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# POLICY PAPER

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ΠΑΡΑΔΟΤΕΟ ΑΝΑΘΕΣΗΣ Αριθμ. Απόφ. 33/19-04-2021,  
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## Description of the Activity

The Community Enterprise of the Municipality of Thessaloniki - KEDITH- successfully implemented during Friday 12, Saturday 13, Sunday 14 and Monday 15 March 2021 the Transnational Workshop and Transnational Simulation of the European parliament activities in the framework of the EU funded project “Be Active - Shape Europe” from the Europe of Citizens Programme of the European Union.

At the online Transnational Activities participated 50 young Europeans aged between 15 - 30 years old from the 6 participating countries of the consortium partners, namely Greece, United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, Slovenia and Bulgaria. Besides the young Europeans, the activities also attracted the interest of youth workers, civil society representatives, local authorities representatives, municipal employees, teachers of the Secondary education, but also several EU citizens, attracted to participate as observers to the discussions of youth on “The rise of Euroscepticism in Europe VS European elections”.

During Friday 12 of March, the Transnational Workshop begun, with the Trainers team introduction to the participants, set of the context of the activities and goals of the project, while an icebreaking activity followed. After that, participants were split into different working groups according to their assignments to the Simulation of European Parliament that followed,

A short reflection followed between the Trainers and participants for the first day's activities, expected results and impact to the participants.

On the second day, Saturday 13 of March, the Simulation of the European Parliament was held, after the official opening of the Project Transnational Activities, with the welcoming speeches of the Mayor of the Municipality of Thessaloniki, Mr. Konstantinos Zervas, the Vice Mayor of the Municipality of Thessaloniki and former President of KEDITH Ms. Ioanna Kosmopoulou and the presentation of the Project to the participants by the Project Coordinator on behalf of KEDITH.

During his welcoming speech, the Mayor of the Municipality of Thessaloniki congratulated the young participants for their engagement to the project' activities, stressed the importance of youth to be supported by the European local authorities to raise their voices and be an integral part of the decision-making procedures of their societies, so as to feel member of it and also the ownership of the decisions on a local, national and European level.

The Vice Mayor of the Municipality of Thessaloniki and former President of KEDITH from her side, welcomed as well the young participants, expressed her gratitude for their willingness and motivation to engage into the project' activities, but also, besides others, highlighted the intensive and integral role that KEDITH plays on the strengthening of youth voice on a local, national and European level, but also the dedication of KEDITH to disseminate the results produced by the young Europeans as their voice to the local society.

During the first day of the Simulation Activity, participants were split into the 5 main political parties of the European Parliament represented in their session, analogically to the votes each received during the latest elections of the Parliament, but also to the 27 EU Member States. After the guidance of the Trainers team and a short rehearsal among the participants to understand the rules of procedure, the Plenary started the session by setting the Agenda and reflecting on the topics as proposed.

The subtopics of the Agenda set, were focused on:

- The new European Parliament: priorities and challenges of the new term
- Building the future of Europe focusing on green growth and the new green deal
- The European Citizenship and what EU should do to better reach its citizens
- Challenges of the EU' s cohesion and solidarity: migration issue and financial crisis
- The Youth' Voice in Europe, a reality or a utopia?
- Participatory democracy in the European Union

Several unmoderated caucuses followed where the participants interacted as political groups to shape their common lines on each topic according to the course they had selected to discuss them. The first day of the activity closed with a short reflection of the day between the Trainers and participants.

The second day of the Simulation Activity, Sunday 14 of March, begun with the overview of the discussions by the Members of the European Parliament of the previous day, but also the intensive discussions between participants in order to form the Draft Report of the European Parliament under the topics of their discussions. Participants formed an official document, as if they were under the framework of the European Parliament, with the guidance and support of the Trainers and also, proceeded to the Amendments procedure to further modify the document, before they enter the voting procedure.

Eventually, with consensus among the Members of the European Parliament, as simulated, namely all participants voted in favor of the final Report, they approved the document reflecting their position as young Europeans to the topics of the Transnational Workshop and Transnational Simulation, on Euroscepticism, participatory democracy, youth engagement to the decision-making procedures, to the development of a greener environment for the future of Europe, the green deal, the green growth and so many other up to date topics that concern the young Europeans for the future of Europe.

During the evaluation procedure for the activity as it was implemented and the reflection activity at the end that was implemented by the Trainers, participants expressed their positive feelings from their engagement into this activity, the gratitude that they were given the leading role to shape the future of Europe as if they were the elected young Members of the European Parliament, the professionalism of the implementation but also the importance of such activities to be implemented by the European Union, as funded by the Europe for Citizens programme.

