

EU YOUTH DIALOGUE

Cyprus Edition

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Edouard Gaudot

Brussels/Limassol, October 2022

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www.iedonline.eu



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this third edition of the *Dialogues*, **11 young professionals and university students** gathered for a friendly conversation on democracy, politics, ecology, solidarities and the contemporary challenges for Cyprus and Europe.

In the general context of a still divided and occupied country, following the 1974 Turkish invasion of the island's northern shores, the discussion was marked by a regular insistence on this idiosyncratic situation that enduringly trumps every other political priority in the public debate.

Against the backdrop of a tension between the desired liberation of the country and the necessary reconciliation, these mature and energetic students **voiced their utter disbelief and disenchantment as regards their current political system**, where rampant corruption and sheer clientelism strengthen the grip of established parties on the public life. **They also deplored the especially poor quality of an obsolete education system**, that they consider to have dramatically failed them in its mission of preparing them to the actual world.

This led to **a collective and committed call for deeper and better mobilization in the society**, to raise awareness among their peers and the greater public, as well as initiate the necessary changes. Here, those who prefer the involvement in the social and cultural movements and the ones who believe that the party-based system remains an irredeemable reality to compose with, converged in a mutual acknowledgment that both tactical inclinations should not be opposed – but associated, in the hope to bring about the systemic change.

Finally, in spite of the prevailing sentiment of being on the “edges of Europe”, small and estranged from the EU's political and diplomatic decisions-making centres, **the discussion ended up on the necessity for a stronger and proactive commitment to the island's anchorage in Europe.**

Short bio

An historian and European affairs expert, **Edouard Gaudot** is a writer and political advisor. Committed to the causes of Europe, Ecology and Education, he teaches (ESSEC, HEC business schools), works as a trainer and facilitator, and regularly publishes on European politics, and political ecology. He also conceives and implements European projects on youth, citizenship, education and ecology. His latest book, *Les Sept Piliers de la Cité*, 2022, Plon, reflects on the current crisis of politics in our democracies and how to fix it.

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1. A conversation about the joys and sorrows of being young in Cyprus

The Cyprus edition of the EU Youth Dialogues took place on Saturday 22 October, in Limassol, on the southern coast of Cyprus. Organised with the precious help on the ground of **Marina Demetriou** and **Eirini Mantole** on behalf of their association [*Citizens Platform*](#), it was the third national chapter of our **IED project** surveying the state of mind, aspirations and political commitment of representatives of the European younger generations.

The aim of the EU Youth Dialogue is to sketch through these *in camera* discussions a partial, yet living picture of the current situation and spirit of this group of young Europeans, from Cyprus in this case, as well as from Poland, France, Germany and possibly more countries.

Gathering 11 students and young professionals, the conversation was animated by **Edouard Gaudot**, project coordinator. Coming from across the island and ranging in age from 18 to 29, with the younger ones still in their last year of High school, the group eagerly engaged in a relaxed and lively exchange of ideas and opinions about their country, the current state of affairs, their hopes and grievances.

In addition, one purpose of the project consists also in fostering a dialogue between participants who consider themselves as politically engaged and those who prefer to abstain from politics. In this regard, the balance was relatively well respected, as a short majority of them (6/11) declared themselves as “politically inactive”, the other ones being active observers of the political debates, former members of established parties or individually involved in the European institutions.

Warm and positive, the atmosphere allowed for a rather thorough appraisal of what young Cypriots might think of their world. Of course, the size of the group, its ability to exchange in a foreign language¹ and the fact that they all had been, or would go, to university, makes the group relatively homogenous socially – and certainly not representative of the whole diversity of Cyprus’ youth. However, their opinions broadly matched what can be found in the various surveys of their generation.

¹ Even though English is commonly spoken in the island, due to its prolonged occupation by the United Kingdom until 1960.

Crisis mood – Following the usual guidelines of the “Dialogues”, the conversation started from them personally, their situation and state of mind after two years of pandemic and an impression of enduring mayhem caused by the current geopolitical context, the rise of the costs of living and the deep energy crisis.

“We live in troubled times and yet you are starting your lives and preparing your future. How do you feel? How did the pandemic affect you, your loved ones, your studies?”²(EG)³

In the general context of a still divided and occupied country, following the 1974 Turkish invasion of the island’s northern shores (and the remaining two extraterritorial military bases held by the United Kingdom since the country’s independence), the geopolitical fallout of the Ukraine conflict immediately echoed this peculiar situation.

