

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Winter Academy for young people

### IED-YDE WINTER ACADEMY

### Youth Engagement in Building a More Efficient Europe

*International Academy, 24-25 November 2017, Brussels, Belgium*



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On 24 and 25 of November 2017, the Institute of European Democrats organised the international youth event titled **“IED-YDE Winter Academy”**, in the Thon Hotel EU in Brussels. It was already the second Winter Academy organised by IED in collaboration with the European youth organisation Young Democrats for Europe (YDE). The first Academy took place in 2015 and its title was “Beyond the gloomy present: your democratic impulse”. This year’s Winter Academy dealt with the subject “Youth Engagement in Building a more efficient Europe”.

The event was attended by **32 young delegates coming from different youth political organisations from 19 European countries** that include Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus,

Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Republic of San Marino, Slovakia, Spain (Basque Country and Canaries) and Ukraine.

#### Participants:

##### **Keynote speaker:**

1. Marios Georgiadis

##### **Institute of European Democrats:**

2. Flaminia Baffigo
3. Mathieu Baudier
4. Adriana Čiefová

##### **Young Democrats for Europe:**

5. Antoine Carrette

##### **Delegates** (in alphabetical order of the countries/regions):

1. Alvaro Castillo (Basque Country, Spain)
2. Begoña Garteizurrecoa Azua (Basque Country, Spain)
3. Alessandro Zunino (Belgium)
4. Arrico Delaria (Belgium)
5. Desislava Nikolova (Bulgaria)
6. Gloria Rusenova (Bulgaria)
7. Santiago Gutiérrez Fariña (Canaries, Spain)
8. Iván Vega Moreno (Canaries, Spain)
9. Anita Velić Fabijanić (Croatia)
10. Valentina Velić (Croatia)
11. Aimilios Antoniou (Cyprus)
12. Andreas Peratikos (Cyprus)
13. Asger Thieden Maarbjerg (Denmark)
14. Mickael Rigault (France)
15. Luisa Theresa Dechert (Germany)
16. Anastasios Mitropoulos (Greece)
17. Theodoros Spanos (Greece)
18. Anastasios Dimitropoulos (Greece)
19. Gábor Névai (Hungary)
20. Júlíus Þór Halldórsson (Iceland)
21. Domenico Mininni (Italy)
22. Kārlis Beļēvičs (Latvia)
23. Aldis Straume (Latvia)
24. Anna Kosmala (Poland)
25. Piotr Olechowski (Poland)
26. José Batista (Portugal)
27. Manuel-Andrei Lupu (Romania)
28. Sveva Piscaglia (Republic of San Marino)
29. Simone Raimondi (Republic of San Marino)
30. Anna Lujza Füreková (Slovakia)
31. Michael Hanzalík (Slovakia)
32. Yurii Ohonovs



Participants of the IED-YDE Winter Academy 2017

## European Youth and its Voice in Democratic Life of Europe

On the first day of the Winter Academy on Friday 24 November, young delegates were greeted by the representatives of the organisations in charge of the event – Coordinator of Institute of European Democrats (IED) **Flaminia Baffigo**, Member of the Scientific Committee of IED **Mathieu Baudier** and President of Young Democrats for Europe (YDE) **Antoine Carette**. Reflecting all negative events happening in Europe and the world these days, they all emphasized that **it is crucially important to organise the events such as the Winter Academy which gathers young active people who are not careless about the state of affairs and want to positively affect the world they live in.** The

representatives also reminded the important outcomes of the last IED-YDE Winter Academy that took place in 2015 and praised the delegates for their decision to come again and dedicate their time to discuss the most challenging issues Europe is facing nowadays.



