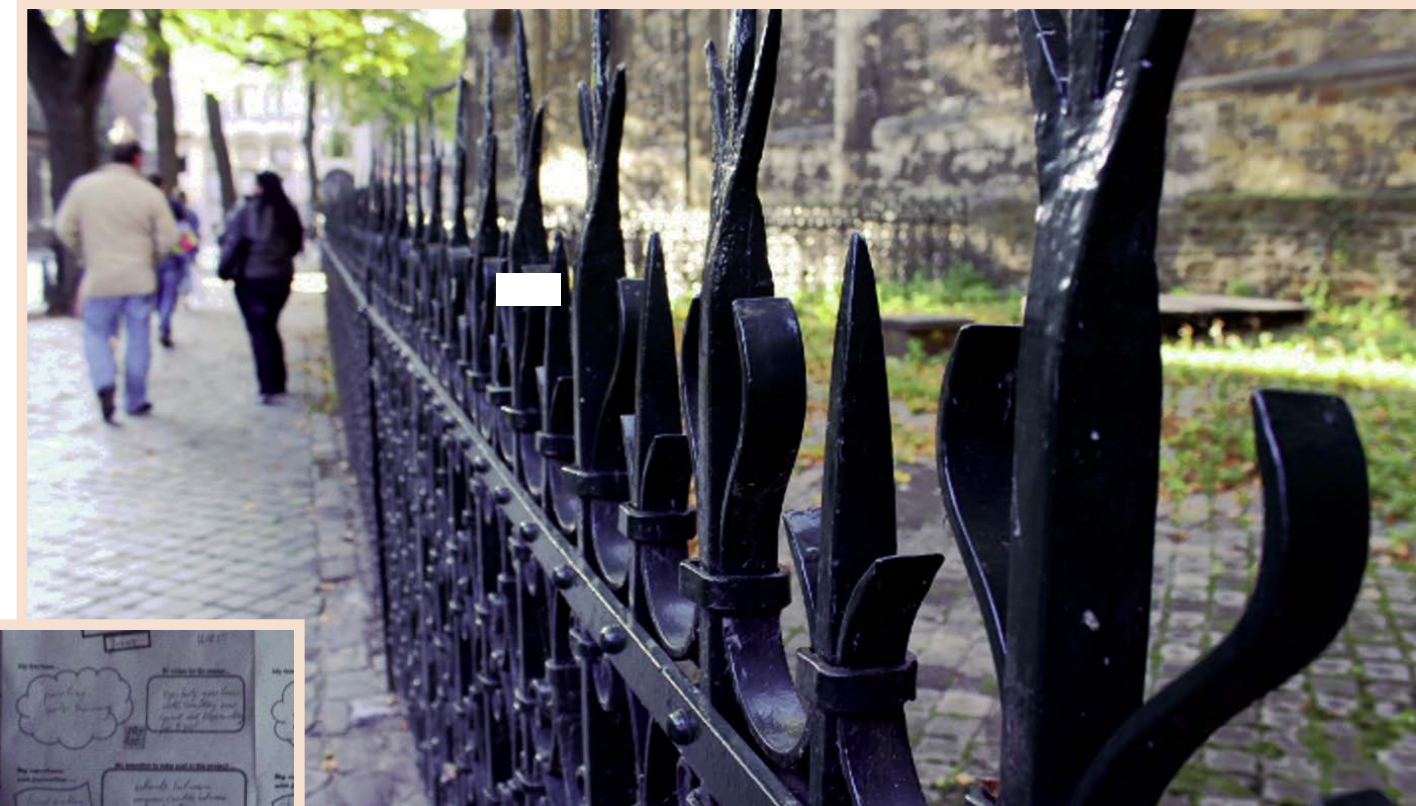
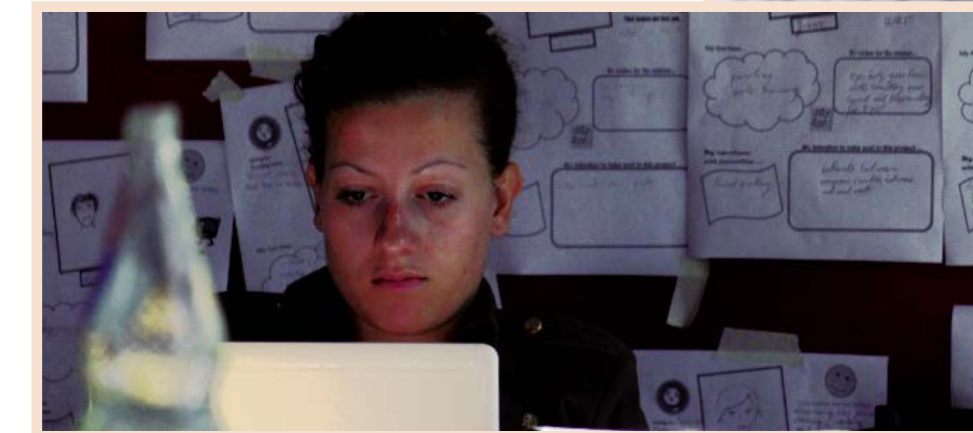
Firstly, people say that a part time job is very good if you want to have more freedom to decide what to do with your

own money and how to use it. It is also much easier to calculate with money in the future because you learn how to use it, but you probably also have your parents supporting you, if you can’t handle your own money. Secondly, you get experience of working and it is easier to find a job when you finish school. Employers look at your c.v. and see that you have been working before and they see that you are able to do your job.

Negative sides could be that you may not be able to handle all this stress and lack of time which you might get. When you get back from work, then you are too tired to study and you might miss the deadlines. Secondly, you might get socially isolated when you have such a planned dayschedule that you aren’t able to communicate with your classmates and friends.

To conclude, it really depends on the person itself, if he or she is able to handle all these things that need to be done and if the person is decent enough to keep things in school well done because if you are in college then studying is the main thing to do, not working.

Margot Tiru, Estonia 2012





Travel:

Você fala Português? – Do you speak Portuguese?

10,332 km. 6 months. From “winter wonderland” Germany to hot Brazil. A dream of many he has dared: Florian Roscheck packed his suitcase and went to Florianopolis for a semester to study there and to learn about the country and the people.

Florian is sitting on his sofa. In front of him is a glass of orange juice, breakfast sandwiches with a chocolate-coated cheese-spread, prepared to eat. The brown hair of the 22-year-old engineering student is disheveled, his dark eyes shine. “The only thing I really missed in Brazil: German Bread” He bites into it and smiles happily.

*** An idea was born ***

It all started several years ago with a friend of Florian, a native Brazilian. Florian always was fascinated by the culture and lifestyle. When he was given an opportunity to go abroad for a semester, he seized it. He says, “It was not easy. I’m kind of a pioneer because I’m the first exchange student in a long time from Gelsenkirchen at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC),” a Brazilian partner-university of FH Gelsenkirchen.

All the old contacts with professors didn’t exist anymore. “No one could help me, I was forced to find contact-partners on my own.” Through a German social network he found students who went to UFSC for a semester abroad and one of them gave him a professor’s phone number. “There were formalities to follow in order to do it anytime, anywhere. Not only did I have to get the permission of the university in Brazil and the FH Gelsenkirchen, but also from my employer Siemens.”

When the “GO!” came from all sides, the only problem was the language barrier. A Portuguese language course to learn the basics of the language was indispensable.

***Summer 2010: Adeus Alemanha! ***

After arriving in Florianopolis and after the initial eupho-

ria, the joy of anticipation and the curiosity for something new went and the first shock came through: the apartment which was rented by a friend was under construction. “Sure, it was a stupid situation and I was pretty frustrated. But burying my head in the sand wouldn’t have helped anyway. So I went off on my own and was happy to find a room in a really nice shared apartment.”

The 22-year-old is thinking and then confirms that it was really frustrating but the only moment like this of the whole trip. “I went there from a foreign country; my life in Germany



was completely different compared to my life in Brazil. So I just could not expect that everything runs like it did at home.”

The best, for everything that has paid off

Florian didn’t only collect many impressions, images and experiences in these six months. “My friends are especially dear to my heart.”

Brazilian songs quietly sounding from the music system in

his kitchen in Germany, the potted palm tree in his apartment exudes a touch of the exotic. Florian speaks softly, he squints as the sun streams through the window. You can feel the wanderlust and the desires that seize him again as he says: “There’s much of Germany and the behavior of German people which I only realized after I went away.” Especially when it comes to the expression of emotions and feelings: “Brazilian people are way more emotional than the Germans. In a positive way and in a negative way.”

