

## 5th IED-YDE WINTER ACADEMY

### Geopolitics & Values: what is the real power of the EU?

Saturday 19 December – 9:00 to 12:00 (CET)

#### REPORT

On **Saturday 19**, the **Institute of European Democrats (IED)** and the **Young Democrats for Europe (YDE)** held their annual Winter Academy. It aims to prepare young people from all of Europe to better understand the European political context as well as taking an active role in the democratic process. The Winter Academy also highlights the work achieved with the IED call for papers. The 2020 theme was: **Geopolitics & Values: what is the real power of the EU?**

The 2020 Winter Academy gathered **34 participants from 12 different countries and regions** (Basque Country, Balears, Canaries, France, Italia, San Marino, Romania, Cyprus, Greece, Germany, Croatia, Slovakia). Because of the pandemic, the meeting was held on Zoom.

To make it as **collaborative** as we can, we have used different tools such as Padlet (for icebreaker and brainstorming), Sli.do for interactivity and the breakout rooms of Zoom in order to allow small groups to work together.

On the content, **numerous speakers were invited by the IED**. After receiving welcome words from both the President of the YDE, **Asier Areito** and the President of the IED, **Francesco Rutelli**, **Professor Nye**, internationally recognised for his work on soft and hard power, gave an introductory speech to the participants.

Following that speech, **two young experts** that took part in the IED call for papers gave a keynote conference on the topic. **Jacopo Giraud**, Adjunct Lecturer in History of International Relations at the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society of the University of Turin, talked about **multilateralism and identity**. And **Sara S. Velasco**, a double major in Law and political sciences at Universidad Carlos III, lectured the participants about the **privacy issues especially regarding the contact tracing app used during the pandemic**.

After those speeches, the participants were divided into four smaller groups and discussed specific topics such as:

- How can we promote European values in the relations with the new Biden administration?
- Hard power and soft power for the EU: how can we reconcile them in a post-pandemic world?
- In a pandemic situation : Is it possible for states to gather data without abusing their power?
- Should the EU, the States or private entities control personal data: what is the best level?

Back from their break, the rapporteur of the small groups then gave an overview of what they discussed in plenary. Both **Jacopo Giraud** and **Sara S. Velasco** then gave some conclusions on the work that has been done in the breakout rooms.

Finally, **Mihai Sebe**, an Acting Head of Unit at European Studies Unit in European Institute of Romania as well as a Member of the IED Scientific Committee delivered a closing keynote on **future politics in what he has defined as the digital age**.

The participants took a final picture and left on a cheerful note with some mingling activities that aimed at reducing the distance caused by an online meeting.

### Conclusions drafted from the Winter Academy:

For **Jacopo Giraud**, Europeans have a lot in common in terms of cultural ties and shared values. And that can be used by the EU to spread our soft power. We are not, however, close to our own continent. For instance, we also have a lot of similarities with North America both in terms of cultural links as well as human flow (students, workers). He emphasises that with the new US administration, Europe can become an equal partner of the US. But in order to achieve that, the EU will have to also improve its hard power that is desperately needed.

**Sara S. Velasco** criticises the fact that some EU countries made it mandatory to download their contact-tracing app which is against the EU laws. She also highlighted a very common paradox in where people fight for their privacy but they are constantly giving out data. She defined digital relations as a mediated one: everything that people say can be used against or for them. In this way, the GDPR made the EU at the vanguard and strengthened our soft power as we are the only place to do so. Nevertheless, she mentioned that this vanguard role can only be a model for countries with liberal democracies as authoritarian states will increasingly use these data to control their population.

