

European Youth Voice



Remembering and Understanding

www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu

An international online newspaper
for young Europeans by young people
Documentation 2012/2013

Launched by aktuelles forum nrw, Germany



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**“Remembering and understanding...
the lessons of history”**

“Young, educated, and looking for a job!”

“Youth and their attitude to elections”

“Youth Resistance Groups during the 2nd World War – examples of Germany and Greece”

“Are Romas and Sintis the real problem?”

These are just some headlines of articles in this documentation.

“Remembering and Understanding”

– that was the topic of a youth meeting in Cologne in October 2012. 63 young people from 10 different countries in Europe participated. The topic included the memory of nationalism, the behavior towards Roma and Sinti, youth unemployment and the European elections.

From memory to understanding – that was the aim of this youth exchange. The articles, radio features and video clips from this project are available on the website: www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu. You can use it as a current forum for further discussions and understanding.

Enjoy it! Share it! Take part!

Be part of our facebook group!

<http://www.facebook.com/europeanyouthvoice>

The website

www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu

The online magazin EuropeanYouthVoice itself exists since 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 special topic. The website is open to everybody. This is a publication by and for young Europeans. You can write independently articles, share photos, produce video clips or upload audio files: Your words, your opinion, your text. Put your contributions on the website yourself. You only need a login.

The organization

The project was initiated by aktuelles forum nrw e.V. It’s a non-profit organization 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. Aktuelles forum’s work stands for diminishing social inequalities through empowerment of participation for all citizens, support of the integration of migrants and fight against racial, sexist or sexual prejudices. 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: ecological, social and fair?!” Europe is more to us than the Eurozone or an economic union. Europe as a lively democracy with social justice is a model for the future.

On the website www.aktuelles-forum.de you will find all information 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 Supporters

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

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Europe



European (?) Capital of Culture

In this crisis times and after 50 years of the European Union project come into existence, how can the young Europeans reinforce their sense of belonging to a union that seems more utopic every day? Against all the nationalistic movements created on this times how can an event like the European Capital of Culture trigger a sense of citizenship all over Europe? Especially when in geographic and practical terms the event's consequences are measured at a local or national level. The visual answers to all this, not more rhetoric, questions are presented in our short documentary. A video sequence that pictures the real frame and on the field experiences of the citizens of the city that hosts the EU Capital of Culture. Culture, buildings and abstract projects that are usually involved in controversial stories – special when it comes to budget's management. We'll bring you a XX minutes of industrial and cultural transformation at a down to earth level. At a citizens level. At your level. Our Capital of Culture is our documentary. "European (?) Capital of Culture" is an audiovisual project done by Sofia Trindade, Susana Machado and Corina Fornade. Project developed in the framework of the Executive Master in European Journalism 2011/2012 – Haute Ecole Galilée – Institut des Hautes Etudes des Communications Sociales

Sofia Trindade, Portugal 2012

The European Crisis

The first idea to get united the European nations as Europeans is during these days disappearing. I

couldn't see it before the European youth voice meeting.

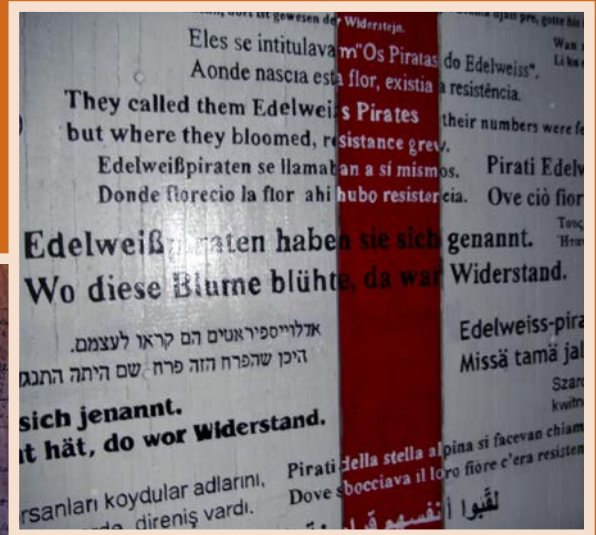
Whoever caused that crisis, European nations are getting further from each away. Today is crisis. Each country has to fight against each own growing unemployment, growing of nationalism or neonazism. For these topic has European Union no solution. It seems the European Union is confused and can't solve it. Young people are without hope, helpless and sceptical. Each country needs to save money, makes reserve funds. That causes higher taxes and unsatisfied society. These factors let to get more power for left wings political parties or far right nationalists.

European Union established few projects to solve the unemployment but the situation is more complicated that unemployed people can't write their CVs and can't work in team. Students don't want to work at engineering anymore. Universities need to have as many as possible enrolled students and graduated too. But there are less of young people than few years ago. That causes decreasing of education quality, because at universities isn't only elite today. After graduation everybody needs to be manager or director because of his degree. That causes lack of blue collar workers, expensive working power for employers and lack of white collar positions. And of course via the principle of supply and demand: the market can't healthy work.

Advice to European Union: stop that meaningless programmes and motivate people to industrial sector, show them the blue collar work isn't humiliating and start up a school reforms!

Pavel Vykydal, Czech Republic 2013

History



History – why is it important for young people?

Many young people are absolutely tired about history. For example in Germany. In German schools, you get bombarded with facts about the German history. With a special focus on the German history between 1933 and 1945, of course. In Germany, there is nearly nobody who didn't see a movie about the Holocaust like Schindler's List for example. And even nearly seventy years after their rule, Hitler, Goebbels, Göring and other Nazis are still very present in German media. On TV, there are documentaries every day. Most of them are about serious topics like the Holocaust or the war, but even documentaries about secret Ufo-projects of the Nazis or Hitler's private sex life are quite popular. But why is it important to be interested in history? History is a very important part of the European soul.

We always have to keep in mind what happened in history, the causalities freedom and democracy causes in the past to understand how important Europe is. Even in times of crises, like the financial crisis at the moment, it is important to look back and remember our darkest hours. That will remind us that there is always a chance to deal with problems peacefully and – even more important – to solve problems together in one community – Europe.

Max Niklas Gille, Germany 2013

Gestapo and KGB – Past and present

When thinking about secret police, the first organizations that usually come on our mind are KGB (also

known as NKVD and MGB) and Gestapo. To young people these organizations are also known from different movies, TV-shows and documentaries. Though, those two organizations were located in different parts of Europe and under different rules, the aim of them was the same – to protect the power and retain dictatorship. People were eavesdropped, dissidents were sent into dark cold prisons and cellars. Secret agents were often drafted among regular citizens, did not matter if they wanted it or not. All the houses had ears. The members of Hitler Youth gave out even their own parents. That kind of censorship and governing forced the people to just watch, it was almost impossible for a man to do something about it.

When in Germany Gestapo lost its power at the end of the World War II, in Soviet Union KGB was on power until 1991, though, there are rumours that Russia is using dossiers and former agents of KGB even today. During the last 4 years, there have been two incidents where Estonian public sector workers steal and abuse the information they have and spy under Estonian government for Russia. The situation where we have caught two spies, does not show the good job of Estonian police, but it shows how many of those people might live in this Nordic country. By Estonian professional espionage info 500 betrayers in a country of 1.3 million people are yet to be caught. Probably most of them are closely watched by Estonian intelligence service but the others pose a great threat to our fragile independence. The case that Russia does not want to give Estonia the list of former KGB agents shows us clearly that they are still interested in those people. By the way, Vladimir Putin used to work for KGB in eighties in Eastern-Germany.

Retaining dictatorship was mostly based on recruiting

new espionage agents, chasing and interrogating suspects. To force out the information, people were often tortured and kept in inhuman conditions and cells. In the 21st century and Europe, we would not act like this even with our worst enemies. There are some extreme measures like simulating drowning but it is illegal to cause physical damage. For example in the Gestapo headquarters of Cologne, 32 people were jailed and pressed in 4-square-meter cells. Prisoners were allowed to visit toilet twice a day and they were not allowed to wash themselves. In a dirty room many illnesses started to spread and due to mental shock some people were not able to return to their normal life after the war had ended.

If soldiers who fought in the First and Second World War were sorted into „dead generation“ we can also call some former prisoners dead for society, if they suddenly did not disappear in mysterious cases. To avoid it to happen again, we need to be extremely critical in all cases of political repression and censorship. The power is impossible without people following the trail the dictator has set.

Anti Haugas, Estonia 2012

Remembering and Understanding... the lessons of history

Patrick meets us at the entrance of a small church in the heart of Cologne – Ehrenfeld. We are about to learn that this place has a huge and interesting historical wealth. As if to set the mood it starts raining as the guide begins his story. He's about to tell us about the time right before the beginning of the Second World War and events happened during the war in this particular place.

If you take a look at the neighbourhood now you might never know that this place was ever the lair of political propaganda. Nowadays it looks like any other typical German city – nice, big houses, tidy streets, lots of bikes. Patrick describes the lives of the people who lived here approximately 70 years ago. The timbre of his voice and the breeze we feel take us to the early 1930s when the average German had to struggle to make ends meet. Most working class families who lived in bigger cities during these years were deprived of the simplest things known to our society – big families with members of 4 people and above lived in a single room, they had no toilets and had to work almost the whole day. They were miserable.