Welcome speakers (left-right: F. Baffigo, M. Baudier, M. Georgiadis, A. Carette)

The delegates then welcomed a distinguished keynote speaker, Vice-Chair of the Greek Parliament and Vice-President of the European Democratic Party (PDE-EDP) **Marios Georgiadis**. “I am very proud that I have been invited to this Academy and I have a chance to meet so many clever, enthusiastic and active young people from all corners of Europe,” he expressed at the beginning. In his speech, Mr Georgiadis

explained that it was his father who encouraged him to enter politics and to influence public affairs in his native Greece as well as Europe. He then talked about bad economic situation in Greece which – besides corruption – is mainly caused by the high taxes imposed by the government. **Coming from the country which gave birth to *dēmokratía* during the classical antiquity, Mr Georgiadis is worried about the current weak respect for democratic values.** He stressed that **we need to protect our strong and deep-rooted democratic heritage and fight against the efforts to weaken or even remove democratic regimes in the European countries.** In his view, precisely young people should take over

the mission of safeguarding and strengthening democracy. Mr Georgiadis is convinced that **Europe desperately needs a higher number of young people engaged in public affairs**; however, at the same time he is aware of the fact that many youngsters do not care about politics and are disillusioned about the state of affairs nowadays. This is visible on regular low turnouts of young people in the elections on both national and EU level.



Such unpleasant situation necessarily needs to be addressed, **young people need to see the actions and be inspired to come voting or run for the public office or seat in the parliament**. In the opinion of Mr Georgiadis, Europe needs a greater involvement of young generation of Europeans who are the most educated and experienced generation ever in history of our continent. He is convinced that their engagement in political life would make an extremely positive difference on the face of Europe.

## Workshop “FOR A EUROPE OF UNITED DIVERSITY”

The second day of the Winter Academy which took place on Saturday 25 November was divided into three sections: the first part was dedicated to the Workshop “For a Europe of United Diversity”, the second part comprised of the Presentation of the Workshop’s Conclusions, and the final section was dedicated to the Roundtable titled “Where will we be in 2027?”.

The main goal of the Workshop “For a Europe of United Diversity” was to allow the participants to explore, discuss and formulate policies on the current most pressing inequalities in Europe. Delegates were divided into 5 workshop groups, each consisting of 6 to 7 members. The workshop groups were designed in the way to cover the main issues which are causing most heated debates and subsequent misunderstandings and divisions among people of Europe:

- ★ **Iron Curtain Group:** East-West cleavages
- ★ **Crystal Curtain Group:** North-South divide
- ★ **Solidarity Group:** Issues of globalisation, migration, development aid and climate change
- ★ **Equality Group:** Gender and LGBTI issues
- ★ **Opportunities Group:** Youth employment and participation in politics

During three hours long session, each group discussed its topic, formulated answers and short analyses on distributed 5 working questions and 2 interactive questions, and prepared suggestions how to address the problems in order to eliminate rising inequalities in Europe. In this last point, the members of the



group were supposed to imagine that they form the group of advisors for the European Commission President and their task is to formulate at least 4 policies how to address the problems which will become the basis of the EU-2027 strategy.

→ [Read the Questions for each group of the Workshop “For a Europe of United Diversity”](#)

In the afternoon, each group presented the results of their discussions, main findings, answers on prepared questions and 4 policy proposals for the EU-2027 strategy.



## IRON CURTAIN GROUP

The main focus of the Iron Curtain Group was to analyse still **prevailing cleavages between the Central/Eastern and Western European countries such as once defined by the Iron Curtain**. Even 28 years after the fall of socialist regimes and 13 years after the 2004 enlargement round (followed by the enlargements in 2007 and 2013, respectively), many citizens and politicians still marginalize some European regions and refer to ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ Europe. It is the fact that the former socialist countries are still experiencing high level of corruption and they are mostly conservative which prevents implementation of liberal policies such as the guarantee of the rights of LGBTI citizens; very importantly, people in these countries still have much lower salaries than employees in the Western European countries which affect their living standards.



Members of the Iron Curtain Group

However, in the view of the Iron Curtain group’s members, **one of the main reasons why old stereotypes still prevail is that there is no adequate information about successful political and economic developments inside the Central and Eastern European Member States**. Although the Western EU Member states are more experienced democracies with long tradition of market economy, the EU members in Central and Eastern regions are catching up very successfully. Many of them are already reaching the living standards of the Western European countries and some of them are even the members of Eurozone with excellent economic performance.