Something missing: German order

Florian was surprised that he missed the tendency of the Germans to organize everything. “For example: if I went to a Brazil supermarket, I felt very bad. I will never complain again about a slow cashier in Germany.” He laughs loudly. “Generally you have to wait in Brazil. And wait. And wait even longer.”

Demanding studies

Then there were a few small problems with his studies. Not only all courses were held in Portuguese. Also the Brazil exam rating system was much stricter than he was used to it in Germany. “At the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina you passed the exam if you could answer 60% of tasks correctly. These were quite difficult already, but I passed all my courses.”

Return to Germany

“Before you start such a trip as I did, you only think of how it will be when you are finally there. Which is understandable. But there is no warning of how it will be when you come back home again.” Sometimes he felt like he didn’t fit in here anymore. “Sometimes I miss the exciting life there.” His family thinks he is more mature than before. “I cannot judge it. But I realized that I became more relaxed.” He smiles mischievously and tugs at his white T-shirt with large letters on it: “Floripa” the nickname of the city of Florianopolis. And his eyes look longingly into the distance again. “In October I will fly back for three weeks. I can’t wait.”

Silke, Germany 2011

Upside down

Upside down: sun in the north at noon, driving on the left side and closer to Antarctica than to the North Pole. My best holidays I ever had led me to a place 18.000 km away from home. Rainforest, coasts, national parks, geysers, rivers, mountains, wekas, penguins, sea lions and kiwis: New Zealand.

A beautiful country where I wanted to go since I have seen pictures from this place on the other side of the world. After eight months preparation and with a lot of travel nerves, finally I set off to New Zealand last November for a three weeks road trip. As pictures can describe the beauty of this diverse country better than words, enjoy the slide show.

Nadja Kemper, Germany 2012

Pre-Departure Stress

3½ days left to departure and I feel my head spinning, steadily I am falling a bit into panic. Mainly because in the last 2 weeks I’ve been hearing non-stop the question: So you’re going one month in Europe A-L-O-N-E? And you know, at first is nice, funny but I began asking myself: am I completely Coo-Coo? Of course, I know that my parents went bananas and wanted to tie a GPS to my ankle, but is it that bad to go alone? Many great characters that I have read had travelled alone (like Goethe with his Italian Journey, or Mark Twain). This had for them a character of initiations in life and brought them memories that would guide them throughout their lives.

I get bumble bees rumbling in my stomach every time I think of Monday. It surely will be a first experience, but I trust more

than anything my gut and holy instinct. Due to them, I escaped getting shot in the Bronx and Harlem in NY and a slight abduction in India. Europe should be a piece of cake, right?

Below I give you my travel route:

Bochum (via St. Gallen)->Konstanz -> Zürich – Vienna – Venice – Rome – Nice – Barcelona – Malaga – Madrid – Lisbon (plane) – London – Isle of Skye (plane) – Helsinki (night ferry)- Stockholm – Copenhagen (plane)- Prague – Warsaw- Berlin – Bochum

Most of the connections will be night trains with the exception of those already marked with a different means of transportation.

I am extremely grateful that I was blessed with really good friends from my former NGO in Romania (VIP) who I am going to visit and share a bed and have a glass of good talk’s. Moments like these are PRICELESS.

I’ve been dreaming of Europe and its beauties since I was a child and now I am seeing my dream come true. I hope I will be able to forgive and forget some personal disappointments that happened in the last few weeks and just come back with a fresh new head and lighter heart.

Music now running on my player: Runaway Train – Soul Asylum. Next post dedicated to my backpack!

Ioana Dinu, Germany 2012

Post holiday tidings

Well the holiday season’s over, the New Year leftovers are almost finished, the Christmas wrapping are all but gone and our embarrassing New Year photos are all over facebook. And let’s not forget that our wallet is probably empty; as is our bank account. Santa’s maxed out all his

credit cards to make sure all the good little boys and girls get exactly what they deserve.

But seriously, the holiday season was a good way to see the economy pick up a bit because of pre-holiday spending and post holiday health care costs (tell the truth, at least someone at your party ate a bit too much and had to be taken care of). But if truth be told it’s only a spike in what’s a downheading spiral. Here’s an American centric view. And here’s a non biased infographic. What’s your take? Was the holiday season just a bump?