Meanwhile we've walked to another street where we stop to see a photo, shown by the guide. It is a man in a car who gained strong political influence and is being cheered by the crowd. Patrick tells us that he had promised to the people food, work and better conditions of life. They belie-

ved him. For a small period of time things really improved for the better. Young people started joining his youth program and it's easy to understand why – it was their way of getting away of the terrible conditions they lived in. In school they were being taught how to put out fires, how to process metal, how to handle critical situations. They were being prepared for a war and to serve as soldiers in World War II. Usually after their time in the Hitler Youth they became soldiers in the Wehrmacht.



The cases of these people were reopened after the war and they were proven innocent.



These 6 pavement stones acknowledge the lives of six people who were deported during the World War II.



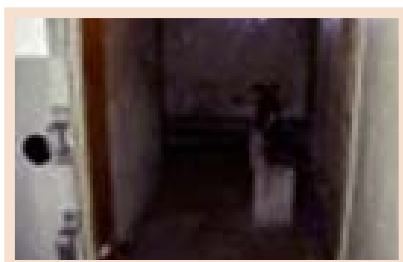
In the cells there isn't a WC. People could go to the toilet once a day with a guard next to them.

On the other hand there were adolescents who denied to be part of Hitler Youth and started gathering outside the city like the Edelweiss Pirates in Cologne. They used to go to the countryside where they could stay close to nature and get in touch with other people who felt like sharing the same way of life. These young people were later being chased by the nationalistic party that was in charge for refusing to join the youth program even though they were not criminals. In November 1944 a group of thirteen people, the heads of the Ehrenfeld Group were publically hanged in Cologne.

We move on to another street and we stop in front of a house. Our guide shows us six paving stones of bronze on the ground. They have inscription that says 'Here lived ... Roma, deported on 21 May 1945'. You see, this well known political figure had the crazy idea that the German race is

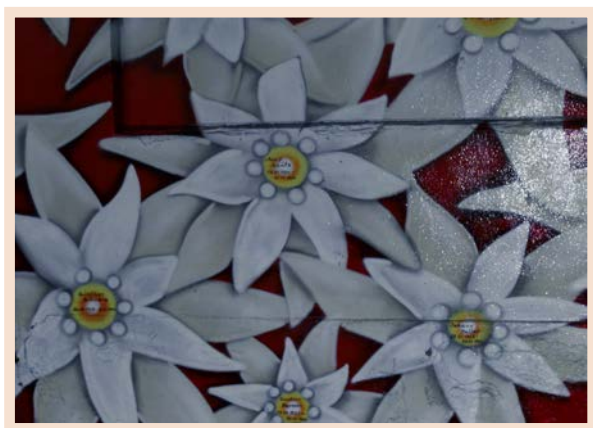
superior to all the other races and it should be 'cleaned up' of all 'impurity'. I suddenly feel a lump in my throat. I'm at the very place where people were chased, arrested and sent to concentration camps just for being themselves. I suddenly feel very cold, but it's not the wind and it is not the rain either...

Our last stop is the Gestapo headquarters here in Cologne. Patrick tells us that this is the first place where people were brought after being arrested by the Gestapo. In the building almost nothing has changed – it is a museum now and the



Up to 25 people used to inhabit this small room during the toughest times.

walls look the same way they did 70 years ago. We head to the cellar where the prison cells were. All the inscriptions on the walls are preserved – I recognize some Russian messages and understand them without translation, because our languages have a lot in common. I don't have to listen to the guide to find out what had been going on in here during the war. People were being arrested for nothing in particular and tortured. Patrick explains the Gestapo didn't even try to mask the sound of their screams. On the walls are to be read many farewell letters and sometimes just parts of diary texts of people wondering how much they've got to live... some of them predicting their own death. Suddenly I am stunned, because I recognize a swastika on the wall. I simply couldn't believe it. Why would a person imprisoned here draw something like that? Patrick explained to me what the situation was – the Gestapo started arresting people just on suspicion and the victims were often confused, thinking that here was a misunderstanding. In order to confirm their political persuasions they carved the symbol.



Many of the members of this organization were hanged publicly.

This story is easy to remember, because of its shocking content, but what's to understand from it? Personally, I believe that history teaches us a great lesson, proving that no race is superior to the others. So, from now on such ideas are simply unacceptable. It also tells us that not all people are the same, that there were Germans who were in opposition to the empowered Nazi party who did something to change the situation and whose names will be always remembered.

I look at Germany as a country now and I see a big difference. Old hostility is forgotten, Deutschland is now part of a union with other countries which were its enemies during the war and it's again the economical engine of Europe. Its society consists of people of different nationalities, colors and ethnic groups living together as one. Is there a better way to understand this particular lesson of history?

Georgi Georgiev Bulgaria, 2012

Youth Resistance Groups during the 2nd World War: examples of Germany and Greece

Youth should be always on the forefront of every action defending Freedom and Peace. During the 2nd World War a lot of resistance movements' occurred in Europe in many occupied countries. Inspired by the story of the youth resistance movement of the "Edelweis Pirates" in Cologne, I'm going to present you some of the most remarkable youth actions against the Hitler regime during the 2nd World War occurred in Germany and Greece.

Nazism had a powerful appeal to German, however youth resistance existed also inside the Nazi-Germany either through organised groups either via informal groups, against Adolf Hitler regime. The "Edelweiss Pirates" was not a specific movement but rather an association of a number of youth movements that had developed in western Germany in response to the Nazi regimentation of youths. Named after the edelweiss badge they wore on their clothes.

This is the story of a young boy, Barthel Schink. He was a member of the "Navajos", the "Edelweis pirates" branch in Cologne, Germany. He used to gather around parks and on the street corners where the group of the «Edelweis pirates» was meeting. Barthel and his friends were discussing about how they're going to survive under the Nazis' authoritarianism and they were trying to find ways to avoid the clutches of Hitler Youth.

Their activities grew bolder as the war progressed. They painted antinazislogans on walls, collected the Allies propaganda leaflets and shove them through people letterboxes and moved on to small acts of sabotages. They also helped Jews, prisoners of war and army deserters. They accused of being slackers at work and social parasites but Barthel and his friends in "Edelweis Pirates" were just young anti-conformists who wanted to

be free and not ruled by the Nazis. At the age of 15, Barthel was arrested with a number of others, tortured and imprisoned for four months. Bartholomaeus (Barthel) Schink, was publicly hanged on the gallows in Ehrenfeld, Cologne on the morning of November 10, 1944.

The most remarkable moments of youth actions against the Nazi occupators in Greece occurred after the first big parade of the conquerors was realised in Athens on May 1941. Two students Manolis Glezos and Apostolos Santas, who weren't more than 18 years old, climbed up the Acropolis and by taking the German guard by surprise they lowered the swastika flag. Their courage that led to this unbelievable action was admired all over Europe and the symbolism of this first action of resistance was particularly moving. Their example inspired a lot of young boys and girls who participated in youth resistance groups. Iro Konstantopoulou was one of them and this is her story.

Born and raised up in Athens, she belonged to a middle class family, rich enough for that time to offer her high education e.g. she could speak 4 foreign languages. However, Iro despite her comfortable life preferred to sacrifice her youth in order to "serve" her country and help by all means for its freedom. Iro Konstantopoulou was a member of the Greek youth resistance movement of EPON (United Panhellenic Youth Movement) a resistance organisation but also the real expression of youth as a special social category, the top resistance group of Greece during that period. Iro took part in many resistance actions and was arrested many times and tortured in order to reveal her colleagues. However, Iro didn't, that's why she was executed by the Nazis on 5th September 1944. Her body was found shot 17 times ... as her age was that day. The story of the Edelweiss Pirates reminded me also an unknown story of a group of kids who acted during the German Occupation in Greece. At that time hundreds of public buildings were prescribed by the Nazi occupiers. Among these buildings were also several orphanages, from where hundreds of orphans were expelled. A group of orphans in the city of Thessaloniki took their lives in their hands in order to survive. They organized in a secret "army" with hierarchy and discipline and set up teams of impact and help. Their sources for supply were German trucks that carried food and bread and of course the so-called "black marketeers". The stolen goods were distributed to orphans and other residents of Thessaloniki who had needs. Their group was named "The barefoot battalion" and apart from the help provided to the people, with wit and courage they also helped the Resistance movement, finding ways to smuggle in the Middle East, Greeks, Americans and Englishmen officers in order to join the Allied armies there.

Young means to be spontaneous; to be near the sources of life, to do things that others do not have the force to attempt. Young don't accept compromises and conventionalities; their mind is controlled by Revolution. Young people are inspired by new ideas! We have values and ideas. Young people understand that the world will not become better transporting weaknesses of the past. Maybe we don't have experience and knowledge, however we have fresh heart and this makes our spontaneity more efficient than the cold logic of the elder. They say that the dead live inside us and their works are for us the elements of life. With their struggles and their sacrifice those young heroes become preachers and drivers, models for the coming generations. If we do not want to lose our orientation and to walk in an uncertain future we should secure that we won't lose our contact with the intellectual values of past. We the current young people have duty to defend our right for a peaceful life. "History is not waiting for us but walks together with us. And we the young are the present that carries on its future", wrote a famous Greek poet. Therefore it is our duty, as descendants of those young people that with their spontaneity filled with pages of heroism the history and gave us a future more peaceful, to follow their example and fight daily for values and ideals that even today are threatened by the interests of the stronger!