The Transnational Activities were closed with the presentations offered by the partner organizations to the participants, presenting the work and produced results by each in the framework of the project, but also the next steps they plan to follow so as to further

disseminate the produced results, but also to support the sustainability of the results produced for the future of their youth. Last, but not least, the KEDITH Project Coordinator and Administrative team provided important information to the participants for the next steps planned for the dissemination and sustainability of the project results, the development of the Policy Paper, reflecting the produced results, but also the distribution of the material and the Certificates of Participation of all within the following days.

The simulation organized succeeded at energizing the participation of young people. The simulation was based on the principles and methods of non-formal education which allowed the participants to be more flexible, learn about others' culture, but also learn how to meet, accept, share their ideas and show their interest in cooperation and communication with citizens from other European countries.

The observers, teachers and group leaders engaged in the project, as they were the ones their participants know and trust, played a significant role in communicating the Simulation Game and helped them prepare for their participation.

### **Transnational Workshop Activities**

During the Transnational Workshop Activity, participants were divided into working groups and through Interactive trainings they were supported and given the tools to discuss and express their ideas on the topic and the Subtopics discussed.

The Goals of the Activity were:

- the development of researching skills
- enhancing team player skills
- better understanding of the EU legislative procedure
- critical thinking development
- Better understanding of how EU institutions operate.

The results produced by the participants

### **The New European Parliament: Priorities and Challenges of the new term, an evaluation**

Four main categories were acknowledged by the participants in relation to the current status of the European Parliament on the priorities and challenges attested in 2019:

- 1) Protecting citizens and freedoms
- 2) Developing a strong and vibrant economic base
- 3) Building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe,
- 4) Promoting European interests and values on the global stage. Today the priorities have shifted and are covid-19 and its consequences in the economic and social field. Participants were concerned about the covid-19 and its impact on business and economy and proposed measures such as the increase of vaccinations, the support of the private sector and the funding of state policies against unemployment.

**Building the future of the of Europe focusing on green growth and the new green deal**

Participants stressed out the importance of the European Green Deal and pointed out several policies of the EU that focus on green growth such as the “Green Deal Going Local” working group. EU’s commitment to become the first carbon - neutral continent in the world made a strong impression to the participants, so that they referred in detail to the set of legislative measures, policy actions and funding mechanisms which were related to sustainable energy, circular economy, clean transport, nature and biodiversity, food and agriculture and green finance & industry. They finally proposed action by all sectors of our economy (investing in environmental-friendly technology, supporting innovative industry, decarbonizing the energy sector etc).

#### **The European Citizenship and what EU should do better to reach its Citizens**

Participants recognized the fundamental rights of an EU citizen as stated out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. They focused on the Rule of Law and how it is currently strengthened by the Commission. Moreover, the different views of the Parliament’s parties on the topic were highlighted. Participants set out the new strategic agenda for the EU (2019-2024) listing the priorities to reach its Citizens:

- a) Protecting citizens and freedoms,
- b) Developing a strong and vibrant economic base,
- c) Building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe.

It was suggested that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights complements national systems but does not replace them. When individuals’ fundamental rights are not respected, national courts must decide on the issue.

#### **The Youth Voice in Europe, a Reality or a Utopia**

The European Youth Parliament is one of the largest European platforms for political debate, intercultural encounters, European civic education and the exchange of ideas for young people in Europe. Several parties of the European Parliament have a youth voice section allowing the younger generation to express its opinion in a very effective way. Participants stressed out the necessity of making an even harder and greater effort in order to let our youth be a part of EU suggesting that this youth voice in Europe has a print on local and national level.

#### **Challenges of the EU’s cohesion and solidarity: migration issue and financial crisis**

Since the height of the migration crisis in 2015, the EU has implemented measures to control external borders and migration flows better. As a result, irregular arrivals to the EU have been reduced by more than 90%. The EU and its member states are intensifying efforts to establish an effective, humanitarian and safe European migration policy. The European Council plays an important role in this effort by setting the strategic priorities. The European Parliament is actively involved, in the adoption of new laws on irregular and regular immigration. It is a full co-legislator together with the Council representing member states on these matters since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The migration issue leaves an important footprint on national and local level in particular there are social and economic effects as well as changes of political regimes, such as the emergence of “extremist” parties and views. Internal crises, long-term financial instability, high unemployment rates and worsening living conditions among wide segments of the population are some of the consequences of migration and the financial crisis.



