

European Youth Voice



Vote for Europe

www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu

An international online newspaper for young Europeans by young people
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Vote for Europe – a chance for everyone!
Youth exchange in Münster,
Germany in November 2013

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These are some examples of articles from the EuropeanYouthVoice. Find more articles and Videos on our website:

www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu

„Vote for Europe“

– that was the main topic of a youth exchange in Münster, Germany in November 2013. 61 young people from 13 different countries in Europe participated. The youth exchange calls for the young people in Europe to actively participate in the European elections in 2014. This means on the one hand to participate in the elections and on the other hand a socio-political commitment to democracy, diversity, understanding, justice and peaceful living.

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 organisation

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 2014 is called: „Diversity“ 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 informations on our seminars and projects. The current European projects are:

- EuropeanYouthVoice (www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu)
- young workers for europe (www.youngworkers.de)

The Supporters

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Europe and Politics



Community policing – what is this and how it works in Poland

Community policing is the concept of the environmental police – is to effectively combat crime and anti-social behavior require close cooperation between police forces with members of the local community. Police officers should be members of the communities in which they work. Building trust and faith in the rule of law is accomplished by establishing direct contacts with people. Police officers should be open to citizens and should help them even in the case of problems that not have a direct connection with the violation of the law.

The emergence of ideas Community policing comes from American state system based on democracy and the independence of large territorial units. The concept of police cooperation with residents emerged while maintaining security and order in the community. Undoubtedly, this was a very important factor because without civil society and an individual approach to the problems of citizens would be impossible to achieve objectives of the CP.

Socio-political changes that took place in Poland after 1989 became the beginning for a new model of police, who had to cope with a huge stigma, because of being a successor "Citizens Militia" (Milicja

obywatelska) identified with the government of "Polish Communist Republic" (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa). Currently, it has to lead an increase in the activity of the society to strengthen public safety and also realize that security and social order is not just a matter of the government and its administration, but also the common good and the value of modern society. The legal act defining the task of the police is the Act of 6 April 1990 about the police. Its basic tasks include initiating and organizing activities to prevent the commission of offenses and criminal phenomena and cooperation in this field with state agencies, local governments, citizens and community organizations. This provision is the legal basis for community policing on Polish soil. The main Tool to carry out these activities are police officers called "dzielnicowi" (Regional police officer). These are police officers who are supposed to control and prevent



in their area. However, is not working as it should and the percentage of crime in Poland is still too high. According to the statistics 85% of the population don't know their "dzielnicy".

Karol Oleszek, Poland, November 2014

Elections saga in Azerbaijan

This year, on 9th of October, presidential elections were held in Azerbaijan. As expected, Ilham Aliyev's third victory was preponderant, 85%.

Maidenly he got to power in 2003 after his father, Heydar, pulled back from the politics. Heydar, the former KGB head, was on reign around 40 years. If we look at the European Council's official announcement about 2013 elections : "overall around election day we

have observed a free, fair and transparent electoral process", everything looks to be fine and democratic, even a lot of newspapers used this statement and did not go deeper in the topic. If we look at the real situation, the problems arise. There is a big difference even in the announcements in EU and OSCE, whose report pointed out: "It was undermined by limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly, and association that did not guarantee a level playing field for candidates".

Aliyev's campaign from elections-to-elections is held every single day. All the media has to cover their president's activities and the news are shown always from the curved mirror. Before the elections all the teachers were enforced to call through all the parents to remind them to vote for Aliyev, people were handed out already filled voting ballots, the voters were transported with buses through different voting offices so they could give Aliyev more than just one vote. People on the streets were taken forcibly to the voting boxes and so on and so on. Human rights violations did not end with the elections, on 12th of October 4 000 people protested against the voting results – around ten protesters were arrested while the others were beaten.

The weird thing in the election results is the fact that the official results were accidentally published a day before the polls were opened. The Central Election Commission of Azerbaijan announced Ilham Aliyev to be the winner with 73%.

Of course Azerbaijan is not the only and the worst country in the world that has problems with democratic elections but as an opinion leaders we, the citizens of EU, need to stand as well for the rights of the people that do not have the chance to stand for themselves. Letting Aliyev act like he wants only strengthens his power while there is no help for democratic organizations that want to save the country from dictatorship. European Union, especially in foreign policy, can not be just and economic union.

Anti Haugas, Estonia, November 2013

Latvia 2014: Here comes the euro!

It's probably going to be cold and frustrating morning in Latvia at New Year's morning. Not so much because of the weather, but more because of the touchy money change process. At the 1st January Latvians will start buying their products and pay for the rent with euro currency.

Money has always been a sensitive subject, so it's not really easy to just change your habits of how you manage your expenses. Especially, now when Europe is still facing the consequences from the financial crisis. So it is hard to have 100% positive attitude towards currency exchange from lats to euros.

How is euro seen by Latvian eyes? The debate about euro in Latvia

has different opinions. Some people see new opportunities for business and international cooperation, others are worried about the possibility of price increase even though economists say otherwise. And let's not forget the emotional connection to the lats currency which symbolizes our nation's independence from the Soviet Russia.

Liva, 23 year old journalist said: "I think people jitter too much around all that euro thing. Lot of people have lack of knowledge, so they just assume government gonna do something bad again."

Olafs (23) thinks otherwise: Even the pillow has its cool and not so cool side, so euro implementation in Latvia has its benefits and losses.



(Data taken from article “Euro implementation advantages and disadvantages”). For Latvians euro implementation still awaits, but what could we learn from other euro zone participants, who have devoted their wallets to euro currency.

ESTONIA – joined eurozone at year 2011

But after euro was implemented the things started rapidly change in more negative way. Product prices increased, companies rounded up all prices and lot of thing became more expensive.

“People was disappointed, because they believed that euro can solve lot of problems not create more. Also we had to give a donation to the Greece at the time, even we had financial problems of our own. I think it it’s more about bad timing.

Situation is getting better after the crisis so people understand that euro is great way to do business abroad and compare expenses in Europe level. Also traveling got easier because of the euro.

SLOVAKIA – joined eurozone at year 2009

After euro was implemented prices went little bit higher and people of course were angry. Some of Slovaks couldn’t got use to the small coins. Also our perspective of the money value changed. We thought the euro is not so valuable, because 60 korunas is equal to 2 Euros. It’s more about perspective on numbers in general.

GREECE – joined eurozone at year 2001

“The currency change wasn’t so hard, because people were ready for some changes at that time,” said Greece resident Vivi (27).

“At first we had to learn the difference between both currencies, but it was more fun new adventure than frustrating experience. People carried calculators around to see how much things cost now. Suddenly we felt rich. Rich in that sense, that in the past we have to pay 10000 drachmas for pair of shoes, but now it is enough with 35 euros. We saw euro as really valuable money,” says the girl.

“Of course after the crisis prices went up, but I don’t think the euro is to blame. Some of people want to go back to our old currency, but I think euro is more competitive in international market. We are better with euro than without it,” concludes Vivi.

Looking at the big picture

So looking at the big picture to the implementation to euro we see Latvia should be ready for little price increase, but from all this comes good things too. Like, easier traveling, international business and faster money transfers.

Maybe we lose one of national identity objects, but we can become more united with Europe market, finance system and development level.

So the main thing that should be done in Latvia is for the go-

vernment to educate people about the impact of the new currency, so the paying with euro wouldn’t become unpleasant event in the beginning of 2014.