Vivi Zapantiotou, Greece 2013



Identity



Different Bundesland, different cultures Leaving the sheltered south for studying in the wild west

It's no secret that there are differences in cultures in the countries of the European Union. The Italians love pasta and pizza, the Greek's sanctuary is gyros and their syrtaki and the German are always in time, when they get their sausages and beer. But when I moved from the south of Germany into the Ruhrarea I realized, there are differences even in one country you never expect! New city, new life, but new country? Not necessary! I arrived all by my own in Gelsenkirchen for my studies. And I must confess, I wasn't free from prejudices and questions from relatives and friend like: 'Are you sure? Leaving beautiful Stuttgart for Gelsenkirchen?!'

Yes, it was my decision and I was convinced to force the new adventure. I arrived late at night in the new city. Alone in a new environment. The first days weren't easy. I needed to discover everything. Engraving was my first grocery shopping, I stood in the line for the cashier and waited for my turn. An old lady stood behind me and just asked me what's going on. I was surprised because at home no stranger would ask you so curious. I got in similar situations in the last years and learned to cherish them. I made experiences I would never have made when I stayed at home in my child's room and I'm thankful for those. Of course I love to come home and see my family and friends and Stuttgart will always be my hometown, the city with the biggest place in my heart, but there's space for other places. I learned for myself that wherever you go, you'll be a stranger but when you open yourself to the people and their behaviors you learn so much for your life.

Tanja Hilpert, Germany 2013

From East to West and back! How a young girl found her home where her roots are

Lisa was only a few month old, when her parents came from East Germany to Stuttgart. It was in 1990 the borders were open just for few months. They were free to travel and leave the DDR, but it felt strange anyway. Her parents Thomas and Sabine had to learn, that they can decide on their own now, how they want to live. They could buy what they want to; they could go where they want to.

Soon the small family felt arrived in their new home, Thomas and Sabine found jobs, and the small Lisa went to the kindergarten and got some friends. They were happy, but something was missing even if no one of them could say what. Lisa got to school, and so the first six years passed in the new town. She passed the primary school and enjoyed her vacations before the next big step, high school. Behind Lisa's back something went on, what no one had expected. Thomas and Sabine decided to go back, back to East Germany where they came from, where their home is. Lisa's world broke down, to leave her friends, her home, everything she loved. The first time was hard for her, but soon she found also positive things in the new life. She got a dog, new friends and felt comfortable. When she turned eighteen, finished her school and could decide on her own, where to go, she stayed. She stayed at the place where her parents flew 18 years ago in the west with the hope of a better life. Time changes and places where years ago fear and terror rule could turn into the beloved home of someone!

Tanja Hilpert, Germany 2013

Meeting with young people from the Greek Community in Cologne

While we were in Germany during the meeting of the "European Youth Voice" we had the chance to visit the Greek community of Cologne. It was a great experience for me, as a Greek, because I met young people who live in Germany and we discussed about their problems and how is their life in Germany.

I met a girl who's name is Despina, she was born in Germany and then moved to Greece but she came back after seven years. She is twenty years old and she is working at the McDonalds but her salary is not enough so she works for more hours. She told me that she feels more German than Greek, she doesn't speak very good the Greek language and she even doesn't know a lot of places of Greece apart from her town, Serres and Athens. Despina visits her relatives in Greece every summer and she has a lot of friends there.



The other Greek guys I met are Kostas, Despoina, Charalampos, Giannis and Olga. They told me that they go to a German school and they know more German than Greek history. I asked them how the German people and their classmates behave towards them and their answered that they don't have any problem at all. I noticed that they didn't know Greek dances and songs but finally we danced all together with young people from all Europe.

I have to say that I didn't like so much the fact that the young Greeks don't speak the Greek language and don't know about the Greek history. However I understand them because they live a lot of years away of Greece or they have never been to Greece. Generally, I felt very proud after I visited the Greek community, and I had a great time! The highlight of that day was Despina's beautiful song who dedicated to us.

Kostas Perdikakis, Greece 2012



On The Germans and their Daily Bread

Wessen Brot ich ess, dessen Lied ich singe. – whose bread I eat, his song I sing. (German Proverb)

When most people think of Germany, probably the first things that come to mind are beer, sausage, and maybe Lederhosen. Not for me, however. During my first few weeks living in the small city of Gelsenkirchen, in North-West Germany, I was entranced by the innumerable amount of shops selling baked goods everywhere. Dotted here and there, on corners, near bookstores and bus stops, there seems to be one every fifteen metres. Waiting for the tram with the tempting aroma of hot, crusty bread fresh from the oven wafting up my nostrils, I decided to investigate.

The first thing that you should know about bakery stores in Germany is that there are two different kinds of bakery stores; the first being the Bäckerei, where one can find many different kinds of breads, ranging from small white bread rolls to large rye loaves. They usually have a small, sweet section with some cakes for sale, but usually, if you want something sweet, go to the Konditorei, which means 'confectioner's'. The word 'Konditor' originally comes from the Latin, meaning, the candy-making of fruits', and this came to be during the 15th century, when the original Medieval bakers had mastered the art of baking bread. Then they began to experiment on baking bread made with honey, dried fruits, and spices, hence, confections', which eventually became an art form on its own. Becoming a 'Bäckermeister' is like a 'master baker'. During this two-year course, they must pass four exams dealing with education, theory and chemical processes, mathematics and one practical exam, which includes preparing a display of their products with a theme. Once a Meister they are allowed to take on apprentices of their own and teach the trade of bread making to other young apprentices. Real bread Meisters also tend to follow the philosophy behind the Slow Food Movement (www.slowfood.de) where the bread is kneaded by hand, made from real ingredients with no additives and the dough is made daily (not baked from frozen), so it is really fresh! Bread from bakery chain stores like Kamps, Backwerk, and Brinker, usually tastes different than from an artisan bakery or a biobäcker – an organic bakery.

All in all, I hope you feel a little more informed about where

the bread on your plate comes from. Now excuse me, but it's 7.30am and the local bakery has been open for half an hour, and I have a date with a Brötchen and some Gouda. Guten Appetit!

Natasha Sing, Malta 2013

The stems of Dexter

If you're reading this chances are you used to love watching Dexter's Lab when you were a kid. Or, even better, you dreamed of being a paleontologist when you were gonna grow up cause nothing was cooler than dinosaurs. Or at the very least you liked to fiddle with all sorts of funny jars with insects and spiders, cooking up all sorts of experiments. You had it in you to be a scientist. You even begged your folks to get you a telescope for Christmas. But as time passed you grew up, realised being an astronaut isn't all that cool (or all that feasible either) so you took to a more sensible path; one that would preferably actually get you a monthly paycheck, benefits and the like. That's basically how most of us ended up training as bankers. And it's the same reason why few of us are actually working as bankers after graduation.

The problem is that none of us actually grew up to fiddle with science for a living. We all took sensible jobs, to pay for sensible cars that'll get us to work at a sensibly polluting rate. No one grew up to be Dexter. And the problem with that is gonna be visible a bit too late for us to do much about it. There have been reports and articles warning of low levels of STEM graduates (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) but the problem is still being treated lightly all throughout Europe. Not only are fewer and fewer of them (see here) but the quality seems to be dropping too (most visible and most researched in the UK here). So what are we to do?

Compulsory education is hard pressed to make a comeback on its own let alone higher education centred on sciences. The few things we can do are to

- pay more attention to the actual demand on the labour market (let's face it, turning everyone into a paleontologist can hardly be productive).
- put effort into lobbying so that governments and politicians take note of the problem and take steps to address it
- Most important – make sure that something like this is not just a dust covered report on somebody's bookstand.

Thatcher, Romania 2012

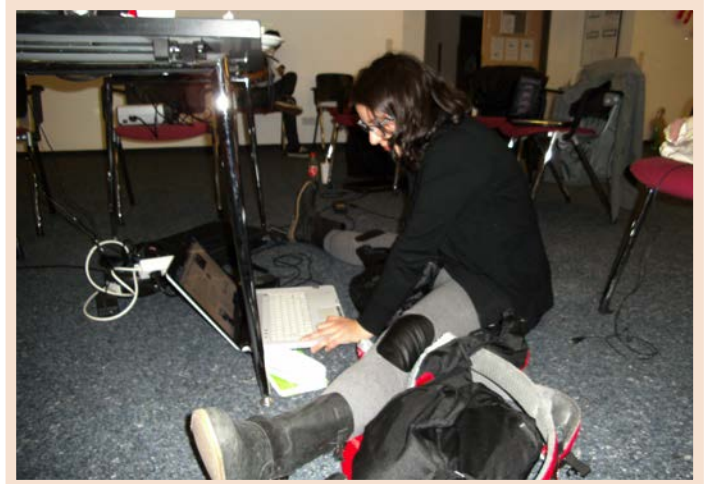
What's the price of life? ?