Nevertheless, these objective facts are not so well-known for people in the older EU Member States who still consider the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – the members and non-members of the EU – as less advanced. The members of the group think that **a big problem lies in poor education about European history, especially about the history of Central and Eastern regions, as well as improper media coverage of the current affairs in those regions**. At the same time, they detected that decision-making power within the EU is still in favour of the Western EU countries which makes it difficult for the Central and Eastern European states to gain a greater political respect within Europe. There are also other issues which do not contribute to

remove East-West cleavages, such as very recent scandal about double-quality of food between the Eastern and Western parts of the EU, or the fact that almost all major EU institutions and agencies are based in the western capitals only. As a consequence, still many initiatives need to be necessarily developed in order to finally tear down all remaining pieces of the Iron Curtain.

#### FOUR POLICY PROPOSALS

##### HOW TO ELIMINATE STILL PREVAILING EAST-WEST CLEAVAGES:

1. **Implement the minimum wage across the EU.**
2. **Encourage more intensive tourism to the Central and Eastern European countries** with better promotion and advertisement strategies.
3. **Improve education about culture and history of Central and Eastern European regions** for pupils and students in Western European regions with a particular emphasis on:
  - Promote positive information about the Central and Eastern European countries;
  - Enhance exchange programs (special Erasmus for the elimination of East-West cleavages);
  - Implement common curriculum on history;
  - Better media coverage about the current affairs;
  - Create a social media taskforce to popularize and foster East-West relations.
4. **Create special armed forces to operate in the tensions zones** (mainly in regards to the current situation in Ukraine).

### CRYSTAL CURTAIN GROUP

Thanks to the European project, the division between Europe's North and South has never been so significant as the East-West divide; however, European Union's debt and banking crisis has made apparent **a gnawing gap between the Northern and Southern parts of the EU**. According to the findings of the members of the Crystal Curtain Group, this gap is mainly visible in political instability in the South vis-à-vis the stable North, different social systems and tax culture, as well as contrasting expectations about the role and size of the state. These **differences originate from different climate and natural heritage as well as distinctive historical experience** (South is more nationalistic), **political tradition** (North has bigger trust in government and state institutions), **religion** (protestant North versus catholic South, South has more conservative attitudes) **and education policy** (North has more advanced educational system); in addition, while the wages are lower in the southern regions, the northern states have generally higher wages, simultaneously attracting skilled employees. Despite over 60 years' long existence of the European integration, the group's members see the reason for these prevailing differences mainly in the fact that **the EU institutions do not have the adequate power or mandate**



Members of the Crystal Curtain Group

**to redistribute wealth within Europe. There is also the lack of European vision which could unite North and South, West and East**, and the common European values are not so visible for everyone. There is also the lack of will of the richer countries to support the poorer ones financially, and insufficient trade benefits for more remote EU regions on the European periphery such as the Canaries or Cyprus. Recently, also **the refugee crisis has the potential to spiral into a major crisis between the North and South**, deepening the divide between the two regions.

In global perspective, **the gap between poor and rich is growing increasingly larger** and we are the witnesses of the public scandals such as the recent one with Paradise Papers which exposed how politicians, multimillionaires, celebrities and high-net-worth individuals use complex structures to protect their cash from higher taxes, so the burden of paying taxes rests on ordinary citizens. Such growing inequality is a global issue driven largely by globalisation. In order to address this crucial problem, **we need to implement more transparency in public and private financial affairs**, and **there needs to be better international cooperation in tax policy and its enforcement**. Tackling corruption is also another important issue which needs to be resolved in this regard. Consequently, several very important steps need to be done to avert the deepening of the North-South divide as well as the gap between rich and poor regions of Europe.

#### FOUR POLICY PROPOSALS

##### HOW TO AVERT THE DEEPENING OF THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE:

#### 1. Implement the common refugee policy based on deep cooperation of all EU Member States:

- EU must set up a new clear European vision based on its founding values;
- Due to the fact that the refugee problem has the potential to spiral into a major crisis between the North and South, EU has to have a functioning common refugee policy to deal with the crisis;
- EU has to put stronger standards and control over democratic mechanisms;
- EU needs to improve freedom of media in the Southern countries, also the idea of common European television channel should be seriously discussed on the EU level;
- EU should manage more cultural exchange programmes (for employees, politicians, etc.) and student exchanges which are the best ways how to remove stereotypes and facilitate exchange of ideas and worldviews.