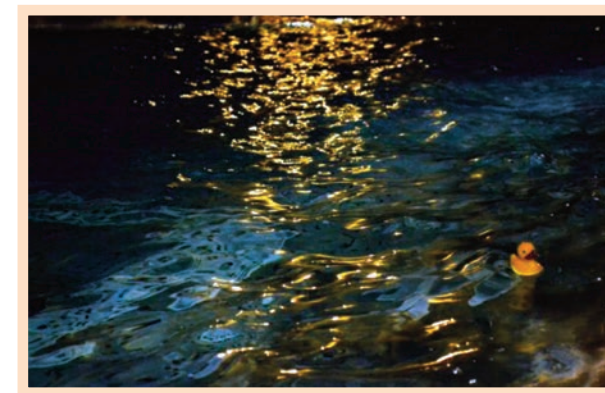
Herta Taube, Latvia, November 2013

Participation is young

Young people in an ageing continent; This could probably be a general sentence covering the situation of modern European society. So, although Europe is usually being referred to as the old continent, there is no denial that the young part of its population is of great number and, to my mind, also of great potential. Despite that though, during the last years an abstention of that promising group of the population has been noticed in terms of participation and civic engagement both on a local level but more evidently on a European scale. Maybe it is that young people do not feel that much part of a European society, maybe it is that they have no motivation to feel so because they find themselves and their lifestyles really different from those of other peers abroad, or even maybe it is that there is no European citizenship feeling at all? Whichever the attempts to generate a stable answer through social theories of statistical figures, I share the viewpoint that the chances of finding

young people that care about the wider European social reality can be better and there is already such a tendency coming forward; Yes, participation can and should be of young age.

Citizenship is a wider concept than a legal or civil status and is linked to people’s willingness and ability to actively participate in society. What is more, citizenship encompasses various social actions, for instance voluntary work, community networking, political engagement. By participating in communities, young people can influence policies and practices in the world around them. Most often, citizenship is associated with national identity or is limited



First swims in the waters of European society – a youth’s case

to belonging to the most formal sense, such as being born in X country and granted the equivalent citizenship, rather than becoming an active member of the society. There is also not a common understanding of what participation stands for, or participation is solely connected to politics in people's minds, so it is then being averted of as a result of mistrust, corruption, lack of transparent and clear division of duties in political institutions which, in the case of Europe, are mostly centralized in the western part of the continent.

There are however encouraging efforts targeting especially people of young age with the primary aim of opening their eyes of perception in the faces of different yet interconnected European societies. To name some basic moves to that direction, Youth in Action (YiA) funds projects which are designed to encourage a sense of active European citizenship in young people and offering a chance for them to see beyond personal borders by sharing opinions and experiences with peers from abroad. Other than that, there exists the European Youth Portal, providing information on 31 countries and in 24 languages and allowing online discussions through forums. Last but not least, big amounts of exchange programs can emerge through newsletters. And most of times it is all just about an application away.

Wrapping it up, I think young persons should be able to make steps in active participation. Even in times of crisis when most of the

times everything around paints a dim picture of reality, effort should be put on finding common ground between different situations but same problems or fears. It is that understanding that triggers participatory action and enhances the will to see things change for all.

Dimos Papadimitriou, Greece, September 2004

Single- party systems and two- party systems

Although the term single- party system is controversial (a system implies on having certain relations between different units), it nevertheless aids in differing political systems, where on the one hand, a party enjoys power through politically eliminating its opponents and on the other hand, there is lively competition between several parties. Since monopolistic parties function as constant governments, they nearly always lead to a state apparatus.

Regarding single- party systems, we can distinguish two different types. The first kind of systems can be found in socialistic regimes where the communist parties have taken control of all aspects of society. These parties have a strong ideological discipline and highly structured organizations aligned with principles of democratic centralism. These are cadre parties, mass parties, which means that membership is limited on political and ideological considerations.

Nearly 5% of the Chinese population are members of the CKP and nearly 9% of the population of the Soviet Union belonged to the Communist Party. In this manner, the core of the party consists of highly paid government officials who review the state apparatus and social establishments. The central tool to control society and government is the nomenclature system, which implies on filling relevant positions with candidates approved by the party.

The second kind of single- party systems link to anti-colonialist nationalism and consolidation of the government in the developing countries. The parties exercising governance in Ghana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe have developed from independence movements which proclaimed the inevitable necessity of economic growth and state building. In Zimbabwe, the single- party system developed only six years after gaining independence through the joining of the two



main parties. Single-party systems in Africa and Asia are generally founded on the basis of a charismatic leader, thus also creating the corresponding ideological identity. Such parties are generally poorly organized and managed.

Speaking of two-party systems, we can distinguish two main parties that mainly have an equal opportunity to win elections. Two-party systems are classically ascertained through three criteria: although smaller parties might exist, only two possess the necessary power in order to have a realistic chance to win the elections; the larger party is able to exercise power on its own, the second party forms an opposition; power alternates between the two, both are eligible to be elected and the opposition works as the walls of the government.

USA and the UK are the most common examples of two-party systems. Archetypal models of two-party systems are rare. Even in the UK, which is held as the standard model of two-party systems, the three aforementioned criteria have been fulfilled only during certain periods of time. In addition, the two-partyism between the Labor Party and the Conservative Party during the post-WW2 period was marked with a 13-year rule by the Conservative Party, which as a result undermined the electability of the Labor Party. One might say, that in the UK, the two-party system has not existed since 1974 when the joint support of the two parties fell below 75%.

Even the seemingly irrefutable US two-partyism between the democrats and republicans can be questioned. On the one hand, the presidential system allows one party to hold the White House while the other possesses power in the Congress, which means that the government and the opposition might be difficult to distinguish. On the other hand, candidates of a third party can have a remarkable substantiality as Ross Perot showed in 1992.

The main advantage of the two-party system is ensuring stability, responsibility and making decisions. Rivalry, regarding two-partyism, offers the voters the possibility of choosing between two different manifestos and alternative governments. The voters are certain, that in the event of their favored party winning, it has the competence to fulfill its manifesto without the need to make compromises in a coalition treaty.

As a disadvantage, it is noted that in the urge of gaining favoring from the voters, parties exceed one another's statements and as a result, a party might come in power with a manifesto which is unachievable due to the shortage of necessary resources. The absence of freedom of choice and different ideologies are also seen as downsides of the two-party system. In the given time of individual and social differences, only two options are not sufficient.

Kevin Tammearu, Estonia, November 2013

Spaniards Perception of the European Union

The relationship between Spain and Europe comes back from the last centuries. But recently, Spain joined the European Union since its integration in 1986. In the present time, this country after 39 years under Franco's Dictatorship has changed economically, politically and socially.

Along these years, Spaniards feel that Europe is a huge step to reach freedom, economic advantages and a better democracy. Contrary to Spaniards thinking, the crisis that affects Europe has formed an anti-European feeling over the few last years. In France, Holland, U.K and Greece political parties have emerged with an anti-European ideology with an important electoral support looking ahead the next election to the European Parliament.

Spain at the moment doesn't have experience in this issue. The most important political parties are pro-Europe and Spaniards are still supporting the construction of a united Europe. Surveys such as Eurostat are made by media corporations who agreed the idea of developing an European identity inside the Spanish society.

A small survey done for this article shows if this affirmation is true. The method was inquiring about aspects like integration of new countries into Europe and the future of the European Union as a whole. This survey was sent by e-mail and published in forums of debate in newspapers and Facebook and answered by over 100 users

in the [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) webpage. It shows a big similarity in some questions with official surveys published by media but this results apply to tested methods used by surveys to gather information.