We live in times when life means almost nothing. We are killing the nature, the animals, ourselves with no regrets. How long can we live this way?

If you had to choose between saving a tree and killing an animal for using his bones for making money, what would you choose? It's hard to say that life means nothing, but it is true.

The violence between people comes through violence for expensive animal's leather or bones.

Last year over 25 000 elephants were killed. The research of National Geographic shows up horrible facts and numbers of killed animals. Only a small part of them was the elephants. The price of their bones is about 20 000 dollars. One of these



unique bones was sold in the United States for 24 000 dollars. It was made in the 20's of 20th Century in China. People in China, Thailand, India and another countries use these animals for religious purposes. According to the Scriptures the animal must be nurtured and then sacrificed in honor of God. But most of the rich people use this as an opportunity in the cases when it is a "forbidden territory".

But the animals with these expensive bones are only a small part of the victims. Scientists and researchers have devised endless ways of abusing animals in experiments. They use them to test weed killers and pesticides as well as new ingredients for cleaning fluids, paints, food, drinks and even pet food.

Animals are also used in medical research, in attempt to find the causes of, and treatments for, human diseases. But animal experiments are unreliable and can be dangerously misleading because animals' bodies are different from ours, and they don't get the same diseases as we do. So all these tests are pointless.

Thousands of chimpanzees have been used in useless experiments for finding a cure for AIDS, but now it is well known that, although it kills humans, AIDS doesn't kill chimpanzees. The link between smoking and lung cancer was first observed in people but then because no animals developed cancer when they were forced to inhale tobacco smoke, vital health warnings were delayed for many years. No one knows how many people have died as a result of the misleading information provided by animal experiments. Only in the UK, nearly four million animals are used in laboratory experiments each year. Hundreds of thousands animals are bred and killed so bits of their bodies can be used in research. In addition, millions of 'surplus' animals are bred but never used – they are just disposed of and their deaths are not even recorded.

So if we follow the Darwin's theory and if human beings

come from monkeys, then when you use a monkey for an experiment it is almost the same if you use humans for this experiment. Then if the monkey is going to be dead after this test, it means that we have killed a lot of people because of the useless ways to find a cure for AIDS, cancer etc.

But for medicines for epilepsy they use people. The most provided method is to use 100 people and to give them two medicaments with the same generic ingredients. They have to use both medicines in different periods, but they never know the name of the medicine. The strongest medicine is lorazepam and it's given when you have a paroxysm swoon, so then you need to relax your brain, mind, muscles etc. But this Lorazepam, which is the generic ingredient in most of the epileptic pills, is very dangerous, because one of the horrible effects is paranoia and skin illness which can kill you. Every pill for epilepsy has a drug effect and you never know how it could affect you.

I started from killing elephants, because of their expensive bones, then using animals for medical surveys to using people. It doesn't matter what it is, we all are nature's creatures. If other creatures' bodies don't work in the exact same way like human's, this means it's pointless and unfair to try experiments on them. So if some of us think that an animal is not that smart as people are, so using this animal for those kinds of experiments prove that this creature also has feelings and own way to accept the world. The animals are not so different from us, they are just closer to their true nature, but we are these who have forgotten who we are and what we really are. So, what's the price of your life?

Ivelina Todorova, Bulgaria 2013

Who has the time?

The notion of time and time keeping is nowadays so deeply rooted in our reality that we seldom stop and wonder how this time business started in the first place. Why do we keep track of time and how have we become so time-addicted? The Benedictine rule introduced into

Western culture the idea of regulated time, for Benedict believed that every waking minute should be consumed by labor either physical or spiritual.

The monastic community was regulated by an uncompromising daily schedule. At a certain time of the day, one would attend mass. At another time, one would work in the garden, and so on. Our entire orientation towards time in European and European-derived cultures owes its origins to Benedict's regulation of time. Now, recently emerged from a short dip in Buddhist waters, I can say that the subject is even more intriguing that I first imagined.

I was walking in a temple that housed over 300 Buddha statues and was lucky enough to stumble upon a full fledged lecture on the Buddha pose and it's meaning. Among other priceless information, I found out that the "Buddhist day" is divided into 4 activities, each deserving 6 hours to be allocated in which ever order: 6 hours for sleep, 6 hours for study or work, 6 hours for walking and 6 hours for sitting in meditation or silence.

While Europeans used time as a measure for how well you are doing in satisfying your religious and social duties, the Buddhists concentrated on the duty to ones self, the source of all problems, solutions and well being.

Is the European medieval institution of time compatible with this pattern of self-observation or is the importance of duty towards others strong enough in Europe that we could never find an agreement between the two?

Sabina David, Romania 2013



Media



E-books vs Paperbacks

Writing has been a part of the human history for thousands of years and it has developed greatly throughout the time. We are now living in a time where the books are existing together with e-books. The new medium may be controversial at first to some people as there are some aspects against the e-book. However, there are more and more people adopting e-books and even preferring it to paperbacks.

The e-books are very useful for a true booklover as they can contain thousands of books. They are also very convenient for studying as they have the opportunity to use keywords and highlighters. What is more, the good news is that no harmful effects to eyes have been found. Reading an e-version of the book even has one advantage in this field – it gives the opportunity to zoom in the text. However, at the rate technology evolves; the e-reader bought today may be obsolete within a few years and people have to buy a newer model. What is more, when reading the e-book from the computer, instead of the e-reader, one may get distracted.

When talking about paperbacks, people often bring out the sentimental value of them. People love the smell of books and they like the fact that they can actually feel and hold the book in their hands. All this taken account, the reader can really delve into the book and get a cozy feeling. However, the books also have some environmental issues as producing paper means the loss of carbon-gobbling trees and carbon emissions. There is also the physical aspect – when you are a true bookworm you will probably soon find yourself drowning in books at home as they take up your

space. There are all those other little aspects which make one or the other better. Who's to tell which is right or wrong – it all depends on the person. When you are a true booklover you may consider the e-reader as it can contain thousands of books. When you value the full reading experience, you can choose the paperback. All in all, you get the vital information from them both.

Mariliis Huul, Estonia 2013

Mobile social networking – is it really making us more social?

In streets it is usual that people walk around with their eyes on their smartphone usually texting or checking Facebook. According to estimates by The ITU – International Telecommunication Union (2011), there are 1.2 billion active mobile-broadband subscriptions in the world. That is 17 percent of the global population. What is more, there are more than one billion social network users. So putting these two things together, mobile social networking is quite common already. Is the fact that we can be online all the time at social networks really making us more social than before?

In my opinion it makes us less social. By chatting mostly online and not noticing others (even old friend whom you might bump into in city) is everything but social. People are getting more distant from talking face to face and that leads to acting socially awkward in real life situations (shier, misreading body language etc.). Although mobile social networking lets us to stay in touch with everyone anytime anywhere it also might have the effect of preventing us from actually meeting people and talking and sharing real emotions with them which actu-

ally makes us closer. As far as it concerns' socializing it is good, but if the purpose is to really be or become friends with somebody, a communication like that will not do the work. So next time when you think about just chatting online or updating your status, just try to call and meet someone in real life and see how it works out for you – you might start enjoying it!

Pätris Halapuu, Estonia 2013

Newspapers in Greece

Greece is a small European country, located on the southern part of Balkan peninsula. It's population is about 11,5 million inhabitants and at the same time more than 4 million are concentrated in the capital, Athens. This is a very interesting point about the way information is being transmitted in Greece.

Newspapers in Greece have played a very important role in political life. After the fall of the Dictatorship (1974), the press has been going through a process of modernization. Newspapers usually support certain political parties and this is clear in everyone in Greece. Moreover, people in Greece choose which newspaper want to read under his/her political beliefs. In recent years press has lost its power as a result of sales fall. We have to add that the press in Greece has followed the commercialization rhythms with a time delay. In addition, the money from advertising have been reduced greatly. But, while the average circulation of newspapers in Greece is falling, the same cannot be said for the number of daily titles. When same papers close because of economical problems, new papers are created. Now there are 280 local, regional and national daily newspapers in all country. The number of the daily papers are high in contrast with other countries, while the percenatge of reading newspapers in the population is one of the lowest in Europe.

Important is also the presence of the immigrants press in Greece. As all we know Greece is the main gateway of immigration in Europe. People who live in Greece and come from different countries, do not want to lose their connections with their homeland. So, in Greece there are newspapers in Albanian, in Bulgarian, in Russian, in Romanian, in Armenian, in Polish, in the language of Philipppines and China, in Turkish, in Arabic etc. The sells of these newspapers are not huge but they play a very important role in the immigrants integration. Also, Albanian Press is the biggest of these papers.

To sum up, we have to say for the future of the press, that the emergence of new media doesn't imply in any way the removal of old or this is what we want to believe so. We can not forget the big history of newspapers worldwide and in Greece also.

Angelos Vasileiou, Greece 2012

Virtual Bullying

The Internet has nowadays become one of the most influential and essential medium of communication. Although it has its positive

aspects, the Internet is, more than anything, a necessary evil as it has opened up a new form of violence: virtual bullying.