Thatcher, 2012

In search of perfect destination

Everything started from one simple idea a few years ago ... I knew a lot about that place... ‘It’s incredible’, ‘An outstanding area’, ‘You’ll fall in love with Kaliakra!’ some of my closest friends who had already visited Kaliakra, were often sharing gleefully their personal impressions with me!

Summer 2011

The map was open in front of me and I was marking Cape Kariakra in a big red circle. I had decided that this summer was the right time for me to take the journey to Kaliakra. I had some free time, a great deal of curiosity about seeing the place, and a couple of friends as eager as me to visit the cape. I had everything I needed for that journey. As a real traveler I took the decision to get rid of all my expectations for the place before leaving. Descriptions, impressions, stories somehow connected with Kaliakra that I had heard in the years were recycled, converted into distant pieces of information. I was ready to take the adventure to explore Kaliakra with my own eyes! And as a real traveler I had to

name the trip. I came up with the idea for the beginning of the title easily: 'In search of...' Then I tested many words to fill in the gap, but it seemed that there was no appropriate way to complete it. I was definitely searching for something but I wasn't sure about what exactly. So I left the title 'In search of ...' in the hope of finding out the missing part of my puzzle in the next days.

The trip took us about an hour from Varna, a beautiful town situated in the East of Bulgaria, on the coast of the



Black Sea. The weather was perfect – warm, sunny, with a gentle breeze. We were almost reaching Kaliakra when I saw a few groups of Bulgarian as well as foreign tourists who had come to discover that place. Cape Kaliakra has a long history, dating back to ancient times. Walking in the area we were able to see parts of the huge fortress as well as a lot of ruins conserved through the ages.

I was impressed, totally impressed... Spacious territory, ancient ruins, the sea... I couldn't help myself staring at the sea while we were stopping for a while to have a rest and take some pictures. What really appealed to me was the

color of the sea – different shadows of blue with sun rays reflected on its surface...

We were advancing to the cape, the final point of Kaliakra. With every further step I was feeling a bit away from everything – work, exams, routine. Just a sense of full freedom... I was in a here-and-now position, when nothing else had a matter except the present.

After taking a couple of stairs down to the cape I was able to see the captivating view of the sea landscape. Everyone who reached that place wanted to take pictures, from any perspective, from any corner, as well as finding a higher rock to climb for catching a bigger part of the whole view through his/her camera; or in other words – 'to be able to catch the moment, to catch his/her moment here and now'!. I was trying to catch the full capacity of the moment too – with my heart, soul and camera. A few hours later we were on our way back to Varna. I was thinking of the trip, the Cape, the whole experience. I was still having this sense of freedom... 'The Perfect destination!' I found spontaneously the missing word. I found my perfect destination for boosting my energy, motivation and zest for exciting new challenges!

Maria Gogova, Bulgaria 2011

In praise of flight

Among the things I consider to be amazing in the technical world, are airplanes. This floating in the sky, confined space, triggers in me a certain feeling of relaxation different from anything similar. It is a sort of relaxation that makes me feel more liberated of ground responsibilities. This might be also due to the uniqueness of the environment. Travellers from the whole world reunite themselves at the departing gates with a single purpose: to arrive at the same destination, be it in the same country or continent. You do not get to

choose who is going to sit near you, and that for me makes it even more exciting. Neither do you know if you are going to have aisle seating and get to see the stewardesses make their number. Or window sitting where you get to see the marvellous results of human ingenuity, or just an apocalyptic sunset. Add the excitement of arriving at the destination and you will get a small formula for happiness.

Some airline companies even went to the extreme of making it an unforgettable experience. Recently, I've been reading a bit about flag carrier of the United Arab Emirates, namely Etihad Airways. Or you could simply say: a small palace in the sky. And not to miss out on some sleep, you can take a nap of course... In the end, no matter of how much luxury it has been invested in the plane or how the stewardesses are pretty and talk in languages I do not understand, it should only be about the experience of flying. In an Air France magazine, French writer, Jean Cocteau explains it with the most beautiful words:

"I can't say that I respect speed. Because for me it represents disrespect. The business of us poets is based on moving slowly... My praise of airplanes would therefore not be speed. When I take off and when I land, my body arrives, in flesh and blood, but my soul arrives later, in slow motion. I have to wait until it joins me and I'm once again whole. What I like about flying is the calm I feel. The relaxation. The delightful kindness of the cabin crew. The family we become in the sky and that no longer suffers and that no longer suffers of the weight of terra firma. I would also add a sort of fear. The vague fear that brings individuals together, humanizes them, makes them sociable... What I seek in an airplane, and what I find there, is a place propitious to the invisible, to the night we all belong to, the deep night the poet tries to bring to light and which does not like to be disturbed. "

Ioana Dinu, Germany 2012

Aachen, a city full of various interesting places

It was directly in the city of Charlemagne where the meeting of the European Youth Voice took place in the term from 25th September until 1st October. The participants coming from Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Estonia were accommodated at the Jugendhostel at Ronheide, a beautiful and calm place of the city where they could get to know each other and write their articles.

History of Aachen reaches until 3 000 BC, which is backed up by real Stone Age findings. The Celtic roots in Aachen are obvious thanks to testimonies of the Celtic settlements. The Roman influence was quite important too because of the

change of the city into a military spa town full of temples and bath buildings which served for recreation and rituals. It is proved that Franks inhabited the center of Aachen too thanks to Frank tombs from the middle of 7th century.

King Charlemagne, a very important personality in the history of Aachen, influenced the history and the contemporary image of Aachen because during the period of his he made the city a center of his empire. His influence on Aachen is pressed into the face of Aachen by Palace Chapel which was made constructed 20 years after his death. Charlemagne is considered to be the greatest of the medieval kings and he is famous for his series of campaigns made in order to round out his empire by conquering different

territories and his interventions into warrior conflicts. He also sent army across the Pyrenees which caused that a northeast of Spain became a part of France, capitulation of Barcelona and the consequent acknowledgement of Asturias of supremacy of France. Charlemagne is important for his subdues of Saxons, Slavs and Avars and the length of his reign because he was sitting on the throne during thirty four years. It is known that during the period of his reign he preferred administration that wars and this is the main reason why he is considered to be one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Aachen.

After King Charlemagne there were another important personalities which contributed to the history; Otto I, Otto III, Friedrich I and Charles V. An event which is also an important moment in the history of Aachen is opening of the Aachen's theatre.

Today Aachen is known as an interesting historical city which can offer different possibilities for the tourists thanks to historical sites, cathedrals and monuments. The city is well-known for the carnivals which take place regularly in its center. Young people who arrive and want to become students have possibility at RWTH Aachen University which offers different study programmes concerning administration, mechanical engineering etc.

The economical situation of Aachen has changed a lot during the last years. Because of the economical crisis and a huge amount of people searching for an employment it became difficult to offer work and that's why a lot of people try to search for a work in bigger cities as Cologne.

Katerina Vojtechova, Czech Republic 2011



A little adventure in summer

About a year ago I wrote an article about building a kayak. A year has gone by and I have finished my second kayak so it is better to travel in company. I would like to talk about a two-day-trip that I took with my 3 friends to Koiva(Gauja) river which runs between Estonia and Latvia. We took 2 of my own built kayaks and one old but still honored canoe called Taimen.

We actually started our trip on the Estonian river called Mustjõgi which means black river in translation. The river

was really beautiful and seemed to be really untouched. It is so good to find such places in your country that look like nobody has made any damage to the nature.

We started moving at 9 o'clock and by the time all the preparations were done we started paddling at 11 am. The weather wasn't perfect as it has been quite rainy and windy this year but we struggled and didn't whine about anything. The river was really curvy and behind every curve there was so much more beautiful nature. On the first day we managed to paddle about 25 km and we spent the night on a very nice shore where we also could have an opportu-

nity to watch around because there was a 20-metres tall tower. We could really see how twisty the river was. The weather got worse and it started to rain but we spent the night in a hut that was built there.

On the second day we thought that it would be nice to take it a little bit slower and not to row so much as the previous day and we started moving at about noon. We had in minds that we would ride about 10 to 15 km-s but when we got to the place where we could have stopped, we decided that we would like some more and so we went on. I also managed to catch one fish which was big enough to take with us. As the water is quite low in summer period some of us had to give a little bit more of themselves so they wouldn't get stuck in the sand. One moment we were in Estonia and on the other we were in Latvia because this river separates these two countries a little bit. It was about 8 o'clock when we found a nice place where we could come out of the water and we called our families that they could come and pick us up now. That was the end of our this trip but it's the beginning for my kayaks. I hope that they have a long future ahead of them and I will have more memories to share.