The first question about political measures done by EU, showed that 87,76% of people are against these and 6,12% support the economic and social strategies of the European Union. This percentage is extremely high because political administration endorsement over last few years has strongly diminished. The increase of poverty, unemployment and huge cases of corruption make political institutions unreliable. In fact, a study made by the European Commission reveals that 95% of Spaniards have the opinion that Spain is a corrupt country.



The second question is about the integration of new countries in the EU. Europe tries to integrate eastern countries into Europe but Russia disagrees. Ukraine is a clear example of this fight between West and Russia. The ex-soviet republic is very close to reach civil war because the new government wants to integrate in the European Union. But, what do Europeans think in this situation? Also a portion of Europeans don't agree to expand their borders more than the traditional border. In this survey, over 100 Spaniards are still supporting the integration of new countries regardless of the crisis in the economy and institutions in Europe (51,55% approve the EU integration and 34,02% doesn't approve).

The study also inquires about the possibility to create a unique "European country" and administration. If this measure was approved, a new big federation will have exclusive competences transferred by European countries. This concept is supported by some groups, but is not popular between governments and politicians. This survey showed that 42,42% agreed to create a new status quo for Europe, 35,35% don't agree and 16,16% don't express their opinion on this matter. This result shows that a big percentage of Spaniards agreed the concept of the creation of a unique European Country but also 35,35% are against this measure and 16,16% don't express their opinion. The last two questions are focused on the next European Parliament elections on May and the identity of Spaniards.

The next elections in the European Parliament are important because this institution decisions will have high impact in the future, nevertheless European people doesn't share big interest in this matter. Some countries, such as Eslovaquia, are example of the lack of interest of general population in politics with a small participation in the European elections of 2009: 19,64% of the population voted in this election. Related to the present question, over 100 users express their intention to vote in the next elections. 61,62% of the population will go to vote, 26,26% will not go to vote and 11,11% don't know at the moment. In 2009, 44,90% of Spaniards went to vote, so probably this percentage will be repeated on May. If the question were about a mix of population emotional state and the identity issue? To ask how users feel about their identity, there is a common notion: Spaniards according to other surveys feel Europe as part of their identity, around 89% have an European feeling.

I feel just Spaniard	5,49%
I feel more Spaniard than European	35,16%
I feel Spaniard and European	46,15%
I feel more European than Spaniard or just feel European	7,69%
I feel just european	1,10%
Don't know	4,41%

In general, Spanish people spot Europe as a wake-up call to leave their current economic crisis. Europe has this significance in terms of political and economical point of view. The liberty to move between the countries of the European Union, the same currency and the possibility to search of better jobs and salaries. In aspects of culture and nationality, the European Union is still far to achieve the creation of a unique strong European Cultural Identity that establish and strengthen the progress achieved in the politics and economics.

Adolfo Rubio, Spain, March 2014

Syrians calling for help

Can you imagine what it is to feel scared in our own home? Do you know the feeling of wanting to escape from your own country in order to save your children's life? It's hard to imagine but it happens to thousands of Syrians refugees. Every single day many people escape from Syria searching for security. Many mothers and their children seek refugee in Europe. They pay to Turkish trafficans to bring them to Bulgarian borders. This costs them a lot of money and puts at risk their lives. But what happens when they come in Bulgaria?

They found themselves in a situation of waiting for permissions for months in refugee camps where the conditions of life are risky



miserable. In those camps they don't have enough food, clothes, medicines. There is not even enough space for all the people so some of them sleep outside in tents on freezing temperatures and others are sheltered in overcrowded buildings – therefore comes the problem with the hygiene and epidemics.

On the other hand it appears a problem with the local people. Some of them share xenophobic attitude and behave aggressively. Others are protesting against creating more refugee camps even if it's obviously necessarily. There are some people, of course, who try to help by donating supplies of first need. But the number of the Syrians is rising and this help is far not enough.

The question is why has this happened? Why were we unprepared for this situation? The war in Syria started two years ago so it was expected to have a lot of refugees coming to Europe. The way to Europe goes through Bulgaria. So why in such an expectable situation Bulgaria and Europe find themselves so unprepared?

Maria Koeva, Bulgaria, January 2014

What do you know about Egypt?

Do you know that Egypt is the world's most populous Arab country and the cultural centre of the Middle East and its stability is highly important to the region? This is only one thing from a variety I have not known until I met Kleopatra Yousef*. Kleopatra works as a Junior Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) in Athens. She is involved in the research project on Governance of Irregular Migration (IRMA) focusing on Pakistani irregular migration to Greece and in the research project developing a cooperation network to link representatives of Mediterranean member states facing similar challenges as Greece in respect to the integration of third country nationals. Her father is from Egypt, so I found the opportunity to ask her some things about Egypt.

We had a very constructive discussion around various issues relating to Egypt. She explained to me that the country is currently facing a very unstable period in terms of political and social life. In 2012 after the Arab Spring's uprising, Muslim Brotherhood's candidate Muhammad Morsi was Egypt's first democratically elected leader after winning the first post-Hosni Mubarak presidential election. His rise to the helm of power was a sharp reversal for the Muslim Brotherhood that was repressed for decades under Mubarak's rule, and it was part of a general rise to power of Islamists.

She made me understand how Morsi's government faced severe criticism as liberal and secular activists accused the government, and the Muslim Brotherhood in general, of trying to monopolize power and failing to implement essential social and economic reforms. They also drew criticism over a series of charges and complaints against activists, journalists and TV personalities. Morsi was deposed a year later through a combination of mass anti-government protest and a military coup. Since then, the country remains deeply divided between Islamist and secular groups, while Egyptian military remains the country's chief political broker and decision-maker. Especially after the ongoing violence and criminal attacks since last July, political uncertainty and anxiety over the future have generated ongoing political protest, labour strikes, deep mistrust between Islamist and secular parties, as well as Muslim-Christian tension in some parts of the country.

Moreover, Kleopatra Yousef informed me that Egypt's former constitution placed the "principles" of sharia as the main source of legislation, providing non-Muslims with the right to preserve their own traditions so as to deal with social and legal matters. Hard-line Islamists, for their part, want the new constitution to declare either "the rules of sharia", or simply sharia, as the main source of

legislation. The current politically unstable situation is partly due to the dispute over the full application of sharia. When I asked her about the Western World she said to me that Western World has officially condemned the attacks of the military over the Muslim Brotherhood protesters since last July (USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia). Meanwhile the period during which Morsi and the Muslim Brother-



hood were in power, political “involvement”, diplomatic and financial support has been largely provided behind the scenes by other Islamic countries such as Turkey and Qatar. I asked her, also, if the situation in Syria can cause some effects in Egypt and she told me that the civil war in Syria will definitely create refugee flows moving to the rest of Arab countries, in which Egypt is included.

I want to thank Kleopatra Yousef* for the discussion we had and for their valuable assistance in getting closer to a country that is going through a deep crisis.

Picture by Elina Leli

Angelos Vasileiou, Greece, October 2013

* Kleopatra Yousef:

She has graduated from the Social Administration Department of the Democritus University of Thrace in Athens and holds a Master of Science degree on the subject of “European Politics and Policies” from the Department of Social and Political Sciences of the Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven (KUL), Belgium (2005). Her research experience includes the Middle-East, North Africa and wide Euro-Mediterranean area focusing on issues such as integration of third-country nationals and community development. (EuropeAid project on “Bridging the Gap: Building Community Empowerment and Sustainable Development in Southern Giza Marginal Communities”). She has also looked into human smuggling in Greece as part of a UNODC project on human smuggling in Northern Africa.

What is Germany heading for?

Germany is the biggest economy and the most important partner of the European Union our knowledge about this country is still very limited.

After the Second World War Germany became a socially defeated and an economically broken country. It was disunited into two parts and occupied. At these long and bad times German society was getting prepared to integrate and win its independence back.