Social media is constantly growing, and with it, so is this form of violence. Perhaps, the most recent and well known case occurred on October

of 2012 when Amanda Todd, a 15-year old, committed suicide as a result of cyber bullying. Prior to her death, the young victim posted a 9-

minute video entitled "My Story: Struggling, bullying, suicide and self harm" which revealed her experiences with regards to bullying through the use of a series of flash cards. Todd stated that in Grade 7, she utilised video chats so as to encounter new individuals and claimed to have received numerous compliments directed to her physical beauty. Unfortunately, she was coaxed into exposing her breasts on camera which gave the opportunity to the tormenter to blackmail her into exposing even more. People thoroughly reacted to the video post causing it to become

viral in a matter of minutes. This is just but one of the endless list of cases in which cowardly bullying triggers a fatal ending.

Adolescents do not appear to understand that actions have consequences; thereby hateful words may affect a person more than they would ever imagine. Raising awareness should be the basis to prevent cyber violence; however, it does not fundamentally solve the problem. A clear distinction between innocent fun and brutal belligerence within wall posts should be made in order to stop such harassment.

Kim Gregory, Malta 2013



Politics



Due process...

The government needs the approval of a judge to detain a suspected terrorist. To kill one, it need only give itself permission."

And here I was, thinking that 1984 is just a good book. The quote is courtesy of Adam Serwer and his accurate description of the white paper recently published by the NBC. Direct from the US Department of Justice this shameless piece of bureaucracy tells us that it's ok for the US government to decide one of its' citizens deaths if:

- An informed, high level-official of the U.S. government has determined that the targeted individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States.
- Capture is infeasible, and the United States continues to monitor whether capture becomes feasible; and
- the operation would be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable law of war principles.

So a single high-level official gets to play God by making use of whatever constitutes due process. Nice, isn't it? Especially since this is live from the Obama administration that, wouldn't you know, just landed another term in office. Not that another administration, Democrat or Republican, would have been anything other than a piece taken straight out of Orwell's book anyway.

The Handmaid's tale, V for Vendetta, 1984, it's just so refreshing to see some of your favourite books play out right across the street. Makes you wonder if you'll get to see them up-close on your side of the pavement.

Thatcher, 2013

The participation among Youth is needed, but how to put it into practise

In this time, it is really necessary to participate around borders. The question is how to participate within the borders. This is the sense and the activities will bring the results. In my opinion, there exist lots of projects for Youth and children but lots of the projects have just one meeting and the people meet each other only once and then there are no result and no sustainable development after one meeting.

In my opinion, the people have to make projects which can continue. Also the problem is when we want to make one project which will have sustainable development that's really hard for preparing and also is the problem how to motivate the participants to do something. I think you can have great project but lazy participants. If you prepare good program, making of results should be easy and also the quality can be good.

I think we cannot say any advice how to make it. But I think if we make any project, the participants should write motivation letters and fill the application forms and after that we should make a tender and choose the participants, which are more motivated and which can do more for the project. If we make this, then we don't have any problems (e.g. when we make project for people about culture - playing theatre and the participants don't enjoy this topic, they just want to visit other country or meet new friends (this is not the main idea of projects).

I describe it on one project which I am preparing right now, it's not the best example, but I think that in this project we want to have fun and also we want to make results which bring some advices to other youth.

The project is called Work for Europe and the goal of the project is to create a space for young people to discuss topics (e.g. possibility of getting a part-time job or a job in each country of the project and compare their opinions). During the project the participants of the project will go through various workshops – writing of CVs, cover letters and during one of the workshops the participants will take a part in a simulation game where a job interview will be simulated in practice. They will also deepen their knowledge in the area of possibilities of getting a job abroad and they will have a panel discussion with representatives of employment agencies as well. The participants will create a survey together related to the topic of possibilities of employment for young people. Then, they will evaluate the survey and according to the results and following discussion they will create a cartoon. This cartoon will be presented on the website of the project in languages of participating countries. It will touch the topic of the project and give tips (national and international) for young people in this topic. During the project a video report monitoring the activities and results of it will be made. We will have 2 meetings – one in Prague and one in Turkey and we want also get to know the culture of these 2 countries and the cultures of other participating countries, that's what we want to make for example during the intercultural night.

Tomáš Botlík, Czech Republic 2013

Youth and their attitude to elections

During the last two weeks regional and senate elections took place in different countries of the European Union. In Czech Republic only 30% of inhabitants participated. That's why the result of the elections finished by winning of the social democrats and communist party. It is because seniors are used to go to the elections regularly as they were used in the communists times. Young people are less and less participating on the elections, maybe because they are persuaded that their vote is too weak to change something.

This is the crucial mistake which should be corrected as soon as possible in order to avoid these results of the elections. A similar situation is in Greece where the socialists received a huge number of votes. It is caused by the bad situation of unemployment when social democrats promise to people social certitude (the same as the communists) and a lot of unemployed people believe them. This happens mainly now in the crisis when nobody has a certainty of employment. If the economical situation improves, there will be a lot more people who will vote for the right side so the communists and social democrats will decline.

Youth should be more active regarding the elections. Once they will be adult and it will be exactly the parties elected by themselves which will rule. Only themselves can influence the result of elections because they are numerous.

What's more a majority of them have university degrees and that means that they are quite intelligent to vote for the parties of the right side. Passive attitude and non-participating at the elections leads to the above mentioned situation with the social democrats and communists which means dominance of the seniors at the elections.

This is the reason why in Czech Republic during forty years won elections communists. The political situation persuaded the inhabitants to go regularly to the elections. It were always the same people who went to vote and that's why



the communists were winners. Youth are living in a different political system so they don't know how it is to go regularly to the elections in order to let win always the one party. Particularly youth which were born later than in 80's don't know the reason why should they go to the elections because they didn't live in the communist times and the Velvet Revolution.

Katerina Vojtechova, Czech Republic 2013

Society



An urban communal garden

Pflanzstelle, socio-cultural and urban agriculture in Cologne: A city garden community In the current context of the crisis in Europe, a sense of individualism increase between the Europeans countries and between people in a country. In a social point of view, cleavages become important between different socials classes and conditions of life. Behind these observations, some people found alternative communities who allow building social links. Then, in Germany, Cologne, I have met the "Pflanzstelle" which means the place where we grow vegetables. It's an urban garden. How it works?

It's a Tuesday afternoon, cold and gray I went to Pflanzstelle, located in the district of Kalk-Kapelle. A German friend who accompanies me and called Fadi acts as interpreter for the interview I am about to undertake. At a street corner, I arrived at the scene where the famous urban garden. It is bordered by a long green wire and is facing houses. So it seems to me not see anyone inside, I saw a woman who is trying to close the gate. I call it.

Her name is Martina. She has 50 years working in marketing and joined the community that live Pflanzstelle. What a nice surprise when she tells that in addition to German, she speaks four languages: French, English, Spanish and Italian! The language skills of Fadi suddenly lose all prestige, but it does not detract from the pleasure of his presence by my side this afternoon gloom. Martina gives us visit the garden while answering some questions.

Since the place was a Brownfield, the soils are contaminated. So, we don't seed directly in it but in jars and palettes. The water is difficult to access. The garden is composed

by vegetables and aromatics plants. We don't use chemicals products and fertilizers. We can't sleep in Pflanzstelle. During summer and spring, it's opened everyday from 9h until 20h. But in winter and autumn, it's more closed. Activities are established like potluck, sensitization of the nature and urban environment with many meetings, concerts, exhibitions. Financially, the seeds, the tools come from pockets of the community and donations outside.

The community includes forty people. Some of them are



vegetarians and the others are vegans. Therefore, a new project on the food was created, the spread project. A group of twenty people eat every week one glass jar of vegans spread. That means every person has to produce one glass jar, shop, cook, twenty minutes of preparation, a lot of spoiled energy. In the project there is one person per week who prepares the spread for all people in the group, brings the glasses to the Pflanzstelle where the others come to take it. The system is a rolling system so, one person have to prepare forty spreads for the forty the week. In the meantime,

the others prepare for you. The spread is composed with beans, garlic, cayenne pepper and salt from the ocean without iodine.

The people who come in the garden are mostly the neighborhoods and foreigners who represent 70% of the population in Cologne. There is an Iranian of 65 years old and I come every day to cultivate tomatoes and tobacco.

This reappropriation of abandoned space brings a new dimension to urban life and can bring people from different backgrounds and cultures through a manual activity – and especially! – Useful: maintains a vegetable garden. It is a rediscovery of the nature and means of preserving it. The garden is also a way of protest, the image of the “Ecological Footprint” fighting against intensive farming and overabundant consumption of meat, one of the disparities between rich and poor.

A place where we can exchange smiles, advice, opinions ... and vegetables! Martina, for his kindness and availability, seemed to personify the will of humanism at the origin of this experience. Clear proof that, whatever the circumstances; nothing can replace the daily exchange with each other.

The urban garden initiative exists in other German cities as well as in other major cities around the globe and seems an effective way to preserve human relations within the city.

The meeting with Martina deeply affected by her generosity and her joy of living. I ‘am feeling hopeful for a more consolidated world.