## **Participatory democracy in the EU**

Participants pointed out the importance of developing and putting to action frameworks to enhance civic participation in Europe, such as the “European Civil Forum, civil participation” (ECF), which proposes a plan C for Europe by “C” meaning citizenship. They suggested that ECF believes on contrary that civic engagement is an essential pillar for a correct collective functioning. This constitutes an indicator which measures each other’s involvement in community’s life. Under its different shades, citizens’ participation to political, economic, social and cultural life is crucial for people’s commitment to the values of Democracy.

## **Transnational Simulation of the European parliament activity**

The European Parliament’s Simulation Game is a role play game in which the participants step into the shoes of a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) of one of the 27 member-states and political parties and negotiate on the agenda topic in order to end up in common conclusions. As the Simulation Game followed the function of the actual institution, the first thing we did was to familiarize participants with the institution’s role and functioning. It was also of a great importance to read a few things about how the EU works, bearing in mind its unique character.

In the framework of the Project BASE ‘Be Active - Shape Europe’ Young participants (15-30 y.o.) were divided into groups, discussing the topic of ‘The rise of Euroscepticism in Europe VS European Elections’. The objective of this topic was to discuss on the main problem of Euroscepticism in Europe that the latest 10 years has affected the policy making procedure but also the way the future of Europe is envisioned, as well as the impact of the European Elections of 2019. The high level of political criticism, the absence of youth to the elections but also the feeling that Europe is something different from us, were topics of concern to this discussion.

The aim of the discussion was to give young European the voice and tools to express themselves, discuss as if they were Members of the European Parliament and vote on a Decision document, reflecting their discussions and concerns for the future of Europe. The work, discussions and decisions of the 4 days of the Transnational Workshop and Transnational Simulation will be reflected on the Policy Paper document which will be disseminated on a local and national level among the consortium, as the voice of their youth.

During the Simulation Game, the participants negotiated upon a topic, so each session was dedicated to questions related to the main topic. The majority of the preparation time for the Simulation Game was spent researching the topic and each participant’s portfolio’s relevance or connection possibly on this topic. Guidelines, time and support was provided to the participants at the beginning of the activity on Saturday, but also during the while activity.

At the end of every day’s session, a short reflection followed with the participants by the Trainers but also on the last day an evaluation form was filled by the participants for the activity in total.

## Scope and Objectives of the Simulation Game

The Simulation Game is an educational tool based on non-formal education aiming to contribute to building the participants' self-esteem, cultivate their leadership skills, ameliorate their negotiation and public speaking skills, as well as introducing and explaining the EU institutions and functions in the simplest and most vivid way.

The purpose of the simulation game was, after negotiations and debates in their formal and informal form, the participants to develop a draft conclusions paper with their suggestions on the negotiated subject, which was voted by the majority from the MEPs in order to be approved. Thus, the participants debated with their opponents in order to end up in a common line, or at least avoid the extreme positions in order for the final report to be able to be voted by the participants.

The simulation was organized by KEDITH virtually using an online platform aiming at energizing the participation of young people. The simulation was based on the principles and methods of non-formal education which allowed the participants to be more flexible, learn about others' culture, but also learn how to meet, accept, share their ideas and show their interest in cooperation and communication with citizens from other European countries.

The observers, teachers and group leaders engaged in the project, as they were the ones their participants know and trust, played a significant role in communicating the Simulation Game and helped them prepare for their participation.

## Produced results by the Member of the European Parliament in each subtopic

Participants of the Simulation of the European Parliament, voting all in favor and approving by consensus the Final Report of the European Parliament, approved the following points on the subtopics of the agenda they commonly formed. It is important to note that the document of the Report of the European Parliament plenary session has been developed for educational purposes only and under the scope of the project "Be Active Shape Europe" funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union. The current document does not reflect and cannot be considered as an official document by the European Union's Institutions or European Union's opinion.

## Participants concerns expressed during the Transnational Workshop, leading to a Policy Paper

During the last day of the transnational workshop, the participants, besides being called upon arms to predict the outcome of their decision made during the transnational

simulation, were called up on drafting a series of proposal, in a form of a policy paper, which will be brought upon municipal authorities.

Uniting young voices around Europe, the young participants came in to the unanimous conclusion of suggesting or stressing the following topics to be included with in the Policy Paper.

- They suggest the establishment of a “Young Mayor “office, which is successfully implemented in the City of Santa Maria de Feira. This proposal is based on creating a work group of teenagers in the city that will go through an democratic election process, (very similar to what happens in the national elections, but the electors are the teenagers from 11 to 17 years old that lives in the city), to choose one that will represent all the team. This team will work together for a year and develop projects that they think is important for the city. There needs to be budget for the realization of the projects and the municipal chamber always follows what it is being done. This all about the youth participation in our democracy, and inspire other people that did not participated to be a more active citizen.