Now there's another thing looming in the air, which is the geopolitical situation. I mean, there is war back in Europe. I've been also quite alerted to the fact that there is war also in this country. (EG)

This would have an impact on many aspects of the conversation, especially when it comes to the ranking and awareness of priorities or the relationship with the EU.

Changing atmospheres – Then, the questions would expand into the potential feeling of “eco-anxiety”, and the perception of ecological challenges, in the context of a long-term ecological crisis, from climate change and the loss of biodiversity, to the various pollutions affecting our environment.

Are the environmental issues, the green mindset, the green demands and also their impact on the economic model something that is important to you? (EG)

Would the “new climate regime” challenge their beliefs in the sustainability of the current economic model, especially in an island so dependent on tourism. Would it,

² All excerpts from the conversations are quoted in *cursive*.

³ Unless noted EG (Edouard Gaudot, animator), the quotes from the participants will remain anonymous for confidentiality reasons.

does it question our production and consumption habits and our way of doing business? Does it impact our society's organization and prospects? Should their future jobs preferably make sense to them, and have a positive impact on the world?

*- How does it affect the way you see yourself in the economy? for instance, you have a tourist driven economy, which is quite connected with many of the green issues, like air pollution, waste, etc.
- Whether you work or not in this branch, how does this growing awareness affect you and how do you take it up and what does it mean for you? (EG)*

Evolving solidarities –The third aspect was connected to the existing and potentially disappearing solidarities in the Cypriot and European societies. An island in the south-east Mediterranean, Cyprus is a natural destination for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in general, trying to reach the EU's shores.

Your country is confronted with the influx of refugees⁴, which might question also a lot of things, such as the social safety net, poverty, but also the solidarities within the society, the rise of polarization, etc. How do you see the current cohesion of the society in Cyprus?

In a country deemed to be patriarchal⁵, where the Orthodox church and the Mediterranean traditional values still infuse the social structures and the collective behaviour, the question of women's rights was also part of the reflection, from sexual violence to gender equality and a persistent pay-gap.

Finally, leading to the last part, the question of politics and **taking care of democracy** – how would they relate to their political system and how difficult would it be to find their place in it?

⁴ <https://euomedrights.org/migrants-and-refugees-in-cyprus/>

⁵ <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/what-state-womens-rights-cyprus>

The question of being involved in politics often cuts across the one of being a party member, but here again, the issue of partisan politics versus personal engagement for a cause was central in the discussion.

And I wanted to come to this: which is basically there are many ways to do politics, and the real question that is actually driving us: is what are your ways of doing politics? How do you get into the city. How do you change the "Polis"? (EG)

2. An upbeat youth – focusing on the present

Interestingly, the first series of question showed a relative lack of crisis mood, and a rather optimistic approach to the whole experience – and the present days. It might sound strange, since the country was not less affected than the rest of Europe or the world. And its younger age group showed, as in other EU countries⁶, “a statistically significant association with major depressive symptoms when compared to the adult population”, according to a specific study on the mental health of Cypriots during Covid⁷. Moreover, the Eurofound study ranked also Cyprus’ youth amongst the least optimistic of Europeans⁸.

Not that this group didn’t feel the pain. Quite the contrary. In fact, facing the uncertainty proved very difficult, as one participant recalled: *you didn't know what to do with your future as a youth as a young person. I didn't know what to do with my future. Do I go abroad to study? Do I stay here? What do I do with my life? How long is going to last? It created a lot of questions about ourselves, about our country, about the world in general.*

⁶ Eurofound (2021), *Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2021/impact-of-covid-19-on-young-people-in-the-eu>

⁷ Stylianou N, Samouti G, Samoutis G. Mental Health Disorders During the COVID-19 Outbreak in Cyprus. *J Med Life*. 2020 Jul-Sep;13(3):300-305. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7550154/>

⁸ Eurofound, op. cit., p.49

The other negative aspects are the usual laments, found in the various testimonies across Europe: the social distancing, the restriction on personal relations and its overall impact on a feeling of isolation – *I still do kind of feel lonely. It's been two years, and I kind of isolated myself from my friends, who were a very big part of my life as a teenager.* Overall, it's the lockdowns and the feeling of being trapped, even more on an island, that characterised the experience for them.