Jane Mintah, France 2012

Are Romas and Sintis the real problem? – A hint on Rethinking

For at least five centuries Romas and Sintis have lived in almost all European countries. Today up to 10 million Romas and Sintis live in Europe. Originally they come from North India – proven in the 18th century by linguists who show the relation of the language Sanskrit and Romanes. Although there is evidence of a peaceful coexistence of Romas and Sintis in the European countries in the middle ages, many stereotypes and prejudices against Romas and Sintis developed during the past centuries. These were later used by the Nazis in their propaganda and up to 500.000 were murdered by the Nazis. So, talking about Remembering and Understanding, I want to give a hint on Reflecting and Rethinking our prejudices on Roma and Sinti today.

Deconstructing the "Gipsy problem"

There was a discussion at the EYV meeting about solving the "Gipsy problem" in certain European countries, where they seem to be a more or less disturbing „phenomenon“. Defining the presence of Roma and Sinti in a country as a

"problem" is one thing, degrading them as a „uneducated, lazy, smelly, money-grubbing childrenmachine making people with a lifestyle of stealing“ is racist. The general widely known term „All human beings are equal“ seems to be forgotten when it comes to speaking of minorities in a white society – in this case white European society. During the discussion I noticed a continuous differentiation between „We“ and „the other“. Solutions toward the so called "Gipsy problem" were formulated rather in this kind of way: „We the educated Europeans need to help the uneducated...“, „We the civilized Europeans need to civilize the uncivilized..“ or „We the cultivated Europeans need to cultivate the uncultivated...“. The stereotypes the Nazi Régime used in their propaganda to murder 500.000 Romas and Sintis seems to have a revival. Separation between We the Europeans and Them the Romas and Sintis, the Blacks, the People of Colour etc. are defined as a constructed dichotomy of good and evil. Because we see stereotyped representation of these groups („the others, the strangers“) in the media, school books and in the law, we believe these representations. We get influenced by the images we see, even worse we take them for granted. On the other side, we also see the representation of us the Europeans in the media etc. as the intelligent, good and civilized (apparently „the norm“). These are generalizing images, trying to oppress a minority and to motivate „episodes of everyday racism“

(Book by psychoanalyst Grada Kilomba called „Plantation Memories – Episodes of Everyday Racism“).

"I'm not Racist, but... the 'Gypsies' take the money from the government and don't want to work, because they are lazy!" Nearly every sentence during the discussion in our EYV meeting started with „I'm not racist, but...“(e.g. „ALL the Romas steal“), which reminded me of the www.notracistbut.com page, a website collecting every kind of racist statements published in the internet beginning with „I'm not racist, but...“. Racism is about politics and economics. Meaning it is about power and wealth. The privilege is given to one group and is being denied to the other groups. Only a group with power can impose its racist beliefs on a



whole society. The function of racism is to increase that groups privileges, power and wealth. More than half of the Romas in southeast Europe have to live with less than 100 Euro a month. Living condition are worse with less chance to take part in social or economic growing.

Children are suffering of discrimination in schools due to the effect of institutionalized racism. The government isolates the Romas in slums or ghettos in order to stable the formed segregation. This is how racism works: The privileged white european explaining his misery through the unprivileged Roma and Sinti. Modern racism emerged as a way of enabling and justifying "white supremacy". And not long ago, radical right-wing czechs marched in Nový Bor and Varnsdorf: „The right-wing extremists chanted "Gypsies must go" and "Free, social and national" – a phrase also used by members of the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD)." (Wave of Hate, SPIEGEL Online International, by Frank Brunner and also see: www.romea.cz).

Rethinking & Reflecting prejudices

The discussion showed once again how near we can be to the ideology of the Nazi Régime. Not even considering the consequences with certain statements we make (e.g. „stealing is in their blood“), we continue pointing our finger to a constructed enemy. Instead of critisizing images we absorb through the media or other information base, we run away from our responsibility unconsciously supporting the oppression of a group. We are making prejudices to our own reality – but in fact there are just fantasies. By putting people into categories, there is no way for any objectivity and the potential for degrading, discriminating and hating a group of people grows. I think all this suggests that it makes sense to fight the various stereotypes and prejudices collectively.

Rethink your thoughts and reflect about yourself always.

*Elisabeth Olajumoke Omobolanle Adeyanju Omonga,
Germany 2013*

Christmastime in Germany

Being a foreign exchange student studying in Germany for a year, gave me a chance to witness Christmas time in Germany. I had to opportunity

to visit a few Christmas markets which was a completely new experience for me. I have heard of imitation markets like this within the U.S. but I was in awe of how the Germans celebrate with their markets the entire month of December. These markets were decked out with lights and rides for children and adults. Plus, the streets were filled with people in booths selling different types of food, homemade crafts, and another German seasonal tradition, Glühwein.

It seemed to me that Christmas was a really special time for the people living here whereas I'm used to the hustle

and bustle of Christmas time within the United States where it's all about the shopping and decorations. Upon some research, I found that the Germans celebrate Christmas for three days whereas I am used to celebrating for only one day. Children here get to open their presents from Santa on the night of the 24th which must save them from the anxiety children face in the U.S. not being able to sleep when they have to wait until the morning of the 25th to open their gifts. The 26th is also a legal Christmas day.

The main similarities in traditions that I noticed were decorating the Christmas tree and decorating the house inside and out. In the U.S. advent calendars are also a tradition in certain families. Overall, I think that I found Christmas to be more enjoyable here. It was less about the spending of money and more about celebrating with family and friends. I am glad that I had the chance to experience Christmas in a new way.

Briana Maddalena, USA 2013

Edit Bauer: Egoism can be counterproduktiv in the EU



Edit Bauer is Slovak politician of Hungarian ethnicity. She serves as Member of the European Parliament with the Magyar Koalíció Pártja. Since the 2009, Edit Bauer is a member of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the Delegation for Relations with the Countries of South Asia. **What issues are important to you in Europe?**

The project of European integration was built on different basis after the Second World War. Main goal was to preempt another war conflict through transnational control of coal and steel mining. Since then European cooperation has developed into present form. However in my opinion, the most important result is the fact that Europe is not in threat of war anymore and that platform for cooperation of European countries exists.

Due to globalization we have to face problems, that didn't exist sixty years ago. Continuing deepening of inte-

gration brings us new challenges that need solutions. It is really difficult to name few fields that are important to me in Europe. For example, I find job creation as important as struggle against human trafficking. All challenges have to be handled together.

What annoys you most about Europe?

Rapid progress of integration, large number of member countries and their reluctance to give up sovereignty in certain areas caused over-bureaucratization of the EU. It might take years to enforce one bill and due to excess of actors playing role in legislature, final law might be wholly different from the previous one. Of course, multilevel control – European Commission represents Europe, European Council represents member countries and European Parliament represents citizens – brings undisputed advantages, but we need more flexible decision-making in this quickly changing world.

Do the young people in Europe have a chance for a good life?

In comparison with other parts of the world, European youth have disproportionally bigger chance to assert themselves. Current economic crisis causes big obstacles for their efforts and some member states indicate very alarming youth unemployment rates. Nevertheless we don't underestimate struggle against this problem and it is one of the most important priorities in Europe.

What do you think about the role of Slovakia in the European Union?

Today's twenties know only from movies how the life, studying, shopping and travelling in the middle Europe was thirty years ago. For the generation that had a chance to experience these years on own skin is today's open Europe – and the fact that we are part of it – amazing result. However these positives brought new challenges. We still lag behind Western Europe in development of economy and it is also connected with lower standard of living of our citizens.

The aim of small countries, such as Slovakia, is to work hard to diminish regional differences throughout Europe as fast as possible. But from broader perspective we can see that strong egoism in Europe can be counterproductive in long-run. Countries, like China, India and Brazil, gain important positions in the world policy and our small country can't compete them. We can find our prosperity only through joint success of Europe in the world.

Alena Fricova, Slovakia 2012

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Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a neglected problem suffered worldwide and is also one of the most sickening violations of the basic human rights.

This illegal trade of human beings occurs for commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour or the extraction of organs. Several hundred thousands of people are estimated to be trafficked within Europe.

The EU is unable to define concretely the term 'human trafficking' as in certain countries; the crime may imply that sufferers have been bought whereas in others they merely require to cross borders. When such conditions are not satisfied, then cases are classified as illegal prostitution as opposed to sex trafficking. Evidently, one of the greatest problems lies in the fact that only but a few rare cases are investigated and presented in court. In 2006, a mere 1500 cases were filed; thus exposing that a rather low number of traffickers are actually punished for the crime.

The facility with which a person may cross national borders aids fundamentally in easing the process of transporting people illegally for exploitation. Interestingly enough, one of the most common forms of human trafficking in Europe revolves around domestic trafficking. It appears to be a difficult task to categorize this issue due to certain countermeasures applied, for instance identifying an irregular migration victim or training work members of an Embassy.

Europe has the advantage over other continents as it is rather well informed with regards to the dangers and suffering caused by human trafficking. In comparison to non-European countries, it has the most organized data collection techniques for trafficking individuals. Moreover, the ultimate number of criminal measures in most European countries is superior in comparison to the rest of the world. The only way for the globe to move forward is to act more and talk less because after all, actions speak louder than words!