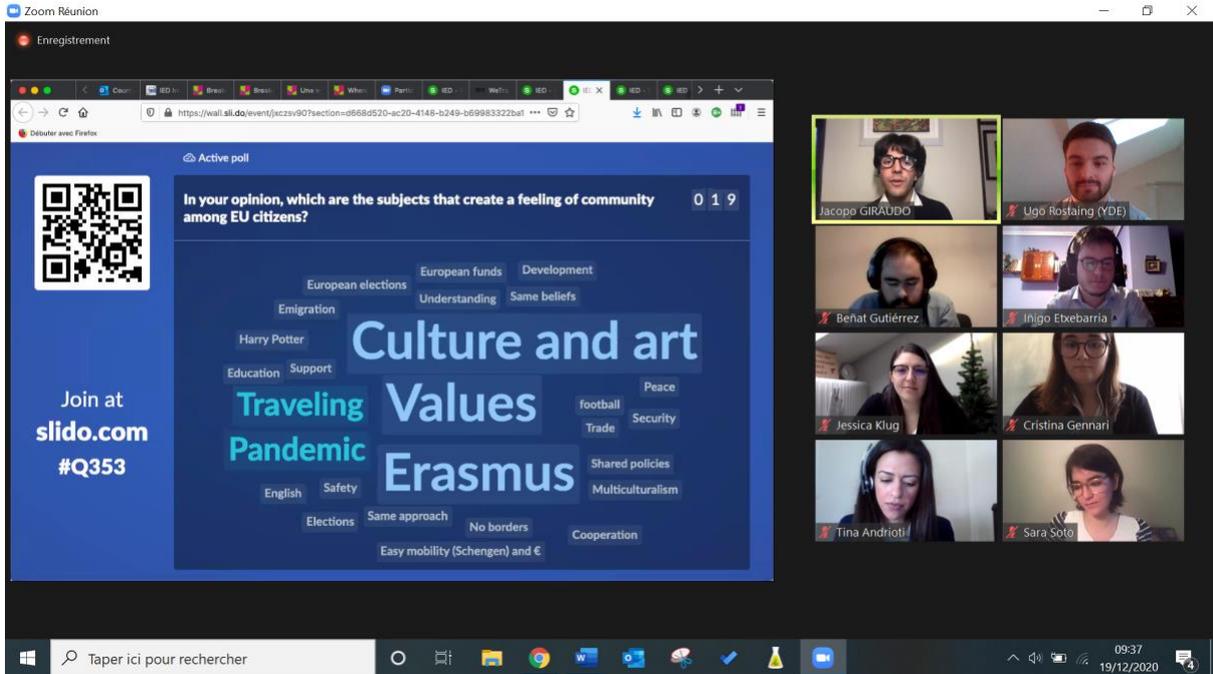
For **Mihai Sebe**, we are in the digital age where everything moved online. The progress is not linear anymore, we are living in the very intense revolution period. He called for a new framework for the digital and asked the state to enforce it. He also argued that we are not equal regarding access to information. Most of the contributions are written in English. And if people are creating social movements online, the State is also investing in the digital space to make sure they don't. He finally warned against digital ignorance: social media acts as an echo chamber, people will only see what they like and this is reinforcing their own beliefs.

He thus called for free access to Wi-Fi to people as well as a secure environment (not being controlled by a third party) and the use of digital to boost citizen participation. Only that will increase digital skills and allow people to engage even more both in their life and in the democratic process.

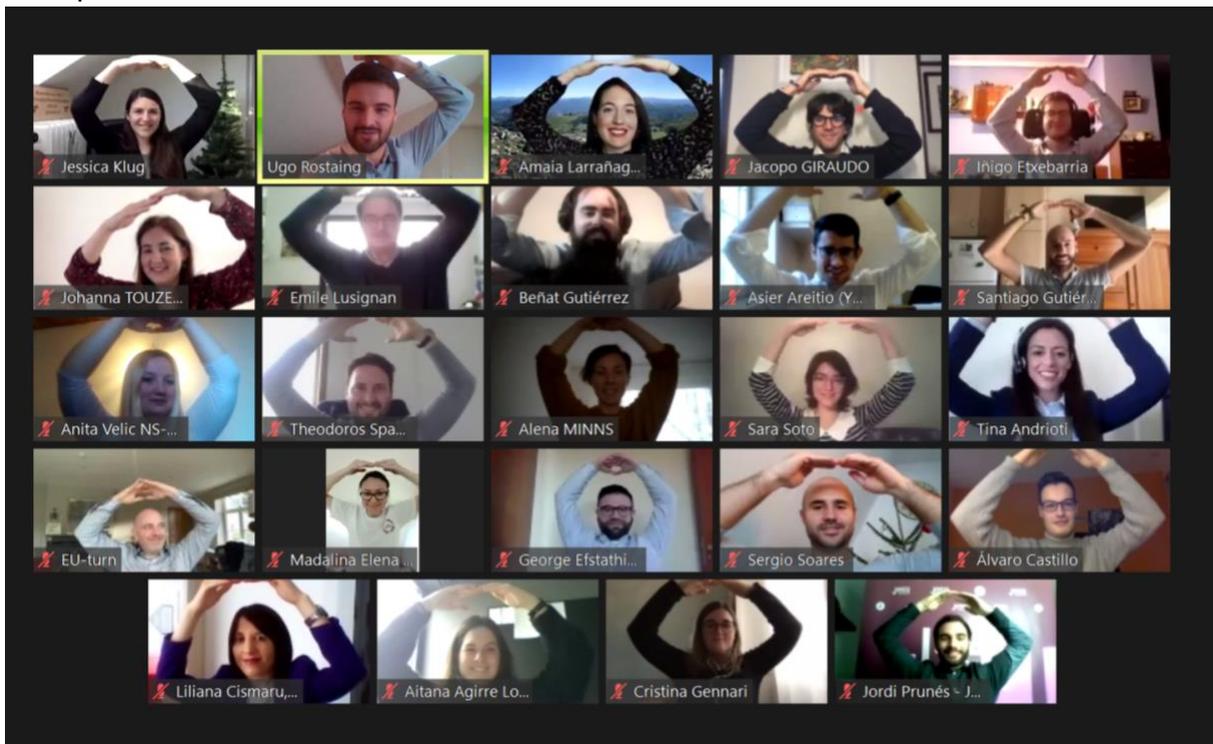
By **Ugo Rostaing**, SecGen Young democrats for Europe (YDE)

## Pictures:

### Jacopo's Girardo Keynote



### Final picture:



## Your lockdown best friend:

