

Learning Citizenship through School and for Life



The Comenius Post

Friends!

I am always happy when I use to put the newspaper together but at this moment I am also a little bit sad. This is the last edition of The Comenius Post in this project.

The content of this edition has been rather free. Some of the authors have put focus on the election in June and some other authors have put focus on some sort of citizen discussions.

Anyhow, I hope you will enjoy and I also wish you all a very nice summer!

Sincerely Thomas

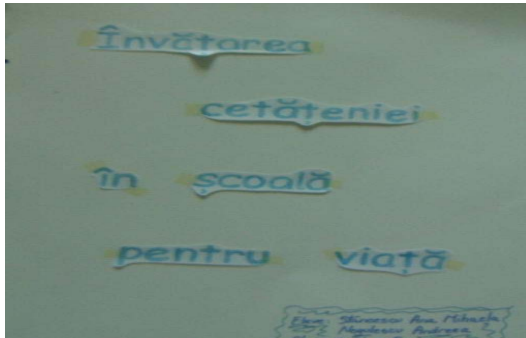


Comenius

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**LEARNING CITIZENSHIP IN SCHOOL, FOR LIFE
- AN INSPIRING EXPERIENCE -**



Lacramioara Dita, 12 C – “I enjoyed working for the Career Portfolio because I’ve discovered a lot of things about me that I didn’t know. My CV and my Portfolio will be very useful to me after my exams – I now have a direction in life and I will follow it.”

In our last activity for the project, we asked the students what the project meant for them and which were their favorite activities. Here are some of the answers:

- “I am very competitive and I like that we’ve won prizes for the final products of this project, I’m adding the diplomas to my CV.”

Denisa Dinca, 12 C – “We’ve been all equally involved – this was the motor of the project.”



“We’ve been curious to meet our guests from abroad and we’ve organized for them trips, recitals, even a theatre play; we’ve talked, got friends, laughed, exchanged ideas and id.s (on messenger) – when they came, we were strangers; when they left, we were friends.”

Andra Geacar, 11 F – “For us, the students, this project was very important. We’ve learned lots of things about citizenship, about the Human Rights, about the relationships between different nationalities – and, after all, we’re not that different. For instance, the students



who visited us loved the same music, the same clothes as we do. They have a similar Students' Council in Portugal and in Sweden; its power is also very limited, although it is formed by delegates from each class, and they organize activities for the students every year, like we do: the Welcoming party for the 9th grade and the Prom for the 12th. We can learn from them and improve our recycling, at home and in school."



Larisa Niculoiu, 11 F – "I think the most interesting part of the project were the exchanges. Targoviste is a small town and you don't see that many visitors form abroad. But, with this project, I had the opportunity to meet people from other EU countries, to discover new life styles, to practice my English; I've seen pictures and films from their homes and schools – I loved their schools!"

Remus Gica, 11 F – "My mother was very proud to see my name in the newspaper and on the Internet when my article was published."

Mihai Sighiartau, 11 F – "My favorite activity was the Portfolio for the Class Delegate, because I am the delegate for my class. I think this project was fruitful for every high school, because we all had the opportunity to learn something from each other, and in this way, improve our status."

- "I like football and sports, so I was very impressed when I saw the pictures from Portugal...They have the most amazing sports base!"

We thank you all and we hope we'll see you again!

Greetings from Targoviste, Romania!

*Teacher
FIRESCU ANA-MARIA*

Dutch parties

The right –wing orientated party the VVD stands for freedom, responsibility, tolerance, social justice and equality for all people.

Their goals are :

→ to further the free intellectual and social development of each individual, without making distinctions according to religious or ideological conviction, nationality, sex, race, colour of skin or language. Central to its beliefs is freedom of choice for everyone



The principles are :

- a Union where citizens the greatest possible freedom to act and only cross at European level are
- a Union where Member States take their own responsibility for European policy, and where citizens have the freedom to sound to
- a Union where Member States tolerant to each other and mutually supportive where appropriate, especially in the fields of economy, energy and international security
- a Union where citizens and Member States are equivalent to each voice is heard
- a Union where social righteous, by equal opportunities for all European citizens to create economically develop and deploy.

What is my Opinion?

The most attention should be paid to unemployment.



On security and crime should also be addressed.

I prefer unemployment because there is high unemployment in the world.

There are far too many people without a good income and can not live well, so much the childrens are going to live on the streets and brings them into the crime. If there are more jobs the crime would be declined. If the parents have higher incomes they can give more to the children, they can give what they want. If the kids want things such as new clothes, a playstation, a new bicycle or a mobile cellphone, the parents can buy those things because their income is too low, so the children go on the street to earn money on an illegal way so they can buy whatever they want. Because many children live on street and do illegal things, many people don't feel safe anymore.

Most of the time old people are afraid to walk on street alone because they can get attacked by the children.