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9th November 1989 was the beginning of the new integration between East-West Europe. Germany rebuilt itself and has made a lot of steps forward for European cooperation after that.

One of the best example is ratification of treaty that was supposed to pass a new Constitution while the other West European countries haven't agreed – just before the EU extension on the East of Europe. Germany was said as a rescuer of the integration progress in the EU that time.

Nowadays it's commonly said Germany became the leader in the European Union cause of its potential. The most important factors proving the German leadership are definitely population (over 80



million people), total GDP (\$3.325 trillion), credit balance of trade and inflation rate of only 1,6%. Germany takes the first place in the EU in the balance of trade – while still exports and imports rate is the highest in Europe. These factors keep Germany away from huge economics and financial dips in a long term of time. Interesting is life expectancy (81,4 woman, 75,7 man), the government spending on treatment (10,6% of the GDP) and very high live standards.

Contributing for the Germany weakness is a very low rate of women progeny and high rate of over 65 year-old people (18% of the society). 2050 there's a 10-percent decrease of nowadays population expected. Moreover Germany has a lot national debts and wrestles with a high bureaucracy, monopolization of the energy sector and very high electricity prices. Beside this, the German society influences Germany reputation in the European Union rather negatively. In Germany you might get a feeling that German politicians lead the politics by themselves and do not really care about the society opinion differences. This may be the reason of a lack of Germans' interest about the EU. Even over 40% of Germans thinks Brussel's influence is too high. Moreover 29% of Germans says there are disadvantages of Germany EU membership. Almost 50% cannot decide. An undoubtedly advantage of Germany is the quality of its politics which is not built on a “shaky ground”. German politicians are world-wide recognized. There are absolutely huge services to the country of the nowadays Chancellor

Angela Merkel. She was born in Hamburg (past Federal Republic of Germany) but moved to East Germany in early childhood, grow up and studied there. She is very well educated (she studied Physics) but above all she's a very strong-minded and ambitious person with a lot of patience. Thanks to her character traits and charisma the current German leadership can be called her personal success.

Is Germany heading for a leadership in Europe? Or is it rather a rescuer of the European Union? Last weeks of 2013 Germany economics was submit to critical review of the United States of America: Germany is swallowing other European economics. German exports harm other European product selling and make them not competitive. What will be the next German steps? Strongly depends on Angela Merkel's strategy. Nowadays all roads lead to Berlin.

Adriana Dank, Poland, February 2014

What is going on in the “Land of fire”?

Azerbaijan is well known for its rich oil resources and problematic democratic institutions. Recent election in the beginning of October fuelled the debate about the future development of this South Caucasus country, which face many challenges concerning its economic

and political orientation. After the controversy, when presidential election results were released on the screenshot of the mobile app the day before the official polls were even open, NGOs together with EU officials drew more attention to democratic issues of Azerbaijan. The leaked results were strongly in favor of long-standing president Ilham Aliyev, giving him 72.7% of all votes. The government's Central Election Commission later announced, that the results came from testing of the app using data from opinion polls in 2008 and apologized for misunderstanding. Few days after, the former president proved his strong position on official poll results, receiving 84.5% of votes. The strongest opposition party against Aliyev represented former president advisor, Jamil Hasanli, receiving only 5.5% of votes.

For the European Union, the days of polls were closely watched for four days by delegations of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and European Parliament. Their representatives confirmed that "they have observed a free, fair and transparent electoral process." However, the European Union highest representatives Catherine Ashton and Štefan Füle warned in their official statement that "significant problems were observed throughout all stages of election day processes" pointing at limitations on the freedoms of expression, assembly and space for expression of the opposition parties.

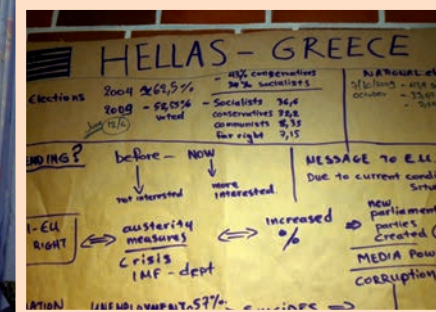
Ilham Aliyev was elected for the third time since 2003 when he replaced his father Heydar Aliyev, former head of KGB in Azerbaijan

that held control over the country for 30 years. Oppression of opposition and media, corruption affairs and controversial statements on Armenia provoked the waves of criticism in domestic as well as in the international sphere. According to Human Rights Watch, the Azerbaijan government continues to intimidate and imprison people and groups who criticized the government. Protests that occurred in the centre of the city after elections were banned and dispersed by the police with excessive use of force. It is noteworthy, that Azerbaijan held more political prisoners than, for instance, Belarus.

The current economical and political situation in the country is strongly affected by rich oil and gas resources hidden in the Caspian sea. It allows Azerbaijan to invest immense amount of money into modern infrastructure and boosting living standards of its citizens. They can also serve as base for balancing interests of two important superpowers, namely EU and Russia. Securing important energy resources from Azerbaijan plays the crucial role in diplomacy of these two international players. Many voice their concern towards the approach of the EU for being weak in its attempts to push on respect for human rights of Azerbaijan representatives. In order to avoid the repetition of Arab Awakening, when the EU looked like supporter of autocrats, it should consider to take stronger and more decisive position towards Azerbaijan.

Alena Fricova, Slovakia, December 2013

Identity and Society



Bullying ! The social Sin

Bullying! I could talk a lot, politics, music, so much that I like and understand with the palm of my hand, but I decided to opt for the more controversial path and talk about something that bothers me by your transparency, and international bullying everyone has heard but not everyone felt.

I'm sorry if I gave a definition so late that many suffered from it and have not had any help!

The word Bullying most shameful of the alphabet, destroyed people, but also created brilliant minds. We can say that it's almost a mixture of pleasure and agony. But now let's really what it's about.

We've all had bad times in our lives, in that made us feel inferior, without any value, but that's normal, nothing in life is perfect. I can say that I am a witness to this social sin that soured me and terrorized for years and years, without knowing that it would take him with me all my life!

I am the daughter of society that "killed" the teenagers, the tranquility of living youth trying to risk it to follow your wishes.

Bullying, built my dreams made me stronger and more versatile, taught me how to play with all the letters. Feeling less than made me lift and reverse all evil

This Sin on a power supply for my weakness.

Bullying still lives hidden in shame of many young people who fear the self-destruction. But the shame is the enemy of change, and to combat this social disability, we must put aside the fear of showing our weaknesses and try to destroy them dynamically and respectably. I don't want to convey a message weak and dull this theme but just want to show that even on our side we have a victim who made good in hollow and backward society.

Juliana Pene Combs, Portugal, December 2013



Christmas shopping fever

Beautiful decorated Christmas tree and cities, a man dressed as Santa Claus, „Kevin alone at Home” – which everyone already saw, a song like „All I want for Christmas is you...” which we can hear in gallery center, and an old man who looks like a Santa Claus decorate a bottle of coca-cola. What is that for? Yes..Christmas is coming...

Christmas time is a beautiful and expected period in our life. We want to spend Christmas quietly and with our family. But in the other hand, it's stressful time as well. We want to be prepared everything the best as we can. We make often an unsuccessful decision. We buy a lot of unnecessary things and gifts. Let me think, what for we spend money..Is it because of beautiful packaging? Interesting windows shop? Or it's just a "SALE"?

There are a lot of shops nowadays, and we don't know which one to choose... we visit all of them. Firstly we decide to buy gloves and then, in another shop, we pick up another gloves, just because they are cheaper!