- *The social distancing thing. I'm a person who loves to have other people. So it was like a trauma for me.*
- *I wouldn't say I'm at my best time or having the best time in my life.*

But at the time of our discussion, the participants rather relished the relief of taking back their life as students and young people. For the younger ones, it even had been a *good thing, because we got to spend time with our families. [...] Same for me: I didn't usually spend time with my family, but thanks to it, we got to know each other better, and we had quality time together.* It seems that looking back on these past two years, in spite of the evident traumas, the whole experience was already part of a digested past – and the consequences no longer weigh down on them.

Additionally, it appears that some positive externalities did arise. Taking more time for oneself, reflecting on one's life goals and priorities... and even *from an environmental perspective, it was really good because we had a chance to not cut the planet as much. And it's something that we wouldn't be able to do if they took the pandemic. So yes, it was really bad for people. But I think that we also somehow gave the planet a break from everything that we do every day.*

Oddly, this reference to the ecological crisis remained eventually the only mention of what otherwise concerns a lot of the European youth: the state of environmental destruction⁹. There wasn't much trace of an "eco-anxiety" in the group – contrary to what could have been expected from a Mediterranean island, where the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss might appear more evidently. Rising sea levels, higher temperatures, fewer rainfalls, deforestation... the consequences for the island's ecosystem are being already felt. "Eco-anxiety is a good thing"¹⁰, claims

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/06/eco-anxiety-fear-of-environmental-doom-weighs-on-young-people>

¹⁰ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2020/02/07/why-eco-anxiety-is-a-good-thing/>

an article of the news outlet *Cyprus Mail*. But young Cypriot don't really seem to feel it.

A sentiment that is completely in line with the broader population. Whether younger or older, Cypriots are not yet rising up to the challenges raised by the ongoing degradation of their environment, and the country maintains “consistently one of the highest per capita emissions in Europe”¹¹.

There are of course some cultural factors, as pointed by one participant: *I think as a nation we are laid in behind. You see that during the pandemics that were many areas filled with rubbish and municipalities had to send people to clean this up.*

But in fact, the main reason according to them, would be the weight of the “Cyprus question” – namely *the Cyprus problem overshadows so many things, gender equality and the cultural problems.*

I think because as a society we're facing constant provocative behavior and threats from Turkey. This doesn't allow us to develop in the same sense that other countries are developing in the ecological sense.

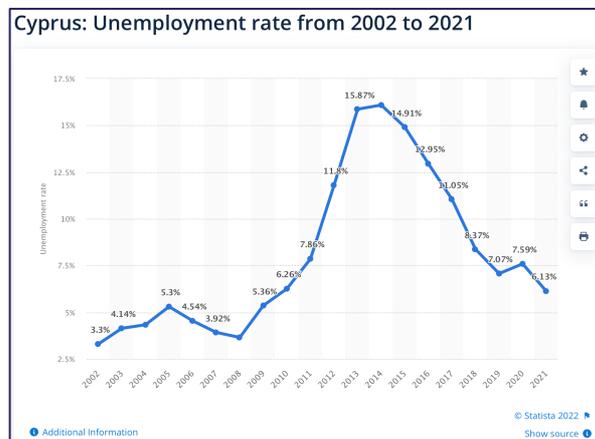
All this is consistent with the recent findings of the quantitative survey report *Youth Barometer 3*¹², which showed that only a small third of young Cypriot are “seriously concerned about social inequality in society, such as the existence of social stereotypes and prejudices”, and in addition, discard completely “topics related to the environment, sustainable development, climate change, green patterns of consumption and production”. Actually, the “Cyprus issue”, as much as the fact that our group showed signs of being relatively comfortable, materially speaking, explains that there was no mention of the economic situation of the country.

¹¹ “Cyprus needs immediate action to combat the climate crisis” - <https://cyprus-mail.com/2022/06/29/cyprus-needs-immediate-action-to-combat-the-climate-crisis/>

¹² https://youthpolicy.onek.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/IMR-UNIC_Quantitative-Survey-Report_Youth-Barometer-3.pdf, released in September 2021 by the IMR/University of Nicosia on behalf of the Youth Board of Cyprus,

Strongly impacted by the sovereign debt crisis in the 2010's, leading to a bank run, a painful bail-in in 2013, and drastic structural reforms¹³, Cyprus' economic recovery was later-on shocked by the standstill brought to tourism by the pandemic. Truly, the decade-long trend towards growth of material wealth, only dented by the 2013 crisis, is the comforting sign of a brighter future.

The unemployment rate has since then constantly receded, from up to 16% down to 6%, below the EU current average rate (see figure), and these young Cypriots did not



seem too worried about the state of the national economy – or the persistent inequalities in their country. And to the statement that *solutions can only be found in university*, the question *what if you're not in university?* (EG) remained unanswered – but it might be linked to the very high proportion (much higher than the EU average) of young Cypriots graduating from university¹⁴.

