REPORT

OUR VALUES, OUR EUROPE

YOUTH EXCHANGE
16-23 SEPTEMBER 2022



The purpose of this report about the project Our Values, Our Europe (OVOE) is to motivate other non-governmental organisations and youth workers to develop similar projects and initiatives to promote fundamental EU values such as dignity, equality, democracy, solidarity, rule of law and general human rights, through activities and to contribute to the integration and promotion of the European way of life.

Host organisation:
Foundation for Entrepreneurship, Culture and Education, Bulgaria

Partners:
Inkubator Innowacji, Warsaw, Poland
Hidak Ifjúsági Alapítvány, Budapest, Hungary
Business Mentality, Thessaloniki, Greece
Evropské centrum mládeže Břecla, Czech Republic
Multi Kulti, Timişoara, Romania

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The youth exchange *Our Values, Our Europe* took place at Golden Sands seaside resort on the Northern Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The chosen accommodation was Detelina Hotel. It proved to be an ideal place for conducting the activities as it is located away from the big city, making it easy to work outside and enjoy the last sunny days of the summer. It is also minutes away from the beach and bus stops, thus giving participants the option to easily explore nearby places.

32 young people took part in the exchange, aged 18-30, from six European Countries: Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Greece, Czech Republic, and Romania. The participants arrived at the hotel on 16 September in the late afternoon and evening and left on 23 September in the morning.





The topics of the project were:

- EU values and The European way of life
- Active Citizenship
- General Human Rights
- Freedom and Democracy
- Equality and Solidarity
- Rule of Law
- Youth



The aims of the project were:

- to bring an understanding and new knowledge to participants of the history and diversity of the EU
- to foster European citizenship and the participation of young people in the democratic life of Europe
- to develop key skills of young people such as civic awareness, critical thinking, integrated problem solving, as well as skills for argumentation and constructive participation in community activities
- to create a civic space where young people can have their voices heard
- to raise the capacity of youth organizations to work with European topics



The used methods of non-formal learning included:

- Ice-breakers games end energizers
- Role-playing and simulations
- Collective games
- Creativity and teamwork
- Discussions, brainstorming and reflection.
- Intercultural and experiential learning

The reached results of the project are:

- Participants gained a deeper understanding and new knowledge about the history, diversity and establishment of the EU.
- Participants increased their understanding of the fundamental EU value such as dignity, equality, freedom, democracy, rule of law, solidarity, and human rights.
- Empowered young people to become active European citizens and participate in the democratic life of Europe.
- Participants gained and further developed valuable soft skills including leadership skills, negotiation skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, critical thinking, constructive participation in dialogue and debate, the ability to comprehend abstract concepts and intercultural competences
- Introduced participants to an intercultural environment and the importance of treating one another with dignity and respect.
- Participants learned how to promote the fundamental EU values and ways to have their voices heard in the democratic life of Europe.
- Learned about the possibilities that are offered by the Erasmus+ Programme



Energizers to Wake the Body Up

Every morning, the workday started with an inspirational quote aimed to set the tone for the day. Every quote focused on one of the EU values, the topic of discussion for that day:

United in diversity - Motto of the European Union

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite – Nelson Mandela

For us, democracy is a question of human dignity, and human dignity is political freedom – Olof Palme

I raise up my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard….we cannot all succeed when half of us are held back – Malala Yousafzai

It is the rule of law alone which hinders the rulers from turning themselves into the worst gangsters – Ludwig von Mises

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After breakfast, the participants engaged in collective energizers to wake up their bodies and get ready for the other activities. The exercises varied each day and combined basic elements of gymnastics, physical exercises, dance, and short games that included counting or role-play. Each activity was introduced in a fun and exciting way, as to start the day in a good mood.





Human Rights

Human rights are rights we all have simply because we are human beings. They are not granted to us by any state. They are inherent to every person, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. There are the most fundamental human rights – the right to life- and those embodying the basic standards for living a life with dignity – the rights to food, education, work, health, and liberty.