In Munster (Germany) beside of Christmas shopping fever, there are Christmas fairs called Weihnachtsmarkt. There are wonderful and they create a great atmosphere. There are Christmas fairs in Poland as well. They must be attractive for people to sell as many things as they can. In the Christmas Fair we can buy everything – a sausage,

mulled wine, leathers, carped, gloves, sweets and toys. Have you ever gone to Christmas fair and haven't bought anything? I don't think so! Sometimes we just can't resist to do shopping, even if we don't have sensible reasons to do it. I'm one of this person, who can't stay away from Christmas shopping fever.

What about sale? We all know that it's kind of fake. Beware of people trying to cheat on you! So maybe this year, before you go to do Christmas shopping, think all over your decisions to avoid wasted money after all. Don't get crazy because of shopping fever!

In the end, you need to remember, Christmas isn't all about shopping. It's magical time, and the most important thing is to spend them with family and friends.

Ameia Stradowska, Poland, December 2013



Culture in Portugal

Portuguese people are among the UE citizens with lower culture activity. A Eurobarometer study shows us that portuguese people are the UE citizens with lower rates in the participation of culture activities and Portugal is the country with the biggest lack of interest in reading. According to this survey more that 70% of the citizens didn't went to the cinema for the past 12 months. Going to the theatre also does not make part of the plans of most portugueses, 87% said that they didn't went to the theatre in the past year. In the visits to galleries, historical monuments and museums just 30% said that they have visited monuments and only 17% went to museums and galleries.

Everyone is blaming the politicians but I believe that's not who we have to blame. I believe that the fault is in ourselves. People have access to all kind of culture. The nacional museums are free on sunday mornings. Libraries are free. People are holding too much to the idea that they need to choose between working to feed their children or culture. Like we say in portuguese "A Cultura não ocupa lugar" which means that there is always space for culture. An investment in culture is the best that a country can do for their people, increasing the sense of presense and stimulating their creativity, but this should be supported by the people not by the state. That's the main problem, there is culture in Portugal but there are many por-

tugueses that don't give the right value to it. I think we all need to spread the word. This is not a thing that's only happening in Portugal, it is happening in the rest of the world specially in the countries that are in crisis because they think that they need to give up on this kind of lifestyle and that's a waste of time and money. People need to change their minds.

Carolina Cardoso, Portugal, November 2013



Discrimination in youth sphere

Have you ever thought about the equality of the different social groups? Many youth people are deprived of the opportunity to take part in the economic, social and cultural life of the society. Why? Just because they are different from the majority of youth at the universities, NGOs, youth organisations and ect.

They are discriminated because they have ethnical, religious, sexual or physical differences .But first of all we shouldn't forget that they are also young people who need their voice to be heard. Probably they even need it more?

The key is communication! Communication should be open and responsible. We need to talk about the discrimination and to become aware of the problem. Everybody deserves freedom, respect, non-discrimination, justice, responsibility and tolerance. Human rights can be understood as those basic standards which are necessary for a life of dignity and the fact that all humans are equal.

These basic human rights should be realized and promoted by everyone. That's why we need to start a process of sharpening the sensitivity of our society . We should also work for equality between the people and tolerance between the different cultures. People often hate or fear what they don't know or understand. The easiest way to avoid this is knowledge.

The integration of people with different types of disabilities also should be considered. For example many universities don't have accessible materials and facilitations for the people with disabilities, as well as help for those who has hearing or vision problems. The social inclusion is very important for these people.

It's also problem that the NGOs and youth organizations are working FOR but not WITH the people who are discriminated. And it's a kind of discrimination, too. There are a lot of organizations for roma integration but roma people participate only in their projects not in the organization itself. They should be part of the whole process.

Have you ever thought about these people? Maybe you should because they need your help!

Lilyana Uzunova, Bulgaria, January 2014



Extended training of lecturers on the topic of bullying



From 22nd to 24th November 2013, additional training of lecturers took place in Prague at Prokopka Hotel. This training was realized in order to learn the lecturers how to work on the above-mentioned topics with children at primary school in the age of 6 and 7 years. And the second aim was to learn more information about project topics.

The program started on Friday at 15:30, when the participants met in the conference room at Prokopka. Together they visited The Safety Line, where they talked about the aim and main activities of The Safety Line.

Friday programme continued by a collective watching of the american thriller Interrupted Silence. The film dealt with the topic of cyberbullying as the main character committed suicide because of her naked photo which was sent via mobile phone among schoolmates.

The film was very impressive and made everyone to think about the consequences of rash actions. Having watched the film, the participants discussed it a little bit with organisers of the project. Then the majority of participants went to sleep because Saturday was the main day.

Saturday started at 9:30 AM, when special training about safety on social networks was held in the conference room. The participants were informed about potential dangers on the Internet by Roman Máca from National Center For Safer Internet. During this training, they were talking about the different forms of dangers of the Internet and watched videos connected with bullying. The discussion took nearly three hours and after its end, the participants went for a lunch to a restaurant near hotel. Afternoon continued with organizational meeting with the leaders of the project. They gave information how to lead the workshops with children at primary schools. Three topics were divided among the participants: Bullying, Cyberbullying and Convention On The Rights Of The Child. The participants had some time for preparation and then they presented their topics, as if they were at some primary school. The last point of the program before dinner was making up of an audiovisual document, which should present the topic of bullying. The participants were divided in two groups and worked on two different types of documents: one group tried to invent how to motivate stars to be interested on these topics and the second group works on the topic of defence. After a long preparation,

the both groups presented their ideas and finally, the topic of bullying where a famous personality should figure was chosen so as to be realized. Preparing of the topic of an audiovisual document lasted till the meaning, so just after having finished it, the participants went for a dinner. The evening was crowned by a bowling tournament.

Sunday morning was dedicated to an invention of the main story of the audiovisual document. After a long exchange of opinions, the story was written down: a girl commits suicide in the beginning of the film. Later the spectator finds out that the girl succeeded in a reality show in singing and loses her friends. The participants of the project figured out that a famous singer should appear in the document and talk about the fame and its negative sides.

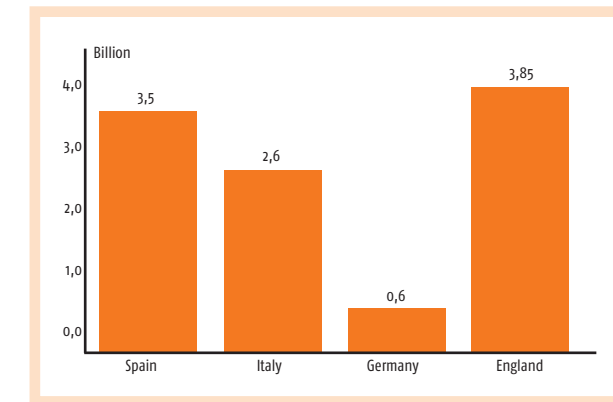
Before noon, when the document was invented, the participants said goodbye to each other and travelled back home.

Katka Vojtechova, Czech Republic, December 2013

Football boom cannot be stopped by crisis

Most of Europe's famous and "richest" football clubs have high debts, but it does not effect in the boom in football business. When will the big bubble of debts explode? Short look on different clubs and their debts, clubs which already overreached themselves and

the connection to the economic crisis. Manchester United, Real Madrid, Inter Milan, Borussia Dortmund, PSV Eindhoven, Sporting Lisbon and it would be easy to extend the list. Almost every club in Europe has debts or contracts debts. Manchester United can be called the champion of the debts as they have 446 million Euro liabilities. All Premier League clubs together have debts of 3.85 billion Euro. And this high amount is growing and growing. In the Spanish "La Liga" the two biggest clubs Real Madrid and FC Barcelona have liabilities of 125 million and 320 million Euro. In Valencia there is a special situation: The club wanted to build a new stadium, but as the costs became very high, the stadium was not finished. Valencia



is not able to pay. Valencia has 450 million Euro liabilities, which is the highest number in Spain. The traditional Club UD Salamanca – home club of the Spanish national coach – got bankrupt and does not exist anymore.