But the general weakness of green or social awareness did not mean the absence of any political consciousness at all. One issue from the social cohesion series of questions did receive more attention: women's right. It started with the mention of the Iranian women standing up for their freedoms – and not receiving the attention and support they deserve in Cyprus, in spite of the war memory: *we had a project about the women in Iran in the university and no one did anything [... it was shocking] for me as a person whose country still suffers from war consequences*.

It then quickly expanded into the discrepancy between the theoretical situation where rights are supposedly upheld, and the reality of a society that remains strongly patriarchal and male-centered¹⁵ – Cyprus does lag behind the European standards in terms of gender equality, according to the European Index on Gender Equality¹⁶.

¹³ <https://academic.oup.com/book/31872/chapter-abstract/267530491?redirectedFrom=fulltext>

¹⁴ <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/report-says-cyprus-has-most-higher-education-graduates-per-capita-in-the-eu/>

¹⁵ <https://cyprus-mail.com/2021/10/29/cyprus-still-lagging-in-gender-equality/>

¹⁶ <https://eige.europa.eu/countries/cyprus>

I come across a lot when women say that they are not feminists because they do have every right by law and are completely equal to men. [...] But what happens with the patriarchal institutions [like the police] connected to the society and the mindset, of the society?

And if there are indeed some marginal progresses, as underlined by the EIGE index, it remains an issue, including with the younger generations. Safety is not fully there, one participant added - *I still feel that something can happen to me.*

3. Disenfranchisement for legacy – the weight of the past

No doubt, they will agree that *it's important to see what we can do when it comes to the environment, and that for the future generations to survive, we are the ones who should do something.* But there is always something more pressing, the large shadow of the “green line” guarded by the United Nations since 1974¹⁷.

In the general context of a still divided and occupied country, following the Turkish invasion of the island's northern shores, the discussion was marked by a regular insistence on this idiosyncratic situation that enduringly impacts and redefines the political priorities in the public debate. Although generally belonging to the former generations, painful memories still loom over the younger ones and tend to trump all other preoccupations¹⁸.



¹⁷ <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/about-buffer-zone>

¹⁸ See Miranda Christou, “Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict” in *The Cyprus Review*, (Vol.26:1, Spring 2014).

Strong and present, this memory haunts the conversation. Ghosts of the past made of entire villages displaced, and violent traumatic memories from families brutalized or slaughtered by the invading army. In Cyprus, the word “refugees” most of the times points at those who had to flee the Turkish attack and occupation – rather than the ones from Syria or across the sea, like everywhere else in the EU.

*- It seems that people forget the invasion, but we cannot forget it. We do not want to forget it, especially us for refugees.
- My family is not refugee [but] we do have the refugees in our family and their children who are 40 years old now.*

In a way, the war in Ukraine sort of put these memories in perspective – *[in my class at the university] we have a few students from Ukraine and [when studying] the “Cypriot problem” it was very interesting to see [they] reacted when we took them into the buffer zone, because we are a country divided because of war, and the people in Ukraine [...] are going through a war very similar to the one we had to go through.*

There is somehow, the recurring desire to engage the communities into a healing process. But this urge to move forward is always counterbalanced by the reluctance of others to let go – even within the younger generation. When the word “reconciliation” is ventured in the conversation, some may pick it up to agree, but others prefer to plead for *total liberation* – discarding what the human consequences and what it would actually mean in terms of legal rights to return.

*- Does “liberation” mean getting back what we initially own or continue with more peaceful methods between the two communities?
- When I refer to total liberation of my country, I'm talking about creating a unified state as we had before invasion. I don't know if it would be possible to give people back their properties; I know it's really difficult. But I cannot see another way of talking about liberation other than returning to people their properties, their wealth, everything they had.*

And eventually, geopolitics will play over the human side. *I'm OK with Turks as people. I have friends from Turkey. And I think that people such as the ones in this room or educated do not have problems with Turkish people.* But in their eyes, Turkey the country, and Ergodan in particular, behaves as a dangerous neighbor; and a regional bully *trying [...] to continue its expansion.*

- When you are facing such threats, you need to focus on that and not on other issues. It doesn't allow you to focus on other issues.