Core principles of human rights:

- *Inalienable* – human rights are absolute and cannot be lost or taken away.
- *Universality, equality, and non-discrimination* – human rights belong to every person, everywhere in the world, simply by being a human being.
- *Interdependence and Indivisibility* - human rights are essentially connected with one another and cannot be viewed separately.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. It was the first legal document to set out fundamental human rights and establish them as universally protected. To this day all international human rights law is based on the foundation of the UDHR. Its 30 articles provide structure and principles for all existing and upcoming human rights conventions, treaties, and other legal documents.

Act it out

To introduce the general concept of human rights and explore participants' perspectives on the topic, a role-play activity was conducted. The participants were divided into smaller groups and each group was given one of the five articles presented below. Then the participants had 40 minutes to brainstorm together and create an interpretation, a play of their article, without using words. When the time was up, each group presented their performance and the rest of the group had to guess which article is being interpreted.



Through this activity, participants were introduced to the general idea of human rights, in an interactive and unique way. Developing intercultural and communication skills were evident, as each group consisted of people from different countries, with different perceptions. They had to find a way to communicate their ideas with each other, and also with the rest of the participants. Co-operation and creativity were stimulated, as participants were encouraged to use props and/or create visuals.



Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of a person.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.



Rights Bingo

Participants were introduced to a quiz activity based on the game Bingo. Each person was given a quiz sheet, including questions about different human rights, violations thereof, personal experiences and knowledge on the subject. Everyone had to go around and find an answer to each question by asking different people.

During the discussion of the activity types of human rights were introduced as well as their relevance to different members of the groups and their experiences. There were contradicting and controversial answers, however, the discussion encourage participants to practice active listening and respect for other people and their opinions.





Fighters for rights

The participants were divided into equal smaller groups and given information cards describing six human rights activists. As a form of puzzle activity, co-operation and teamwork were a key part of every group. By learning about the life events of some very known and some not so known, human rights activists, young people explored to what extent human rights are being respected in different countries and how to promote and be curious about protecting these rights and freedoms.



Freedom and Democracy

Democracy

The idea of democracy is believed to have started in Ancient Greece. The word itself has Greek roots with “demos” meaning people and “kratos” meaning power. When combined the two words create “democracy”, meaning “power to the people”. As such it is considered a way of governing based on the will of the people.

The functioning of the EU is founded on representative democracy. Every adult EU citizen has the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in elections to the European Parliament, in their country of residence, or in their country of origin.

To start, participants were encouraged to first come up with an individual definition of democracy. Then, each of them had to find a pair and come up with one agreed definition between them. Further, participants got in groups of four and later in groups of eight, to debate and come up with one final agreed definition. The definitions of each group are as follows:

It’s a system of governance where the power belongs to and stays with the people, who can choose their representatives in an anonymous way for specified amount of time. The decisions are made based on majority, and the human rights are guaranteed. In an democracy the legislative, executive and judicial systems are separated.

Democracy is a political regime that is based on the will of the people, and every citizens have the power and decisions are taken on a majority vote.

Democracy is when the citizens rule their own country, making the political decisions, by voting. It’s when the power is divided by parts (parliament, house of common, senate, presidents) that protect democracy. In this way the citizens are free to express themselves, have a free will, living in peace/



Democracy is the freedom of choosing your leaders/representatives, who represent citizens'' equal rights by elections! Each vote is equal, and each adult has the right to vote! It is a guarantee of freedom and safety.

Freedom

There are different types of freedom that are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Individual freedoms include respect for private life, freedom of thought, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and information. There is also freedom of movement and political freedom.

Where do you stand?

An informal moving debate was conducted, where ten different statements were discussed. After being presented with a statement, participants were encouraged to choose whether they agree or not and move to the according side. After that arguments were presented, and participants had the option to change their opinion, and move to the other side.