#### 2. Adopt a European educational standard based on the most successful methods (e.g. Finland, Sweden):

- EU should set up a system for spreading the lessons of successful Northern education methods to the south.

#### 3. Boost economic growth in the Southern Member States by learning the know-how from the Northern European countries:

- Northern energy model is a good sample for the South;
- Strengthen EU agricultural policy in the South;
- South could learn and benefit from the lessons in governmental and economic systems from the North.

#### 4. Northern and Southern European countries should try to work more closely together and exchange practices in culture, politics and citizens' rights:

- South could benefit from high standards of gender equality functioning in the North;
- North could benefit from cultural richness of the South;
- EU could facilitate deeper political and cultural media programs with the aim of exchanging ideas between the North and South.

## SOLIDARITY GROUP

The task of Solidarity Group was to analyse **the issues of globalisation, migration, development aid and climate change in Europe and the world**. In the first place, the group's members are convinced that immigration is one of the key issues the EU is facing nowadays. In order to address this issue effectively, **it is necessary to 'humanise' migrants** and made living individuals from them and not only statistical data. **Media and also politicians should do a better work in explaining to people that migration is not a threat to Europe and that migration is not the source of terrorism as populist and extremist politicians very often claim.**



Members of the Solidarity Group

The EU represents one of the most advanced and wealthiest regions of the world and, as a result, **the EU Member States should feel greater global responsibility and be more solidary towards the poor and developing regions of the world**, particularly in Africa and Asia. Effective solidarity programmes should be implemented in order to improve educational standards, develop infrastructure, build democratic institutions, strengthen civic society and respect for human rights and rule of law in the less advanced regions. Making use of the EU directives and regulations, the EU agencies should coordinate the cooperation conducted by state and non-state actors, and control how the resources are used.

With regards to the climate change and the recent turning point of the USA in climate policy, **the EU needs to maintain the leadership role that led to the Paris Agreement and become a global climate leader**. Similarly, the EU should empower its states so they all act as one strong actor in this issue. The other ultimate objective of the EU is to raise awareness of people about the climate challenges, and stress the importance of interlink among society, economy and environment which comprise 3 pillars of sustainability as defined the by Agenda 2020.

In final analysis, the group's members agreed that **the challenges embodied in accelerating globalisation are the main sources for the rise of popular support for populist and extremist political parties across Europe. Those politicians abuse these challenges for manipulation of people and spreading fear and hatred**. All democratic forces therefore need to be more active in keeping closer to people who feel threatened, and explain them the real facts about globalisation. Only by united and democratic approach of all EU Member States, the challenges of globalisation, migration, poverty and environment may be affectively addressed.

### FOUR POLICY PROPOSALS

HOW TO ADDRESS SOLIDARITY ISSUES (GLOBALISATION, MIGRATION, DEVELOPMENT AID, CLIMATE CHANGE):

1. **Carry out the political campaign which will emphasize personal factors of migrants (their background, their names, their faces etc.) in order to humanise them**, and better engage them in the society.



2. **The campaign focused on ‘humanisation’ of migrants should be included in the school educational curriculum and covered by media** to increase the awareness about immigration among citizens who are sceptical towards migrants.
3. **Empower underdeveloped regions by more efficient solidarity programmes** in order to help those regions with their political and economic development as well as to control and eliminate massive immigration to Europe. Such programmes should combine the improvement of education and infrastructure in those regions.
4. **With regards to the Agenda 2020, the EU should introduce the position of Chief Sustainability Officer who would be in charge of introducing a criterion that combines three pillars of sustainability – society, economy and environment – in the day-to-day decision-making of the EU institutions.** It should be expanded from the EU level to state and regional levels as well as to the private sector. This will also help to raise the awareness on the climate change among Europeans.

## EQUALITY GROUP

The **gender and LGBTI issues** were the main topics for discussion in the Equality Group. The group’s members welcomed the launch of **the worldwide campaign #MeToo thanks to which people have publicly started to discuss highly inappropriate and dangerous sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and violence, as well as sexual stereotypes** which still exist in our society. The members of the group see a huge problem in the fact that people who have been sexually abused feel ashamed for what they had experienced and, as a consequence, majority of them do not want to talk about it publicly. However, thanks to the #MeToo campaign in which many well-known people from film and music industry dared to talk about their horrible experience, this initiative gave courage to other people, who were or still are the victims of sexual violence, to start talking about this extremely important and worrying issue.



Members of the Equality Group

When looking at still **prevailing inequality of men and women in the workplace**, the group’s members explained that gender inequality is mainly historically rooted. Consequently, it is more demanding to eliminate gender stereotypes in traditional and more conservative regions; also religious authorities still greatly support traditional gender roles. Although many positive things in maintaining equality between men and women are already in place, **women are still discriminated in the workplace – e.g. women usually earn less money for the same job performance than men do, women occupy less leading and senior positions, and there is still also a low number of women involved in politics.** The delegates are strongly in favour of addressing this significant problem; however, they do not agree that the quotas are the solution. If we implement the quota system on how many women political parties/companies/organisations must employ for leading positions, then we can come to the situation that women will be viewed that they did not earn the position thanks to their skills but only on the basis of gender.



The Equality Group would also welcome **a higher number of men on parental leave or the type of ‘shared’ maternity/parental leave** meaning that a woman would take care of a baby for first six months and a man will take over for other six months. Such solution can eliminate inequality of men and women at home and slowly remove gender stereotypes in parenting, marriage and in taking care for household.

The issue of LGBTI rights is a highly debated and vigorous debate in Europe, particularly in the central, eastern and southern regions. While the same-sex marriage is allowed in 17 EU countries and the registered partnerships in 6 EU states, still as many as 8 EU Member States do not allow any recognition of the same-sex partnership by constitutional laws. The reason why the EU Member States are still not united in their approach towards the issue of LGBTI rights is that people in above listed regions are more conservative and religious-based, and they lack objective and true information about this topic. Another problem is that **many political leaders – instead of supporting these rights and explaining that LGBTI people are not the ‘threat’ to the society – are rather scared of this issue and prefer not to talk about it.** Therefore, the members of Equality Group highly welcome the recent European Court of Justice’s inquiry to rule on national marriage laws on same-sex marriage. In their view, **if LGBTI people have the same duties as heterosexual people in paying taxes or healthcare, then they logically have to be allowed to have the same rights.** Altogether, in spite of the fact that we live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the situation of gender equality and guarantee of rights for LGBTI people is still far from ideal and many important policies need to be implemented in order to reach real equality between women and men as well as fair rights for LGBTI people.

#### FOUR POLICY PROPOSALS

##### HOW TO ADDRESS GENDER EQUALITY AND LGBTI RIGHTS:

1. **New education curriculum which will teach pupils and students to respect gender equality needs to be implemented:** we need to improve the quality of education, mainly in regards to education on gender and sexuality.
2. **European governments must politically and financially support the organisations that are active in gender and LGBTI issues and facilitation of the inclusion process.**
3. **EU must eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market:** governments have to motivate companies to pay same salary to women and men for the same amount of work by giving them benefits like lower taxes.
4. **European governments need to enhance the fight against sexual violence** through the campaigns in social and mass media; it is necessary to **provide adequate help to all victims of sexual harassment and violence.**

#### OPPORTUNITIES GROUP

The last workshop group debated the reasons behind **the incapability of the EU to deal with a crucial problem of high youth unemployment level across its Member States.** The reason of this problem flows mainly from **the lack of interaction between education and job market needs.** While Greece, Spain and Italy are among the European countries which have the highest youth unemployment level, Latvia, Slovenia and Denmark experience the lowest youth unemployment level. Accordingly, the countries with lower number of youngsters registered in their labour offices should exchange their best practices and know-how to the countries which have not been very successful in tackling youth unemployment so far.