Politics fosters divide. The governments are a constant source of division. *It's like we live in our own microcosm and also culturally.* The inertia of the past weighted all through the conversation. As one participant put it, with a quite severe tone: *I think that the problem is the fact that old people and old ideas poisoned the young people.* It was a recurring lament, that Cyprus lives under the spell of a rigid culture and the rule of painful memories.

Pickled in the old habits and old conflicts, the older generation failed to produce the necessary role models, according to this group of young ones.

- I believe it's very important because young people need role models and I think that was lacking generally from society.

The feeling is one of marginalization – *we feel left behind. We feel like we're not heard. We don't have access to the decision-making processes.* The depressing alternative seems that lest to be relegated on the margins of the system, the only choice boils down to the continuation of the system, with memorial inertia and political conservatism.

A strong feeling of disenfranchisement and impotence emerged from the political sequence of the conversation. The lack of role model and the failed leadership of the political class is felt as a betrayal. However, according to them, there is only here the logical consequence of a society incapable of maturity and collective responsibility. *Modern life and the excessive technological advancement and materialism have affected greatly the feeling of common belongings. We do socialize, we do collaborate with people in our close environment, but we are not very willing to do more to help others. We do not look at the problems other people are facing, such as minorities, for example.*

The claim that the Cypriot political is completely out of touch with the real needs of the country and the people remained a general complaint during the discussion. For example, the Cypriot electorate expects, and even demands from the government to take action on the major issues, such as climate change¹⁹. And in the group, this was also a unanimous cry for public action and responsibility. But sheer clientelism, and the inability of the party system to work for anything but its own maintenance, make for a weak and discredited political class. As a former party member put it in the discussion, everything is organized *for the sake of the party and not for the individual members*. It is important to note that among them, those who had a party-membership experience were quite relieved to have left their respective organizations.

Interestingly, they all pointed out the shocking failure of their education system – whether they graduated from public or private schools. Conservative, outdated, and organized to maintain the social structure rather than emancipate the students, their schools are a disappointment. The group unanimously deplored and resented both contents and methods of teaching, crying out that *their studies hadn't prepared us at all for the world we live in*. From teachers to administration, it's a system built for competition and repetition, that *doesn't help us to build a responsible or a strong personality*.

- *More or less, we are being taught the same things that our parents used to be taught like 30 years ago. So I don't see how that can help us move forward. Nothing has changed or very little.*
- *How do you expect to move forward?*
- *First of all, the economy. I got out of high school, I didn't even know how the economy works in any other country.*

Quite understandable for university and high-school students still very close to the issue on a daily basis, the necessity to reform the national education system did come back and forth during the whole discussion.

¹⁹ <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-391-climate-survey-cyprus>

4. From the edges of Europe – mobilizing for the future

The question arose, then. How can you mobilize, for the future? What are the leverages that can be activated to initiate a change?

Interestingly enough, our young Cypriots were highly critical of the education they had received, but proved quite well educated and learned. They had grown aware of the shortcomings of their surroundings through their higher university studies, their connections abroad and a disposition to engage with the world. The work of the Youth Board of Cyprus²⁰ might also be bearing fruits – and one participant shared all the fruitful experience acquired at European level in a succession of institutional steps.

Europe – the EU came late in the conversation, and yet, it was present from the beginning. There is an ambivalence in the relation to Europe. First, Europe means the continent, so Greece, and the strong cultural and political bond with a country whose culture, history – and fear of Turkey – they share: *in fact we have the Greek civilization*. Secondly, Europe is where Cyprus belongs.

- Europe is a collection of culture. We have the Greek civilization in Europe, just like we have the French, the German. So it doesn't matter if we are more Eastern than the rest of Europe. We are still part of European civilization.

Furthermore, the EU membership guarantees stability and national independence.

- Without Europe we don't exist anymore. I'm 100% sure that Turkey would go on and by force or any other means take the rest of the island.

But Cyprus is literally on the edges of Europe. Seen from this Eastern outpost, the EU can feel quite afar. And prone to what they called *double standards*, repeating the official stance of their President, Nikos Anastasiades²¹. The grievance is that the EU and its bigger members, namely Germany or the UK when it was one, *never took*

²⁰ <https://onek.org.cy/en/>

²¹ <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/10/11/the-eus-tolerance-and-double-standards-with-turkey-embolden-erdogan-claims-cyprus-president>

any action to support us against Turkey – France being a recent exception in their eyes, due to its intervention in the tensions with Turkey’s exploratory moves in the Eastern Mediterranean²².

- The international community took action immediately about the war in Ukraine for 50 years.