1. *We should obey all laws, even unfair ones.*
2. *The only people that have power in democracy are the politicians.*
3. *"People get the leader they deserve"*
4. *It is the responsibility of citizens to control the day-to-day activities of the government.*
5. *Freedom of expression means you can say whatever you want.*
6. *Some rights are more important than others.*
7. *Some people have, naturally, more rights than others.*
8. *Democracy is the worst government except all others that have been tried.*
9. *Extremists should be banned from speaking in public.*
10. *We aren't born with rights; we get them.*







The statements gave a lot of room for interpretation. Various opinions and perceptions were discussed. Through this activity, participants gain a deeper understanding of democracy, freedoms, social, economic, and political rights, while at the same time being exposed to the fact that not everyone will understand each statement in the same way. As such, they also practised their negotiation and critical thinking skills





Equality

The principle of equality embodies the idea that all citizens have equal rights before the law. It applies in all areas – social, economic, political and cultural.

Participants in the youth exchange created campings on how to promote equality between themselves and within their communities.

Promoting equality on social media:

"Equality is the soul of liberty, there is in fact, no liberty without it" – France Wright

- The right of different groups of people to have similar social positions and receive the same treatment
- Taking advantage of social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok

Equality in the workplace, school and at home

- Transparency between salaries in companies
- Gender balance in workplaces, advertisements and promoting a diverse work environment
- Media and schools should educate and stop promoting outdated stereotypes
- Families should promote equality by being the best prototypes
- Personal responsibility to get informed and act with equality to all people



Events on promoting equality

- Speakers from all over Europe, who will share their stories on the same day in a big event
- Social media will promote these events
- The money from sponsors and people will be used to build facilities for disabled people
- Organizing a conference at school to transmit the value of equality through non-formal education





Rule of Law

The EU is based on the rule of law. Its functions, structure and obligations are founded on ratified treaties. An impartial judicial system upholds the rule of law and justice. The European Court of Justice has final jurisdictions, granted, and respected by the EU members.

During the day that focused on the Rule of Law, participants individually gather what the concept means for them.

- *Justice*
- *A collection of statements all citizens must obey in order to preserve democracy*
- *Having a justice system independent from every other system justice system*
- *Everyone must act within constraints of law. No one is above the law. We are equal*
- *The importance of being consistent with the same rules of society*





Chahal vs UK

A simulation of a trial was conducted, using a real case that came before the European Court of Human Rights. Participants were given an information card about the role they had to play: the judge, Mr Chahal or the UK government. One person from each role was included in a mini-trial. Arguments were presented from both sides, while the judge had to ask further elaborations and questions and then make the ruling.

The participants gained real knowledge about how the European Court of Human Rights works. They developed skills connected to critical thinking and creating logical arguments. While for some it was hard to present an argument that they don't necessarily agree with, it gave them a new perspective on the matter and challenged them to be objective.





Group Non-Formal Activities

to promote EU values, foster European Citizenship
and develop critical thinking, civic awareness, constructive argumentation and intracultural competence among young people.

Who are I: Buzz group activity aimed at exploring issues of identity and self-awareness through brainstorming, drawing and group discussions. Focused on developing communication skills, while promoting shared identity and mutual respect.

Electioneering: Discussion-based activity that addresses the rights and responsibilities of citizens connected to democracy. The impact of the game on participants helped to consider some of the controversial aspects of a democratic society, practice and develop skills of listening, discussing and persuasion and encourage cooperation and open-mindedness.

Making Links: Simulation game in which participants were divided into four groups, representing the four actors, and their functions in a utopian democratic society: the government, the citizens, the media, and the NGOs. The activity involved negotiation and a deeper understanding of the functions of each of the four actors, and the importance of promoting civic responsibility among each actor.