Kalev Kriis, Estonia 2012

A cozy way to world peace

Without a cent to the end of the world – the online community CouchSurfing.com makes it possible. It sounds like new extreme sport, but it's way more comfortable.

Ben Mock from Nelson, Canada calls it „the best possibility to travel and to be amid at new places“. For Kristina Wetz from Mainz it replaces the hostel and the guidebook at the same time. Mark Hansmann from Gelsenkirchen calls it an enrichment. Emilio Martinez from Faro, Portugal uses it as „a ticket to conquer the world“. For anxious mothers it's

just frivolous nonsense.

So what is CouchSurfing?

CouchSurfing.com is a worldwide online community where travel addicts around the whole word offer their couches to totally unknown people to sleep on. There's no need for monetary compensation or exchange of goods.

Around the world CouchSurfing.com has about two million members. There are about two million profiles that present couches, beds, mattresses and treehouses and travelers who want to sleep on them.

There's the Spanish circus performer who lives with 20 other people in Barcelona and who offers her couch for 99 more, and there's the 56-year old computer scientist whose six children are out of the house and who hosts people „to have more life in his house“.

Everyone is waiting to meet new people, to hear stories, to get to know new recipes – to amplify their horizons.

Everybody returns the favor somehow. One time it is a good meal, another time an interesting conversation, sometimes even the aria of an opera singer from Cologne in the middle of your living room, sometimes an recommendation for an addition of your vinyl collection, but always the offering to surf the visitors couch one day.

There are mostly no concerns. „I guess the risk is really low. The community is awesome and if you look if the user is verified and has some references by other surfers or hosts it should work out very well“, says Mark from Gelsenkirchen.

For verification at CouchSurfing.com there are three different steps. To complete the first one you just have to give your full name and complete address. To get the second one you need to pay 21.34 American dollars. But CouchSurfing.com is a non-profit organization, so the donation is unsolicited. The members are often students and mostly not that rich, so no

one would take it amiss if you aren't verified three times.

„Although I am only verified once I found a couch in every city I was looking for one“, tells 22 years old Kristina Wetz from Mainz.

Guidebooks have developed. They started giving commendations beyond the tourism-mainstream but that is nothing in comparison to illegal house parties in San Francisco or a personal surfing lesson in Sydney.

„I had my first real Halloween Party in San Diego, California while I couchsurfed there. It was like in an American teenage movie and so the party got dissolved by the police at the end. That was really an experience I will never forget“, Kristina says.

Surely, there are sometimes combinations that aren't ideal. „In Los Angeles we had a host who was kind of strange. We had the feeling that he didn't trust us. He always tried to avoid us being alone in his apartment and he was really busy and he wasn't really friendly. We wondered why he offers his couch since it's voluntary“, says Kristina. „Sometimes you notice that surfers just visit you to save money and that they aren't interested in you as a person“, laments Emilio from Faro. To save the other CouchSurfers from those kind of people there's the possibility to leave references at the profiles of the users. Those can be commented on by the owner of the profile but not erased. But in most cases you will notice that everything is voluntary and the hosts love to offer their couches. „Once a host from California drove us, with his surfboard on top of the car, from Sacramento to San Francisco – and these are at least 140 kilometers away. He just did it because he had a day off, he wanted to surf and he liked us“, Kristina says.

Ben Mock from Canada also got to know such bountiful hosts. „My brother and I did a motorcycle trip and arrived at our host's

house in the middle of the night. She got up just for us and prepared tea and dinner for us. She was so easy going the we decided to stay three days longer then we had planned.“

If there's a black sheep, the community does everything to make it public. A few months ago there was a warning for all German users: A twenty year old guy did steal a lot of stuff while he was hosted by people all around Germany.

He was surfing on couches in Karlsruhe, Bremen, Wiesbaden, Mainz, Norderstedt and Nürnberg. He always waited until the hosts left their flat and then he took their stuff and left. The requests always came from a different profile and the thief always changed his name. The community was in contact with the police and they requested that every user look really carefully at the profiles the couch requests were sent by and to tell every suspicion and to think about accepting last-minute requests.