In Italy the two clubs of Milan have both almost 200 million, in Germany Borussia Dortmund with 40 million and FC Schalke 04 with 170 Million have debts as well.

There are some clubs which already had to bear the consequences. The 54-time Scottish champion Glasgow Rangers was shut down and needed to start renamed in the lowest league. The Greek club AEK Athens is insolvent after the relegation in the last season and has to start new in the third league.

There are a lot of small clubs in every country which have the same problems. The UEFA already started to react and disallowed clubs, which disregard with the financial fairplay to take part in UEFA competitions. For example for the next season four Spanish clubs included CF Malaga, who last year have been in the quarter finals of UEFA Champions League and the big Turkish clubs Besiktas and Fenerbahce from Istanbul.

So why do clubs are still invest more and more millions for new players, if they already have that high number of liabilities? How can they justify that if the economic crisis in Europe is going on? Spain for example wants to get help from the European Union and

at the same time the football clubs have not paid the taxes and have debts of around 1 billion Euro. So how could the Spanish government relief debts of the football clubs and at the same time the citizens have to carry a big saving program on their shoulders?

Smaller clubs in Germany are also saved from bankrupt and they are getting these advantages, too. But how can you justify this to the citizens who have to count every Euro. Why should other countries of Europe finance the relief of the debts of other countries football clubs?

In my opinion it does not need a lot of time anymore until the growing bubble of liabilities is going to burst and many famous names will be deleted from the football map. It is needed to reduce the debts of football clubs as well. And the race of getting better without caring about money has to stop. Europe's football clubs should maybe take Bayern Munich as an example to play on a high level football and have regulated finances. So this example shows that it is not impossible to finance, save and play on a high level.

Sources: www.t-online.de/sport/fussball/id_61813896/bundesliga-rekord-umsatz-und-steigende-schulden.html

www.fussball-tuerkei.de/index.php/nachrichtenleser/items/seria-a-schulden-schulden-schulden100512.html

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Danny Piel, Germany, November 2014

Humor in Social and Ethnic Key

Mahadev Apte observes “not only does humor occur in all human cultures, it also pervades all aspects of human behavior, thinking, and sociocultural reality; it occurs in an infinite variety of forms and uses varied modalities.” There are different ways to approach to the study of humor. The categories which interest scientists the most are humor in everyday life; the social aspects of humor and humor in art and fiction.

There are two ways to describe the social aspect of humor. One theory claims that the social function of an anecdote is the feeling of superiority over target group. The other theory finds that humor is just a phenomenon reflecting the community and something that helps us see the controversies and hidden problems of the society.

Humor is a way of processing and appreciating fundamental disagreements and conflicts, often ones with the gravest implications, dressing them in such a way that they seem less threatening and more acceptable. The birth of ethnic jokes is usually caused by tensions between the main part of a territory and its periphery.

A problematic issue when talking about humor towards other ethnic groups is the creating of stereotypes. An example anecdote can be: “HEAVEN is the place where the cooks are French, the police are English, the mechanics are German, the lovers are Italian, and

everything is organized by the Swiss. HELL is where the cooks are English, the police are German, the mechanics are French, the lovers are Swiss, and everything is organized by the Italians”. British sociologist Christie Davies comments this issue by saying: “To become angry about such jokes and to seek to censor them because they impinge on sensitive issues is about as sensible as smashing a thermometer because it reveals how hot it is.”

There is also the concern of insiders and outsiders. For example the joke: “Q: Why aren't Jews concerned about the abortion controversy? A: Because they don't consider a fetus viable until after it graduates from medical school.” If the tellers or listeners of this joke are gentiles, it may be anti-semitic, criticizing Jews as being overly ambitious and arrogant. But if the tellers or listeners are Jews, it may be an expression of Jewish pride and the extraordinarily high standards of child rearing. When a person from the same group tells an ethnic or religious joke, it gives the opportunity for the rest of the group members to examine their behavior and culture.

However, we must keep some basic principles in mind as we look at ethnic humor. Firstly, someone else's ethnic identification does not seem as important as does our own. Secondly, the appreciation of ethnic humor correlates with how much we know about, and identify with the joke target. Also that humor is a tool that can be used either for building up or tearing down relationships.

Used sources: The International Society for Humor Studies
“HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research”
Estonian Folklore, L. Laineste, “The Ways to Study Humor”

Mariliis Huul, Estonia, November 2014

International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women – Orange your World in 16 Days!

1 in 3 women and girls experience violence in their lifetime!

On November 25th is celebrated the International Day to End Violence Against Women! 1 in 3 women and girls experience violence in their lifetime!

This is considered one of the most serious issues inside each household and within the global society. Everyday the basic rights of a human being are threatened in it’s own intimacy space, specially the rights of children, due to the fact that they daily witness violent acts.

The UN Agency for Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment (UN Women), launched the annual campaign called “Orange Your World in 16 Days”, that began in 1991 and is part of the SayNo – UNiTE to End Violence Against Women project. The main objective is to promote worldwide activism against gender violence during 16

days, from the 25th of November (International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women) until the 10th of December (International Human Rights Day), through social media networks.

One of the youngest examples of true courage and active citizenship is Malala Yousafzai (16), Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought 2013 winner, that strongly stands for women rights, especially for the right of girls Education, which she claims to be the most necessary solution in our Society.

Join the campaign and let the world know about your opinion:
<http://saynotoviolence.org/16days2013>

Andreia Prino, Portugal, December 2013



Living “abroad” or how is it to be an Eastern on the West

Each of us have travelled somewhere...for a weekend trip, vacation or business trip. But can you imagine leaving your country and start living in some other part of the world? Surely you can, some of you already did.

Is it harder to start living abroad or to move to the opposite side of your native country? Do you think it’s possible to be surrounded by your nation and still feel as a foreigner?

Here are some thoughts of a young woman from east of Slovakia, who decided to stay in the western part and establish her own family far away from the loving family. Picturesque houses, nature, history or customs are for many of us reason to be proud of where you come from. But desire of adventure, property or better social conditions is forcing one to change the smell of the home for the smog of the big city. I am for sure not the only one who have chosen such a life, far away from my home and everything I love. And even though I am not alone any more, I still feel the need to return home, into a small village surrounded by the forest, into the village on the East Slovakia.

It is known about the mankind that we possess things, even though they don’t belong to us and unfortunately it is also the case when we, Easterns, feel how we are not wanted here on the West.

Improper notes, insults, damaging of the property, allusions how

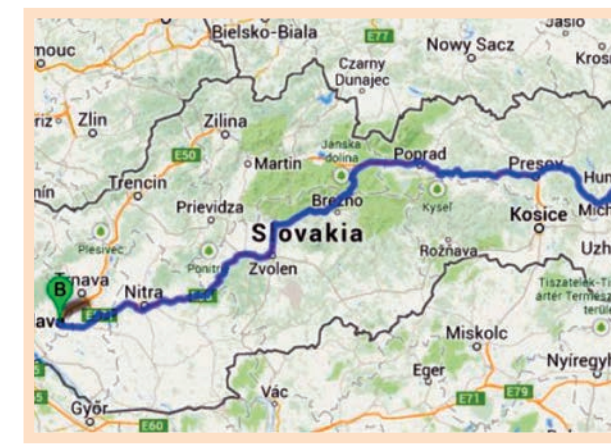
we “steal” jobs or how we overindulge in alcohol can be heard on daily basis. Social networks or media are full of this “issue” and there are a lot of people who share this opinion and foster it.