It could be because of the lack of media attention, some did suggest, but whatever the reasons, that's a double standard. Because the occupation, the provocations are happening right now. Two or three years ago, the Turkey regime tried to do illegal buildings in the secret economic zone. Sanctions were supposed to be taken against them. Nothing happened because many European countries had had issues with that because they would be affected economic. So that's a double standard. And the lack of media attention is actually a manifestation of this attitude: It's not televised, because it's a double standard.

However, Europe appears as a means to make things change on the island. Whether it's the Turkish occupation or the climate awareness, or the blocks in the government, a lot of the solutions go through Brussels and Strasbourg. What is needed, actually, is an enhanced influence there. We need more representation. There isn't enough lobby within the European institution and maybe it's because we are smaller in size. We need more people to get involved in the same European programs.

Representation was the key-word on which the conversation landed. Obviously, the Cyprus society is much more dynamic than the cultural conservatism and political stalemate would suggest. In fact, some non-partisan movements were mentioned: LGBTQ, women's rights, welcoming refugees (although this remains dominated by religious charity organizations).

- Yes, I think they need representation. We're talking about civil society. I think they're the most important part of the society because that's where all the academics, all the researchers or the activists come together. And if there was more collaboration with them, with the

²² <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210721-france-slams-erdogan-provocation-after-cyprus-two-state-comments>

government, I think that would be more of an ideal system. But they are being marginalized.

- [LGBTQ] are definitely becoming more visible as an issue. [...] There's definitely big improvements with the Pride movement and the way society views queer people.

Whatever the issue, the real challenge is to foster awareness in the society, they would insist. *I guess that it goes by layers, and the first layer is to educate yourself to build some critical thinking.*

- I believe there is awareness among young people of our generation and even younger people than us. And therefore, I believe there is hope for people to improve.

Stirring and awakening an entire society. For example, *regarding ecological consciousness: I think we should be taught in schools about it, another thing that could have a great impact is television and comparison to other nations.* In other words, disseminating the European standards and nudging the national pride into action.

Again, to empower youth, education is the cornerstone of deep and sustainable changes.

- We need to form our own opinions. And that starts from critical thinking, from education. So everything is very interconnected in terms of something more collective.

As one of the more politically involved participant put it: *it starts internally, and then it becomes a collective consciousness.* However, the most important is raising awareness goes through national public debates: *it doesn't mean that everyone has to agree with everyone. I feel like it's more important to learn to accept different opinions and different viewpoints without forgetting your own initial thoughts.*

- Raising awareness is a bottom-up solution, which means we have to convince the people that they have to politicize and vote, and do their research before voting.

Unionize, organize, intervene, step-up. Don't expect the political parties to do anything that could diminish their grip on the system. *The top will never accept to change because that's the system that's feeding them.* If you become a member, do not expect to have the means to change it from inside.

- I think when someone enters a party or is trying to achieve that party's purpose, which is to gain power and then keep the power, when you get the power, you will never leave it.

The solution is evident then: *civil organization.*

5. Rising up to the challenge

The whole conversations showed a subconscious subtle tension. On the one hand, most of the justifications for lagging behind, or lesser awareness for important issues were connected to some sort of victimhood mentality. Summoning the geopolitical threat, the lack of consideration from the EU, or the painful memories of the war can lead to relinquish responsibility for the present challenges. It's a temptation that most of the participants spotted in the current political system. And did not completely avoid themselves. However, the tone changed in the second part of the discussion. When the topic turned to taking action, the group demonstrated maturity and a sense of responsibility.

- I just think that we're a bit of an egocentric society. So if something doesn't affect us directly, we tend to overlook it. And we tend to kind of be in denial about certain issues that are happening around us. So we don't pay attention to necessary problems like corruption by expressing and verbalizing what is actually happening.
- And also the corruption, which everyone talking and complaining about how corrupt our government is.

The challenge is both individual and collective. Fostering engagement, awareness, mobilization by personal example: *if I go outside and do something, it may not benefit me directly, but it will benefit my society. We need people partially care for others, and not only care, but it's also going to be good for them.*

And this goes through multiplying the programs with inclusive dimensions. And building “intergenerational bridges”. It has to be a collective effort – *both by the older and the younger generation.*

Eventually, if no one is a source of inspiration in the older generation, then be the inspiration you would like to see in the world.

For the moment, we have no one that inspires us, no one that shows us the correct way, let's say we need to discover this on our own.

The conversation ended up on this very Gandhi-like lesson of social and political ethics.