- They suggested the importance of promoting an eco-friendly lifestyle and to provide the resources for that to happen. For example, promote the use of electric cars and provide the amount of chargers necessary to benefit all the electric car users. The 3R strategy should be promoted in each municipality using and the local bodies should provide the containers in strategic and near locals.

- They suggested the better education of local farmers to the new sustainable reality, and further introduce them in more sustainable strategies in the field of agriculture.

- They stressed the importance of equality by supporting immigrants and deconstruct any sense of stigmatization and prejudice towards migrants

- They acknowledged the Importance of integration of migrants in all the member states of the EU

- They stress the need to promote the EU website in each municipality website, to disseminate more information about the Union and remind locals that they are also citizens of EU.

- They suggest the creation of awareness campaigns in schools about what and how EU operates

- They suggest a project of cultural exchange even within the country

- They suggest the cultural exchange of EU culture, through the introduction of an EU festival where all countries will hold an exhibition in a variety of matters, such as food, dances, folklore etc. in order to enhance European citizenship and strengthen the union through diversity

- They suggest the creation and promotion of a series of sustainable initiatives, which will promote a healthier lifestyle. The promotion should seek to engage all the ages.

- They suggest that local bodies should guide and engage young people in engaging in civic matters and help them find their way within the political system activities which help young



people to find their way in the political system, being more aware of the ways they can be involved.

- They stress the importance of creating communal biological farms and activities which will make people aware about environmental problem engaging in all the wide range of ages

- They seek to raise awareness about the “victim - blaming “culture, and to change the perspective, giving victims the protection they need

- They stress the importance of making every aspect of civil life accessible to people with disabilities

- They stress the need to advocate for the immigrants’ rights and inclusion within the Municipal level

## ANNEX: The Decision of the Participants acting as Members of the European Parliament

### Proposals from the young Europeans participating at BASE project.

#### *The Youth Voice in Europe, a reality or a utopia?*

1. *Calls* on the European Union to introduce an online book on the European Institutions, policies and procedures to each country, in every European Language, in order to prevent ecological damages aiming to create a lesson in the Primary and Secondary Education that will be common to all Member States and taught so as to enhance the European citizenship of the EU citizens;
2. *Proposes* to include not only the EU & Me publication, but also other appropriate education materials about EU, to schools of all ranks, across all the member-states of the European Union, so that kids from a young age can start be interested and curious about the European Union
3. *Promotes* the implementation of Simulation of the European Institutions for the young Europeans to participate, in order to understand to understand how the policy making works and also trigger their interest for their democratic participation
4. *Requests* from all EU member States offer a 1% of their GDP on an annual basis to further support education and training of the young Europeans to develop knowledge on the EU citizenship, values and common goals, but also to foster the development of a common European identity
5. *Promotes* programmes and initiatives like Erasmus+ for youth. Invite younger generations and make them discuss about politics, EU policies and what is happening around the world with their international pairs, since this programs interests a lot of people and it could be a good way to inform students and get them closer to the EU
6. *Demands* all the National Television channels of the EU member States, if not applicable at least one private channel, host a programme specialized on EU topics and affairs that affect the majority of the society and integrate it to the daily prime time zone
7. *Stresses* the importance of creating Educational Seminars for the youth on EU Institutions and Policies among the Educational Systems of the Member States on an obligatory basis. Moreover, more multicultural events for youth and a further increase of the available funding on programmes and policies on youth, especially exchange programmes aiming to multicultural understanding
8. *Develops* under the European Parliament official communication channels, European socializing programs specialized for youth in order to make the ones that already exist more accessible to schools, visible and attractive to youth, but also allow young Europeans to further engage into the decision-making procedures. The social media

accounts on social media platforms will be further developed in order for people to interact with the policy makers, share their opinions, concerns and pose questions directly to the Parliament. By doing that we increase youth participation and we combat misinformation and disinformation

9. *Coordinates* national and EU activities for youth participation in the mechanisms of the EU, giving equal opportunities and relevance to all member states, and encourages European Parliament Parties to include younger voices in their structure in order for younger voices and ideas to be heard