Also on the basis of their own experience, the Opportunities Group’s members detected that the phenomenon of unpaid traineeships is a very important problem to be addressed in this regard. In their

view, **through currently popular system of unpaid traineeships, the companies abuse youth labour for free.** Consequently, they all agreed that **the traineeships/internships must be paid** and in order to reach that, they propose the introduction of tax incentives for companies that hire young people, e.g.



Members of the Opportunities Group

with quota tax deductions. When looking at the real possibilities of young people to engage in public affairs and politics, the group's members admit that **it is still very difficult for youngsters to enter politics, usually for those without elitist background or family members in politics.** Implementation of quotas are one of possible solutions how to influence political parties and public institutions to hire more young people as well as encourage youngsters to engage in public sphere. The political movement *Coalition Canaria* can serve as an interesting example here – they established the quota system of having at least 25% of young people in senior positions within the party. The group members thus concluded that we need to

necessarily encourage more young Europeans to get involved in politics so they can dedicate their education, skills, experience and energy for shaping public affairs in Europe.

#### FOUR POLICY PROPOSALS

##### HOW TO ADDRESS YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES:

1. **Encourage systems of the traineeships already during the university studies:** a company would take care of the university fees for a student and s/he will be committed to stay working in that company for a certain period of time after completion of her/his studies.
2. **Encourage 'active' employment policies rather than positive: spend more money on financing of training programmes,** and less on financing long-lasting unemployment subsidies.
3. **Implement tax incentives to hire young people and the rule of paid traineeships.**
4. **Implement quota system on the party level** – political parties should employ at least 25% of young people within the party.

#### Roundtable “Where will we be in 2017?”

The Winter Academy was concluded by the roundtable “Where will we be in 2027?” in which young delegates discussed how their regions/countries, Europe and the world will look like in ten years' time. These are the main projections of the delegates on what will happen in Europe in 10 years' time:

##### EU Enlargement:

- ★ Iceland will become the member of the European Union;
- ★ Republic of San Marino will become the member of the EU;
- ★ Ukraine will be in the advanced application process for the EU membership.

### EU Integration:

- ★ More Member States will be involved in deeper political and economic integration aiming to ever-closer union between peoples and states;
- ★ France and Germany (and possibly Italy) will lead and supervise EU integration;
- ★ EU Institutions will work less bureaucratically and more efficiently and effectively;
- ★ EU will have a joint European army;
- ★ EU will have a common defence policy;
- ★ Eurozone will be stronger and euro will be one of the strongest and stable currency in the world;
- ★ Populist calls for other ‘-exit’ (after Brexit) will enjoy minimal public support and will be slowly eliminated.

### Regional Issues:

- ★ Island of Cyprus will be re-united and will have a bigger role in energy sector and energy trade between the EU and Asia;
- ★ Canaries will use its geographical advantage and become an intermediary between the EU and Africa;
- ★ Basque Country will have fully and clearly specified relationship with Spain so no similar problems – such as the recent one with Catalonia – can be repeated;
- ★ There will be less corruption in the EU countries which are fighting with corruption scandals nowadays.

### EU Policies:

- ★ Europe will be a sample of excellence of sustainability and respect for environment and climate;
- ★ Young people will be less passive and more involved in political and public affairs, there will be a higher number of young political leaders;
- ★ Youth unemployment will be historically low;
- ★ Curriculum and education systems in all EU Member States will be united and will serve as a sample of excellence for the rest of the world;
- ★ EU will again have new visionary and charismatic leaders;
- ★ EU will be more consistent in supporting of human rights;
- ★ European citizens will understand the EU better and thus they will feel more pro-European.

### EU and the World:

- ★ EU will become a true world leader;
- ★ Countries will be more integrated on global scale and will cooperate more intensively.

After the roundtable, the Winter Academy was closed by the keynote speaker Mr Marios Georgiadis. He similarly believes that in ten years’ time, the EU will be more united than ever and will become a sample for the rest of the world. He also noted that **‘hope’ was the most used word during the course of the Winter Academy**. In his opinion, **we cannot lose hope because alongside education, experience and luck, having hope is the way how to achieve what we want**. “Never lose hope and aim high,” was his final advice to the delegates of the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the IED-YDE Winter Academy.



Prepared by Adriana Čiefová (IED, 2017)

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