How fast a man forgets that we cannot change where we were born, where we come from, who were our ancestors and many more factors, which will go with us for the rest of our lives, whether we want it or not. And despite vernaculars Slovak language sounds beautifully in every part of the country, mostly when we have our hearts open. If only we ‘d be more considerate and tolerant to each other.

“What a blessing it is when you find a good people, with whom your heart feels like home.” *Phil Bosmans, priest

* this quote was translated to English from the Slovak book, please excuse if any mistake occurred

Rudolf Dong, Slovakia, November 2013



New languages, new worlds

In the era of new high technologies we still learn new languages. There has been a widely spread idea that soon or later computers will be able to translate almost everything. To some extent, it is true now – we have the Google translator, to mention one. But when it comes to speaking new languages the AI cannot be a replacement of the human brain capacity yet. One of the priorities of the EU educational programmes is studying new languages. Through the recent decades the EU has invested a lot of money and efforts in that direction. People from different ages have been able to participate in various programmes for gaining knowledge in new languages and through which to meet new cultures and new worlds.

The reasons for learning languages could be numerous. One could be the well-known and scientifically proven fact that this kind of activity helps the brain stay in a good condition and boost the memory capacity as well. Some people have a passion for languages and they find it quite easy to become fluent in a new one. The aptitude for languages could be a powerful spur but in most of the cases people, especially adults, choose to study new languages for more practical reasons such as making their CVs look more attractive, fulfilling a particular requirement in order to get the dream job or simply, because they need the foreign language in their regular jobs.

In spite of the particular motives behind this decision the truth is that when you study languages you immerse yourself in a completely new reality – new ways of expressions, new cultural manners, new perspectives on usual topics. As everything else there is some kind of fashion in languages too. For some period of time there are one or two languages which are preferable worldwide, then – others and so on. Usually the tendencies are based on the current business needs which define the outlook for the labor market. Nowadays speaking English is a must when it comes to work, studying abroad or even – just for everyday communication. And English certainly is not a fashion trend anymore. It is a necessity by default.

What is really interesting now is the rise of so-called “exotic languages” and mostly, Mandarin Chinese. Chinese is among the fifth most difficult languages in the world. With its specific tones and the enormous number of characters this language is too far away from English or any other language spoken in Europe. The indicators of the development of the Chinese economy showing a huge progress for the last years, plus the high expectations for further economic growth have turned Chinese into the most recommended language by many leading experts in the business field. Despite all proclaimed benefits of speaking Chinese among the most important ones is the opportunity to explore China through your own eyes and to face the challenge to revise some of your own ideas about the world as a

whole. With its high level of difficulty studying Chinese requires strong motivation and a great deal of discipline and patience.

At the same time there are some quite eager Chinese learners. In a recent BBC reportage (see below the article) a group of Australian kids demonstrated their ability to present themselves in Chinese. At the age of 5 they are able to say “Hello, my name is...” with a big smile and great Chinese pronunciation. The school where these kids learn Chinese is considered as an example for a good educational policy. By the age of 12 the children will be fluent in Chinese. In the form of games and fun they will be able to study a lot of Chinese characters as well as to gain self-confidence in speaking this language. What a better way to broaden your horizons and embrace new cultures than studying a foreign language at an early age, right?

Every new language is a new world. Being able to express yourself correctly in a foreign language means, first, feeling the rhythm of it and second, understanding the culture, the people, the communicational patterns and some norms in the particular country. Learning a language is never easy but it can bring a lot of emotions as well as the sense of achievement. What’s more it gives you the chance to find many new friends around the world!

You can find the full BBC article and video about studying Chinese at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24672295>

Maria Gogova, Bulgaria, January 2014



Prestige – an example of solidarity in Europe

In 19 november of 2002, a boat full of fueloil sank at the north-west spanish coast, in Galicia. 77.000 tons of oil were spilled and the rich ecosystem and the main economic system, and ocean life-forms perished.

The prestige problem is considered in third place of the top ten of the most expensive accidents in history. 200 km of the coast was contaminated. The prestige is a clear example of solidarity in Europe.

When the fuel oil sank in the Galician coast, a lot of people from different places of Spain and Europe arrived to Galicia to help us.

"The first day we had two or three people working. The second day we continued a few tools, but on the third day, when I got to the parking lot I could not believe it, there were a lot of cars the stock doubled in Oia are something more than 3,000 residents and had over 4,000 volunteers, it was amazing." said the sculptor with emotion.

An beautiful example this tragedy was the case of Manfred, a German who was living in a sea cave in the coast of Galicia.

He was born in Germany and spent most of his childhood in there, raised in a family of seven brothers he went to Art School in Italy. After he got graduated, he started teaching art in Switzerland to help people to deal with social integration. His interest in the preservation of the environment and curiosity about the Galician coast led him to the Costa da Morte. In May 1962 he became immersed in the festivities of the Holy Spirit Camelle. From that day on this lonely, educated, good looking tourist German moved to the village until his time of death.

After the Prestige accident in November 2002, oil pollution ruined his sculptures. It is believed that the German died because depression because of melancholy and sadness.

On November 9, 2010, a big storm destroyed his entire collection.

Unknown Author, Spain, November 2013

To follow or not to follow your dream

Have you ever asked yourself "Is this what I really want to do?" while listening to one of your professors in university giving a lecture? Do you ever have second thoughts about whether you've chosen the right path? Although there are no precise studies about the number of people who are following a university directly related to their skills and passions, there are some estimations suggesting that only about 27% of young people are currently working in the field they have studied.

So who is to blame for this situation? The system? The teachers? Or perhaps the parents? Probably all of the above. Let's take the educational system, for instance. In some European countries, like Germany, there are organizations, such as "Agentur für Arbeit", which provide pupils with a personal advisor. This is not compulsory, so pupils have the freedom of choosing whether they want to be part of the program. Fadi, 18, is one of the people who have benefited from this agency. He is currently an intern in the city Council of Wegberg and feels that this is mostly thanks to his personal advisor. Ever since he was 15, he went to see his career counselor, who monitored him and noticed Fadi's skills and competencies. She then suggested for Fadi to follow a vocational college, which was related to his interests, leading him where he is now. Fadi also has friends who chose not to be a part of the program, some of whom are now either



studying something that they don't like, or are unemployed. In conclusion, Fadi believes that "it's a pity not to take advantage of such an opportunity" and he's very satisfied with the work of the people in Agentur für Arbeit.

On the other hand, in countries like Bulgaria there are no such programs. This could partly explain the mismatch between people's skills and their work, which in turn leads to the lower living standards than in Western Europe. This is one reason why people like Maria, 26, who loves to draw, do not further study to develop their talent – she knows that it's a small chance to have a decent living, since these kind of artistic talents are regarded more like hobbies. Maria, who has studied law, confesses that "a talent like drawing needs all of you" and that if she were 19 again, she would probably choose to struggle more and study what she really loves. Maria is not the only one who has chosen to go to a university program which is different from her passion. Michaela, 21, from Slovakia, has also picked a field which offers more chances to find a well-paid job –

languages and intercultural relations. History is what she would have really loved to study, but she is aware that "there are no career possibilities".

Somewhere in the middle are people like Mariliis, 21, from Estonia. Mariliis is studying English and Economics which she finds interesting. However, she would have also liked to be a dental technician. She can't really say that she has found her <<thing>>, but rather that she's "experimenting".