Kim Gregory, Malta 2013

Madrid, culture and crisis

Madrid has been for a long time a city connected with culture. After Franco's dictatorship, a new cultural movement began in the city, La Movida Madrileña, changing minds and opening new ways of culture: more independent and mixed. During these years, new musicians, printers, writers and other kind of artists created a new concept of culture and therefore grew new young and modern culture centers around some quarters of the capital of Spain. Some of them were occupied for young artist who

think in the art as the art of a free expression: without control of governments and without the capitalism policies. The number of squatters has grown in the last years. One example can be founded in Chueca's quarter.

Chueca was a quarter where chaos and art make an indivisible whole. During 70's, this quartier was an complicated area in the center of Madrid because the drugs and prostitution. After that, gay's movement and market changed this neighbo-



red in a new area where art and culture are main items.

The name of the squatter Garbage, shows how an old and neglected building can become an alive space. This center located in Barbieri's street, was before a Chinese restaurants. Since October this year, Garbage offers a lot of art activities like concerts, recital of poetry and arts exhibitions of young artist. Nowadays, Garbage still fighting against the official culture because its illegal status.

Leaving the center and walking right to the south of Madrid, across small streets, we arrive in Lavapiés.

Lavapiés it's a multiethnic and cultural quartier. It is important to highlight the 40% of population are immigrants from Africa and Latinoamerica. This mixture of cultures makes an alternative and cheaper cultural movement. In its streets we can find some of important art centers: Centro Dramático Nacional, Teatro Valle Inclán and Tacabalera.

It is a special example. It started like a tobacco factory and when this factory closed was occupied. In 2000, the occupation finished and started a new era in this center: after some years of discussion, the center started to be self-organized but allowed by the governments. With not so much money and damaged for the economic situation, the center tries to survive and keeps some activities and other events for this multicultural area. In the other side of the city, Madrid Río, called el pulmón verde, is the cultural center Matadero.

Madrid Río is an ambitious and new plan of urbanism. With a lot of millions of inversion, this new area wants to be a cultural center. Therefore, with the totally support of the Madrid's governments, Matadero is founded. The inversion in this cultural center and surroundings was 10,5 millions €. In Matadero takes place films, presentations,

exhibitions, theaters, conferences, workshops. The most important of this center is the big help that governments give to them.

And the questions comes: which one of this three examples is the best one? Is the money the conditional of art?

Alba Vila and Adolfo Rubio, Spain 2012

Roma's people want to work

On 1st August 2012 has been launched a Czech project called „Romas work and want to work“. The aim of this project is to point out the Roma's situation in the Czech Republic is getting worse. Romas people have to face many prejudices in their everyday life. Mostly the society think that all of the Roma's people don't work, they're satisfied only with the help from the state and so on.

The campaign is based on some very creative posters which are being placed in public transport, on the internet and the company is also organising plenty of events where can the visitors find out more information about this issue and they can make a discussion about it.

I personally like those posters because they're very original. They use paradoxical situation and they're also fun a little bit. Every poster consists of a bold title which presents one of those prejudices that the Czech people about Romas usually have. It's really difficult to translate them because the literal translation wouldn't make any sense. For example if someone in the Czech Republic said „I had my apartment whitened“ – it doesn't mean that someone came and painted his walls with white colour but it means someone robbed his apartment. So that one of the posters has a big title „I met a Roma who had my apartment whitened“ – it sounds like a Roma robbed his apartment. But underline is written „He is a really good painter“ – which actually explains that the Roma is a painter by profession.

Actually, attitude of the Czech public to this campaign is pretty bad. Despite the original design of those posters, people mean that it can't help to change the current situation in our country. Well, we'll see...

Barbora Heresová, Czech Republic 2012

BTW. You can check the posters on this link
<http://www.mypracujeme.cz/galerie/ukazka-galerie>

Sport



The Olympic Games in Slovakia – only a dream?

People have still in their minds heroic achievements, world records and last but not least the electric atmosphere of the Summer Olympic Games in London and already on February 7 in Russia will be celebrated one year until the start of a new adventure – the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games! People from all over the world focus their attention on this extraordinary event. Slovakia can be another contender in the field – 2022 is our time.

The Olympic Games are considered to be the world's most significant sports competition, which have seen a rise of many great athletes in their history. The Olympics are important from various points of view. In the world where violence, mass demonstrations and discrimination are part of our everyday life, Olympics contribute to a better future. Let's imagine that. It's a start of a football match or a hockey game, no matter who sits next to you, which language he speaks or what he wears, whether your companion is Spaniard or Bulgarian, you are just united in the same interest, the same PASSION. This is exactly the right word – passion that makes athletes and audience happy and joyful. Ladies and gentlemen, that's what we call the magic of the Olympic Games.

And now Poland and Slovakia stand in front of a chance to organize together the Olympic Games 2022 that could be held in Kraków and Zakopane (Poland), in Poprad and Tatry (Slovakia). The plan shows that Krakow

would host the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, and the city would also host the majority of the events played on ice, while Zakopane, Poland's winter tourist capital, would host snowboarding, cross country skiing, and the biathlon. Slovakia would organize several skiing events and some of the ice hockey fixtures.

Polish and Slovak common Olympic bid has immediately elicited zealous discussions. Unfortunately, many reactions were rather negative. On the one hand, it's indisputable that such an event would help to promote Slovak tourism as Slovak Republic would become a centre of world's sport. On the other hand, Slovak citizens rise up against any projects and proposals regarding the Olympic Games and find it ridiculous. The reason is simple – money. Opponents claim that Slovakia doesn't have enough money for organizing it and compare these attempts to a financial suicide.

In our part of Europe (East Central) no Winter Olympics have ever been held. The nearest Winter Olympics were held in Innsbruck, Austria 1964/1976 or in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia/Bosnia and Herzegovina 1984. The host city will be elected July 31, 2015 at the 127th IOC Session in Kuala Lumpur; however the application deadline is set on November 14, 2013.

Slovakia bid independently in 2002 and 2006 for the Winter Olympics but went unsuccessful. Is this finally a right moment for us?

What are your feelings about that? Feel free to react!

Eva Rihová, Slovakia 2013

Travel



Benefits of travelling

Have you ever wondered what travelling gives to people? Is it just all about getting away from home or something more? The person who has seen the world has more knowledge about the things going on elsewhere.

From a personal standpoint, travelling is one of the ways how to accomplish themselves, for example some people go abroad only with a packback just to see if they could live without fancy hotels and only little cash in their pockets. On the other hand, it might get really hard to get food and shelter but young people like adventures.

The second reason, why so many young people travel to other countries is that they want to become an exchange student. This also includes very much travelling and seeing the land. Unfortunately, it might be a sad travel because of missing their family.

From a religious and historical point of view, it can be said that travelling can be really helpful if it comes to gaining knowledge about the history of the country where a person is staying at. But a person must know at least something about the country because there might be totally different traditions and you might get into a disgraceful situation.

In my opinion, young people should grab every opportunity to travel because it gives you a paggage of knowledge that you can learn only practically.

Margot Tiru, Estonia 2013

The Student's Guide to Travelling: How To Extend Your Boundaries Without Extending Your Wallet

To put it simply, travelling is one of the greatest joys in my life. When I was a young girl, I always dreamed of becoming a journalist who

travelled to all the corners of the Earth for her stories. Living in the midst of war, poverty, natural disasters, visiting jungles, mountains, deserts, oceans – you name it. Ten years later, my passion for travelling has still not subsided, and as an Erasmus student living in Germany, you can be sure that I'm doing my best to make the most of it.

When it comes to student travelling, money tends to be the number one concern. Flights, trains, trams – it all adds up – so ask around for local sites where you can get a lift with other people travelling in the same direction and you pay something towards their petrol. Here in Germany we use <http://www.mitfahrgelegenheit.de/>, and usually the difference between using public transport and liftsharing ranges from 5 to 20 euro! Also, when using cheap airlines like Ryanair or Easyjet, if they don't fly

directly to your desired destination, check out whether they fly to another airport which does, and compare prices with the cost of the local public transport and see which is cheaper.

For example, when I visited a friend in Malmö, Sweden, it was cheaper to book flights from Düsseldorf to London, then from London to Malmö (and back) than to take a direct flight to Stockholm and catch a train from there, the same one, but that's how it works at the moment. If you play your cards right, like waiting for the offpeak season for tra-

velling or looking out for when there are sales, you can really save a lot of

money – and travel more!

Another of my favourite ways of travelling is using the ingenious concept of Couchsurfing. Basically, to couchsurf means to sleep on someone's couch for the night. This is fine if you have friends in another country – but if you don't, check out the website www.couchsurfing.org. This site is run by a company in San Francisco, and basically all you do is create a profile and then start looking at the profiles of people in the place you want to visit. You then contact them and see if they can offer you a couch. A lot of the time people have spare rooms or mattresses, so you can look around for what you prefer. Don't be worried that you might be staying with an

axe murder or a rapist. This is the conditioning of the media on your brain. Most of the time you meet people just like you and me, who love travelling themselves.