Also, no really know if the couch shown in the pictures is real, or if it's just full cigarettes and crumbs, or even if it is just the center of a chaotic commune, before they arrive. You also don't know if the visitor is really as „open-minded“ and „laid-back“ as he says on his profile. But an average of 15,000 new members every week show that it is at least worth it to try it once to form your own opinion, to broaden your own horizon and to save money.

And perhaps the community will realize its founder's target one day and „make the world a bit smaller“.

Bente, Germany 2011



Particpants of the Project – Editorial Staff Team

Bulgaria

Liliana Chernin
Maria Gogova
Ivelina Todorova
Victor Kutsarov
Lachezar Kotsev
Victoria Dimitrova
Evgenia Meserdzhieva
Mazy Utawasow

Germany

Ekaterina Pichugova
Lizzy Dee Adeyanju
Katerina Vojtechova
Danny Piel
Fadi Mustapha
Sabrina Kirschner
Ekaterian Pichugova
Björn Kiesel

Czeck Republic

Pavel Fridrich
Pavel Herufek
Pavel Vykydal
Tereza Raidova
Marieta Zezulkova
Tomas Botlik
Jan Svec
Barbora Heresova

David Doan
Viktor Machourek
Tomaas Botlik

Estonia

Anti Haugas
Andry Silla
Martin Ziehr
Kalev Kriis
Annika Urbel
Terttu Maastik
Mai Järvela
Sten Otsmaa
Margot Tiru
Pätris Halapuu

France

Amelie Gaudemer
Béline Cand
Cecile Viault

Greece

Giorgia Patsouraci
Harikleia Koundouraki
Xristina-Andrea Maraygaki
Eirini Gentekaki
Kostas Goniotakis
Vassiliki Charalabidou
Ioannis Mandelenis

Boras Kostantinos
Nikolaos Papachristodoulou
Christos Papas Kemmydas
Christina Maravgaki
Konstantinos Goniotakis
Charikleia Koundouraki
Vivi Zapantiotou

Malta

Sarah Gauci
Jordan Bonello

Poland

Anna Donata Gawrońska
Agnieszka Ślimak
Salome Mgeladze
Łukasz Oflus
Sylwia Karolina Zdrada
Marlena Lewczuk
Amadeusz Starzak
Maciej Sowinski
Agata Poniatowska
Maciej Calus
Adriana Dankiewicz

Portugal

Sofia Trindade

Romania

Ada Ioana Barbu
Bianca Alexandra Troncea
Alexandru Emilian Chifu
Gabriela Radu
Marina Ungureanu
Bianca Niță
Tina Rizescu
Mario Brighenti
Alexandru Stanica
Bogdan Marius Petrache
Ana Sabina David
Maria Rizescu
Ana-Maria Anghelescu

Slovakia

Michaela Lennerova
Alena Fricova



How to join!

How do I change the auto-generated password?

The password can be changed when logging into your profil page (see right side-bar, under Welcome! sign).
How do I post an article?

In order to post an article one has to:

1. Join European Youth Voice and Login
2. Click 'dashboard' (right side-bar)
3. Click on posts (left side-bar)
4. Add new
5. Write text, embed video, pictures etc.

6. Publish (left side-bar)
- How do I include my picture in the slideshow?

Before you publish click on 'Set Featured Image'
(Bottom left side-bar)
Feel free to leave suggestions for more FAQs on our Facebook Page!
<http://www.facebook.com/groups/147065788672468/>

The website: www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu
The website is open to everybody. Everybody can write independently articles, share photos, produce small films or upload audio files. You can put contributions on the side yourself. You only need a login.

Editorial staff team of the aktuelles forum

Ioana Dinu, Ulrika Engler, Nadja Kemper, Danny Piel, Norbert Tillmann

Grafik and Design: Dipl. Des. Wiebke Sturm

Druck: Frick Digitaldruck

Edition 200

All photographs are produced from the participants of the project.
All rights reserved.

Impressum:

aktuelles forum nrw

Hohenstaufenallee 1

D-45888 Gelsenkirchen

Tel: +49 (0) 209/15 51 00

Mail: info@aktuelles-forum.de

Web: www.aktuelles-forum.de

WARSZAWA CENTRALNA

FEEL LIKE AT HOME



Participation and Journalism

www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu



JUGEND für Europa
Deutsche Agentur
für das EU-Programm
JUGEND IN AKTION

living europe



This project is financed by the land headquarters for political education in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Nordrhein-Westfalen) and with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained there in.