Government

- Creating laws on the basis of the majority in the cabinet
- Implement the laws created by the legislation
- Evaluate laws and decide punishments for violations
- “Equal” division of resources between state branches
- Representative of the citiznes

NGOs

- Protect people’s interests
- Connecting people with the government
- Support human rights
- Provide help to the people in need
- Raise public awareness

Media

- Research and investigate
- Spread information
- Disprove fake news
- Entertain and educate
- Civil engagement

Citizens

- Be an active citizen
- Hold politicians responsible for their actions
- Fact checker
- Don’t be afraid to express yourself
- Preserve the democracy



European Youth Goals

The EU has created an EU Youth Strategy aimed at encouraging young people to become active members of society and participate in the democratic process. The strategy is also focused on creating the EU Youth Dialogue between young people and the EU and providing them with the tools needed for social and civic involvement and for reaching their full potential.

As a result of the EU Youth Dialogue in 2017-2018, 11 European Youth Goals were identified. The goals target multiple sectors that affect the lives of young people in Europe and are seen as the reflection of what young people want to see in Europe.

On the final day of the youth exchange, participants were divided into five groups. Each group chose one of the 11 Youth Goals and created an awareness raising campaign. The campaigns included ways to promote the chosen youth goal to other young people and in their communities.

Space and participation for all

- More digital, less bureaucratic
- Emphasize the importance of each institution
- Funding transparency
- Display results properly
- Motivation for voting
- Quotas in the state institutions

Equality of all genders

Share household roles

- Make posters about men and women sharing housework

Support the opportunity of flexible working hours for parents

- Trade unions

Listen and reflect

- Be the right example



Sustainable green Europe

Education

- Workshops (4+ years old)
- School trips (6+ years old)
- Youth Exchange (18+ years old)

Public transportation

- Reduced/ free
- P + R

Campaign

- Fundraising
- Action

Green products

- Accessible
- Free of tax

Employment for all

Education for all

- Formal (university, seminars, workshops)
- Non-formal (youth exchange, Erasmus)

Advertise public services (employment department

Free language courses

Career advisor

- Free For all

Practical education for the youth

- Working courses
- Financial management
- Information technology

Soft skills



Connecting Europe with Youth

- Creating an optional subject in school about EU values, EU projects and opportunities
- Organize trips frequently to the EU institutions
- Making simulations to understand how the EU works in reality
- Create competitions with awards for EU knowledge
- Create youth representatives within EU institutions as the voice of young people





Varna Adventure

An adventure game was organized during the fourth day of the youth exchange. Participants were divided into groups of six. To finish the game each group had to complete six tasks while exploring the sea garden in the city of Varna. The groups had to take pictures and videos as proof of completing the tasks.

The tasks were:
1. Each group must create a team name
2. Each group must pick a symbol that represents the group: a stone or a seashell, or anything else that represents your group
3. Each group must meet a local **young person** that speaks English and tell them about the OVOE project and give out an OVOE sticker
4. Each group will have to make a photo with an animal and another local of **all ages**
5. Each group must find the secret bridge of wishes, hidden in the Varna sea garden and make a wish there
6. Film a video group message, wishing what each group would like to see changed in society.







Intercultural Dialogue

Non-formal learning and sharing of national culture helped young people engage in intercultural dialogue. By organizing cultural evenings, participants got the chance to proudly represent their country, while learning about other groups' culture, cuisine, music, dance, and interesting facts. The evenings included videos about different countries, filled with practical and interesting information, traditional foods and drinks, music, and dances. Some participants also created unique games with prizes for the winners. These cultural nights foster the formation of intercultural groups and cultivate a feeling of tolerance among young people.





Secret Friend Game

On the first day of the youth exchange, each participant picked a piece of paper on which was written the name of a different participant. As such, everyone received a secret friend, that remained unknown until the end of the exchange. The names of everyone were written on envelopes, that were then stuck to the wall. During the youth exchange, participants had to leave small gifts varying from notes, candy and souvenirs, to their secret friends, without revealing who it is. On the last day, an interactive game was played to reveal everyone's secret friend.



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