If people like the above-mentioned have chosen not to follow their dream, Madara, Latvia, thinks differently. She thinks that no matter how difficult, if you are really passionate about what you're doing, then you'll manage just well; "it's not a problem finding a job, you just go and do what you like". Madara loves sports, which is why she studies fitness training and nutrition.

Different people, different countries, same issues. Maybe it's our fault too, because we don't engage in more activities during our adolescence, so that we discover what really drives us, or that we're not sufficiently committed to our <<cause>>, in order to stick to it no matter what. The conclusion? The educational system is deficient in some countries, which affect young people's personal development. Nonetheless, this situation proves the fact that we're not that far apart and it should make us more "united in diversity".

Andreea Vladoiu, Romania, December 2013

United in Diversity

“...our interests can no longer be separated from those of our neighbors. Either we all loose, or we all win” Martin Schulz said in his acceptance speech after he was elected president of the European Parliament.

European Union has to face a challenge. In an era of super mobility and super diversity, how do people develop the capacity to live with difference?

History has shown a hardening of attitudes towards ‘others’ in difficult times. But nowadays things are worst, we live under difficult times of economic crisis. It is very easy to transfer the responsibilities to others, especially when they have different characteristics. But, European Union from its establishment has tried to show that can overcome the difficulties like these. It is a challenge and if we want to succeed, all citizens of EU should work for this aim.

In 2000 the European Union used the motto “United in diversity” for first time. This is one of the most important achievements of our European Family. It signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent’s many different cultures, traditions and languages.

The EU gives to every citizen the opportunity to travel, to exchange

opinions, ideas and products free through the Europe. We – as members of the project “European Youth Voice” – have the opportunity to participate in seminars where are gathering people from different countries to discuss a variety of topics.



Try to recall in your mind when the dialogue we have done a positive ending. How many times have you been impressed of things

you learnt about different cultures and habits? How many times have you felt that the commons you have with a person of another country in a discussion, are more than the differences?

You should probably have felt this feeling at least one time. But only when you approach the different opinion with an attempt to understand. Only when you really want to learn something new, without trying to prove that you are superior.

Maybe the secret of living in diversity and being united is here. It is hidden in your intentions, when you are in the same place with a person with some differences. And really think about the differences, how many they are? Except the language, which is the most important (we can solve it with a joint speaking engagement of an international language like English).

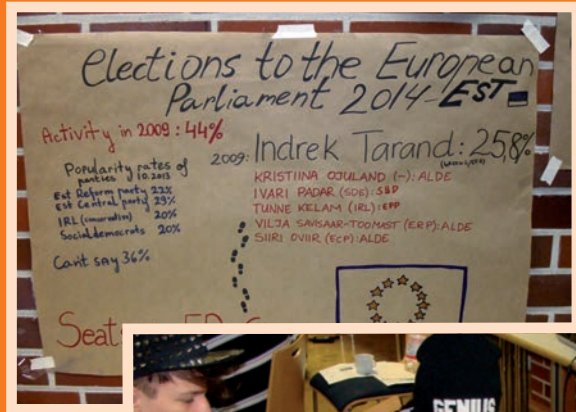
When you share things always you loose something. The “profit” you gain is bigger. You are becoming more human, as you are speaking and trying to understand humans. Do not forget that is not all economy, some things cannot be counted. So how about living in diversity?

*The image I created for this article is inspired from the 5 Olympic Circles. The letters are being united with different colors, which symbolizes our attempt to be united peaceful like when the Olympic Games take part.

Vasileiou Angelos, Greece, January 2014



Youth Unemployment



How to solve the unemployment in Europe?

It's all about the educational system. Capitalism caused unemployment. How pathetic. At least this could say the 15 % voters who elected Communist party of Czech and Moravia (they forgot quickly). The unemployment and the whole global crisis situation support insanity like voting the totalitarian formations in Czech Republic. Everybody had job these times and now they don't, back to the old times!

Democracy and capitalism works as a system however political interventions make them non-functional in some ways.

You can chose, what to study. You can make up your dream life and try to reach it. The pity is that everybody wants to be a manager of anything what gives him a life from advertisements and Sex and the City series. Journalists, economists, lawyers, psychologists etc. But there's no market for these people in Europe anymore. What is the policy of European Union? Find them praxis. The non-sense! Companies aren't foolish. They can get free (or at least donated) workers for the dirty bureaucracy and trainees learnt nothing. Skilful people can find the job parallel to school on their own. This is how capitalism works.

People at schools are leaded more and more to narrow specialization and team-work. The individuality and context, analysis and deduction are disappearing. Human mind is decomposed to pieces.

This can work only in top qualified, top intelligent and top dexterous individualities connected into team otherwise everybody can do nothing useful at the end. I estimate maximally 10 % of global population for tasks like this.

Population is decreasing but the university graduates are more and more. This is kind of weird capitalism. No-one wants to close the public school, so there are still more and more incompetent students who graduated with university diploma and they demand the adequate salary and position. We could call this educational inflation. These incompetent self-confident young people had been considered like blue collars workers 30 years ago. Nowadays they are struggling unemployed or somewhere behind the checkout. Dreams ruined, system collapsing. If they hadn't so overrated demands, they could have lived satisfied life as a chimney sweeper with higher salary and easy access to this kind of education. Dummies own same diploma as the useful ones, lack of technicians is covered by another dummies because no-one wants to do that but universities aren't shut down. At the end everywhere are more feckless people and the whole economical growth is going to collapse (just look around).

I don't know the situation elsewhere minutely, so I will write about Czech and Slovak at least. The private schools cover the requests of market. The requests in Czech Republic and Slovakia aren't

mostly to get wanted education what public schools aren't capable to handle with. They offer the education to people, who were unable to get admitted to public schools. Private schools should work like: Do you want to have the better opportunities, lectures from praxis, strong company partners? Pay for that! So this is another (educational) system non-sense.

Conclusions:

- 1) Support the narrow specialization only between highly talented individuals.
- 2) Shut down some schools, make a real capitalism and invisible hand of market is dealing with it.

Pavel, Czech Republic, December 2013



What is the most appropriate job for me?

This is one of the most important questions that every young person faces to while thinking about his/her future. The answer is difficult and sometimes wrong. The statistics show the tendency that many young Europeans are not satisfied with their jobs. Why does this happen? Some blame the education system, others – the economy situation and thirds – the employers. Probably this happens because when you are young you are not always aware of the opportunities you have or maybe sometimes even if you know your opportunities you don't understand them right. That's why during the last few years career orientation becomes more and more important for the young people. A career guide is a person who can help you in lining your goals and direct you how to achieve them. When you graduate school you should decide if you want to study or work or travel – where, when or what? These many questions require many answers. You take the decisions by yourself but they are influenced by parents, teachers, friends etc. so sometimes it turns out that they are not the best for you. Here comes the role of the career guide – a professional who uses psychological and social competence to orientate you. Nowadays everything is changing so fast so you have to be flexible, to speak different languages and initiative because professions are changing all the time and you should have huge variety of skills in order to be adaptable. So be active and keep on searching the best job for you!

Evgenia Meserdzheva, Bulgaria, December 2013



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How do I change the auto-generated password?

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

In order to post an article one has to:

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

How do I include my picture in the slideshow?
Before you publish click on 'Set Featured Image'
(Bottom left side-bar)
Feel free to leave suggestions for more FAQs on our Facebook
Page! <http://www.facebook.com/groups/147065788672468/>

The website: www.EuropeanYouthVoice.eu

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



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