I promise you that is a great way to travel as you meet a lot of new, fascinating people, who love being a tour guide and enjoy showing you around their country. You also get a real look at what that country is like

when you stay with someone who lives there, as opposed to the dry 'touristy' hotelrooms, which can cost you over 60euro per night. Couchsurfing is free, and you can simply buy some wine or bake something as a thankyou to your host, but even this is not obligatory.

So, I hope you found these tips useful. Later I will be writing a more detailed version (such as the best way to pack your luggage) on my blog:

<http://thegirlontherock.blogspot.de> so you can check it out if you are interested, and also contact me with any questions that you might have.

Until then, I wish you happy travelling!

Natasha Sing, Malta 2013

The Vietnam Experience

There are three stages in getting to know Vietnam. The first one started when I got off the airport taxi, in downtown Saigon at 2 in the morning. You feel like you don't have enough eyes to see everything, to watch out for everything nor to acknowledge every blinking light and the truth is you don't. The first night in Vietnam is all about the air vibrating, about the music of the omnipresent high heels (and short skirts), the clinking of chop sticks hitting the bottom of a bowl of pho, the non-stop honking of dozens of motorbikes that melt into a pleasant purring as the night goes by. The first couple of days in Vietnam go by as if you

are dreaming. Every face is new and beautiful and you can't get enough of the sun and the food... Oh the food! Exploding with spices and herbs and every kind of sea food there is, a delight at every corner of the street, at any hour of the days and especially the night.

You drift by, smiling and waving and returning every cheerful hello Vietnam throws at you and only see the good around you.

But then a week passes by and suddenly you start to see more than the open houses and the convenience of having everything for sale always at just 5 feet away. You start to see the garbage and then a rat passes by your feet in a night fish market and then the bus driver is not entertaining anymore but just a strange man that throws his trash out the bus window.

And the smiles don't look as good anymore and the prices aren't so surprisingly small anymore and you feel tired.

But don't disappear, the third stage is about to kick in! You now know the correct price for fruits you never ate



before and you can make your way across the most crowded motorbike lane with your eyes closed and you feel strong. You already ate at the dingiest places and your sun tan is now settled. Now you don't wait for smiles, you start handing them around instead of Vietnamese dong and you feel less lost or vulnerable.

It is in this stage that you can really know Vietnam, when the right questions come to your mind and you can understand the locals. In this stage you can find out for example about the many religions of the Vietnamese people. But be careful who you ask!

First I asked the owner of a hostel in Da lat, the sweetest woman I ever seen, if she is a Buddhist. Her response was swift –No, my father is a communist so we don't have a religion– but the shrine in her hostel lobby adorned with a fresh batch of dragon fruit offerings told a different story.

The next person I asked was an orphan brought up at a

Buddhist temple in Nha Trang. She fluently spoke 3 foreign languages and told me there are three religions in Vietnam: Buddhist, Christianity and communism.

I was confused by her answer, seeing that I was just coming from the Cham temple where the Linga and Yoni (penis and vagina) were so peacefully revered.

It was about time I took things into my own hands so I hit the streets with my eyes open. What is the most praised and well known symbol around? In a land of no copyright laws and endless markets, Apple seems to rule the Vietnamese imagination. Flip-flops, hats, bags, t-shirts and skirts, face-masks and motorbike mirrors, there is nothing that the infamous Apple logo is not printed on.

But Vietnam is not only food and beaches, noise and heat, street vendors and pollution. There is dignity in the Vietnamese way of life given by the fact that they earn their living everyday by any means and never shy from work.

A country of many colors, Vietnam might just win you over if you come with an open heart.

But it might also wear you down to your most basic feelings only to spit you out on one of its white beaches, blue waterfalls or red dirt roads, a traveler with a distant home and a vague understanding of what it means to be born in a land of permanent sun and to have to hide from it every day.

Sabina David, Romania 2013

Traveling in Europe

While studying abroad this year, I have gotten to travel a bit and I have noticed some things that at first I found bizarre but are actually quite typical for Europeans. It is standard in the U.S. to have a car unless you live in a city

because then public transport is many times much cheaper than owning a car. However, if you live in the country side like I do, having a car is your only chance for transportation. I've noticed that the system for trains, trams, and buses within Germany is far more extensive than that within the U.S. so not owning a car, even if you live in a smaller city, isn't a big deal.

At first, I was shocked at the number of people I had met that didn't have a car but then I realized it's not a practical for them. The biggest difference in transportation that I have encountered was flying. I decided to fly from Belgium to Ireland for a trip. I was so very confused when I arrived at the airport at night and everything was closed. Every airport I had ever been to (within the U.S. of course) never shut down at night. There were always people and shops open but it was dead and everything was closed in Belgium. That wasn't even the most bizarre part of my trip. In the morning when I have to catch my flight, I was standing in line with my tickets and then following the crowd to what I thought was the jetway bridge. I was sadly mistaken and stunned when I ended up outside on the runway and still following the crowd walking up to the plane.

My eyes were in disbelief. I swore that there was some sort of mistake. I felt as if I had been transported back to the 1950s, or that I was cast in the final scene of Casablanca. Never in my life I ever have had to walk outside on an airport runway and then walk up stairs onto a plane. After that incident, I talked with some European students who informed me that it was perfectly normal to board a plane that way and that it is typical for flying. In the end, it really was a cool experience. I will always find it a little strange but it's definitely one for my history books.

Briana Maddalena, USA 2013

Unemployment



Young, educated, and looking for a job!

When Laura (23) started studies at The Faculty of Social Sciences in The University of Latvia she had to find a job to pay for her living so she started to work as a babysitter in the kindergarten. Asked how she managed to combine studies with a part time job, she tells that it was very hard: "I had to wake up at 7 o'clock, went to the early lectures, in the afternoon went to the work and got home at 11 o'clock. I did my home works at night and woke up at 7 again. I wonder how I managed to survive it, I think couldn't do it now."

The average student in Latvia living in the dormitory in the first years of studies needs approximately 100 – 200 lats (200 – 300 euro) per month [1]. Many of them get social loans, help from their parents and few get scholarships but Laura had to make living on her own. As a part time babysitter she earned 240 lats. It was necessary for her to work since there was no any other way how to keep on studies but money issue wasn't the only source of the pressure. After she got the budget place she also had to study a lot to make sure she wouldn't lose the opportunity to study for free: "Emotionally it was very hard but I didn't think about it much. The hardest part was getting a job after the studies," tells Laura. For the first months after graduating Laura felt frustrated. "I sent approximately 40 CVs and in the most cases I didn't get the answer at all."

Laura kept on working as a babysitter since she wanted to live in Riga where there were more possibilities to get the job than in the countryside. Still Laura was determined to make career in media after graduating and it took her a year and a half until she started to work as video editor.

"You won't get a job if you don't have the experience but you can't get the experience if you don't have a job" has become a common phrase among young people in Latvia. When you ask them to tell about job perspectives in their chosen profession, majority is pessimistic and understands there's a possibility that after graduating they won't find a way to earn money with the knowledge and experience gained in universities. The relation between theoretical and practical skills is not necessarily related to the demands of the labor market. One of the main reasons is the growing popularity of Law, Economics, and Communication and Media studies. In this case labor market is overloaded with graduates in Social Sciences but qualified engineers and graduates from professional colleges are absent.

The cooperation between universities, students and employers in the most cases hasn't been productive for the last years and only now when the quality of education has

been more actively discussed, the collaboration is possible. One of the platforms for dialogue among students, academics and employers is a forum "Ready for a Labor Market" made by Student Association of Latvia (LSA) and held in September, 2012. The presented solutions show the correlation between the practical courses in universities and potential work places and employment. Education policy makers, academics, students and representatives of The Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia stress the necessity to make parts of higher education programs fit the needs of labor market and employers, educate young people about lifelong learning and labor rights, and stress the role of government as the main institution capable to encourage and support both students and employers. [2] If taken these measures could become a real solution for unemployment issue in Latvia but it should be considered that the labor market situation is extremely dependent on the whole economic situation of the country. Also the question rises about the student motivation which is not always affected only by the quality of studies but also by the experience, personal aims and expectation of the future life. "Competition is needed if you want to grow up not only as a personality but also as employee. Motivation makes you more favorable for the labor market, especially in the time of crises when employees are looking for alternative and innovative ideas," tells Laura.

In the beginning of the 2012 European Commission asked to solve the youth unemployment issue in Latvia since almost 30% of unemployed people are youngsters. [3] The main aim set up by EC is to make sure that graduates could find a job in four months after getting a degree. Although discussion about the quality of higher education and labor market has been a part of a daily agenda for the last years, unemployment is still THE issue for students in Latvia. Previously mentioned solutions and further cooperation between all the involved parts could give a hope for young people in the labor market.

[1] Diena. (2012). Studenti mēnesi videji iztiek ar 100-200 latiem. Retrieved.: 30th October, 2012. <http://www.diena.lv/latvija/zinas/studenti-menesi-videji-iztiek-ar-100-200-latiem-13966004>

[2] LSA. (2012). Darba tirgum derigs. Sk.: 30.oktobris, 2012. <http://www.lsa.lv/dtd/2012/10/01/ideju-foruma-prezentacijas/>

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3. Click on posts (left side-bar)
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6. Publish (left side-bar)

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