### *Participatory Democracy*

10. *Encourages* procedures to raise awareness on both country-wise and European-wise voters about the importance on voting for the beliefs in every election
11. *Decides* the creation of a Youth European Parliament within its structures, allowing the participation of 300 young Europeans aged between 18-25 years old, directly elected by the young European citizens on a 3 years term basis, in order to express and safeguard the interests of the youth of Europe
12. *Establishes* the “Young Mayor” initiative to all EU regions and Municipalities, following the good example of Portugal for youth engagement in the democratic structures
13. *Proposes* the creation of municipal and national projects that make young people experience democracy and feel represented by people with the same age. Projects where they have a voice and where they can vote and participate in the decisions.
14. *Supports* initiatives targeting to inform Citizen that they can write directly to the deputies to get an account of what they are doing in order to control that they do what they have promised and be elected for
15. *Suggests* the creation of a Weekly Report with every topic that is being discussed in the European Parliament and include some countries position and opinion on that topics
16. *Highlights* the importance to raise awareness on Euroscepticism and encourages citizens not to believe in fake news and rumours about EU and make their own research to create truthful conclusions
17. *Encourages* the implementation of digital elections through a "public" social platform (especially during COVID - 19), managed by EU in order also to spread valid information and allow a universal participation of European citizens and especially youth on the electoral procedures of the Parliament, aiming to tackle the high percentages of abstentions

18. *Suggests* to uniform the age limitations for eligible candidates in the elections of the European Parliament among European member states, so as to allow all young Europeans to run for Members of the European Parliament
19. *Encourages* the development of informational campaigns about how large - scale companies, and not only, should start becoming greener and more environmental friendly. Thus, we strongly encourage the promotion and reward towards businesses that are using renewable sources of energy (such as with the use of air, water and sun).
20. *Recommends* to increase the allocated budget on programs, which support the investments in clean technologies and development of sustainable products. If businesses could get financial support, they would be more ready to conduct their business in environmentally friendly ways.
21. *Decides* to set very strict rules on animal vaccinations test and the ban on the sale of ivory, real leather and fur. we shouldn't kill animals to obtain leather, but we can take the leather of the animals we kill to collect meat.
22. *Encourages* European Citizens to use an eco-friendly lifestyle related to the acquisition of new eco-friendly technologies, the implementation of better recycling strategies and other positive behaviours through incentives and privileges
23. *Promotes* actions such as the EU Beach Clean Up which take places at the coasts of Europe. Also, actions such as the aforementioned, should expand in the entire of the European Union.
24. *Establishes* a system of a more affective circular economy and educating young students on how they should start recycling. Moreover, national government should ban the use of harmful towards the environment materials, such as plastic.
25. *Promotes* the development of the fusion energy and the green ones over the nuclear and the others that contaminate more (using tax benefits if necessary)
26. *Promotes* the climate change and environmental science studies in schools and using the media to stress the importance of climate action
27. *Suggests* the creation of legally binding goals to tackle pollution and climate change. The existing agreements have not been effective (i.e., Paris agreement) due to the lack of enforcement. The EU should set specific goals for its member states, such as zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040, with active enforcement
28. *Stresses* the importance of deconstructing all unsafe nuclear plants within the Union so as to prevent environmental hazards
29. *Promotes* a green reconversion, relocating people who have lost their work out of the closing of factories that polluted the environment. Make a long - term plan,

focused on the reconversion of factories and on the education of these workers, which have to re - learn a job (a green job)

30. *Decides* the creation of a legal framework that will tackle the issue of overfishing.
31. *Establishes* educational campaign on how food industry impact on the climate change for EU member states national televisions
32. *Stresses* the importance and need to educate farmers to the new climate smart and sustainable methods of agriculture.

*Challenges of the EU' s cohesion and solidarity: migration issue and financial crisis*

33. *Stresses* the need of free of interest loans to young people in order to start their business
34. *Calls* on the European Institutions and the member states to create European socializing programs and make the ones that already exist more accessible to schools
35. *Recognizes* the need to develop a scheme that will help the EU economy bounce back after the COVID-19 Pandemic, particularly recognizing those categories that were heavily affected by the pandemic, such as owners of small businesses
36. *Stresses* the need to exercise legislative authority in member states when laws are against civic participation
37. *Calls* on the European institutions and the Member States to promote and support a mandatory topic in the scholar program about the European Parliament
38. *Calls* on the European Institutions and the member states to create European fund that will support innovative ideas for the creation of a more sustainable environment
39. *Stresses* the importance of facilitating democratic procedures across Europe
40. *Stresses* the importance of deconstructing all unsafe nuclear plants within the Union so as to prevent environmental hazards
41. *Suggests* the Development of AI and technology in general to encourage the discussion and to set up some limits about it (ex. bioethical issues)
42. *Stresses* the importance of changing the colonial perspective about migrants and migration in order to start considering them real European citizens and to support their participation in European Union's life.