If the criminality decreases, much people are going outside and walk outside and they aren't afraid anymore that they get robbed or maybe got killed.

Why vote?

The vote in the European Elections is important to me. It matters to us all, business such as our :

- safety
- environment,
- energy
- consumer rights.

The European elections are important because we are a part of Europe and they may affect the choices we make.

All decisions that are made affect our country and our daily life.

There are things discussed such as safety, environment etc.

If you disagree with a rule of the environment, safety etc. you can make your choice.

If you don't vote, you should not get angry on the rules that were made, because you could hear your vote. If you voted, you can get angry because maybe in your opinion it's the wrong choice. If it doesn't matter, you don't have to vote. It's your own opinion and if it doesn't matter what's picked, just don't vote.

Jorn Huijs

**What does this party want?**

- To strive for optimising the battle strength and efficiency of the European Commission. Thereby the presented reduction has been provided with the number of commissioners such as in the original treaty of Lisbon among others a main point.
- More Dutch civil servants at the European institutions.
- Brussels becomes the only meeting-place of the European Parliament.
- National embassies continue preserve

Durably and innovative:

- Within the framework of an equitable climate policy we must developing countries financially and help adapt material with to the impact of climate change.
- Energy: Europe coordinates and brings together denkkraft and financial resources to develop durable, innovative alternatives to be able go catch disappearing fossile fuels.
- A part of the turnovers of the emissiehandelssysteem must be reserved for climate policy, a another one part must flow back indirectly to businesses to promote innovation this way.
- We plead for permanent efforts in the field of noise nuisance. Noise nuisance of aviation, rails and movement causes annually much health damage.
- Embryonic tribe cell research cannot be financed by the EU, because thereby human embryo' s are destroyed. We plead for a European import ban for resistance worker wood cut down.
- EU must guarantee compliance of CO2 the reduction objectives of the individual Member States.
- Sustainability must preserve a high priority in the new Commission.
- Voluntary action plans in the field of energy saving are converted into binding legislation.



Economy and Money:

- The extent to which a Member State has hedged future pension liability should be an indicator of the Stability and Growth Pact.
- The Structural Funds are only available to Member States with a wealth level below the EU average.
- Bulgaria and Romania? At least five percent of the structural funds they receive for improvements in childcare and care for people with chronic illness or disability.

Our own opinion:

The European elections are important because are a part of Europe. All decisions they make can affect our country and our daily life.

We pay a lot of money to the EU so I think we can have some influence in the organization of the EU.

The reason why many people are involved in the elections is because they think they can do nothing to the decisions they make in Brussel.

It is logical that they think that because the largest countries are still the most powerful in the EU.

With regard to the forthcoming European elections may also be an interesting assessment. Traditionally, the interest in the European elections less than that in the elections of the Second Chamber. This know 85% of the Dutch is not exactly the year in which elections are held, saying only 58% in the European elections to be interested. 43% of the population says sure to vote. Here contrast, 9% before going out to the polls to make. As the role of the European Parliament has only 11% of Dutch people feel that this is very important. Here is a European average of 13% against. 67% of the population even has the idea that Parliament is important. In other European countries is only 57% of the population considers.



What is important for me?

I find that most attention should be paid to the nature in Europe.

Many countries pollute Europe standing well above the allocated amount.

We have the future of the youth and all the natural resources thinking.

If we are so selfish, and nothing to do, the youth problems in the future, climate change, fosiele fuels etc.

These problems we are already becoming more common, so we must do something quickly before it is too late.

A solution for this is that plants should be limited to a certain amount of CO2 emissions.

If they do not approve, they close the plant or pay a penalty which in turn is used to restore nature in Europe.

Cars must be checked on CO2 emissions, there are now a, b, c, d labels but labels just are not enough. they must meet minimum B otherwise they may not on the road.

If they introduce such strict rules, you see, within a period of 20 years all improvements occur.

Sander Peeters

What does the Party want?

Groenlinks find that national, regional and local enterprises must have the possibility to pretend higher demands, than the European association requires. That is important for a big value of the population from The Netherlands. Soot filters for new diesel cars are still not committed, Groenlinks find that this is not correct, because people who live near to a highway or live in dirty air will get quicker a desire compared to other people. Further Groenlinks wants a innovative and a greener Europe in co-operation with the climate changes around the whole world. Groenlinks wants also that the European association develop more in the environment problem in Europe. And companies like train networks and bus networks need to get more freedom from the government, for investments. Also Groenlinks wants financial marketing to make bigger, so there is more space for the economic marketing. Groenlinks thinks that country need to hold on four rules, to become a member.

- The land need to have a stable democratised and the humanrights need to be normal.
- The country must stay in the investment line of the EU, so not a too big country or a poor country.
- A country don't need to instigate too much trouble in the association
- And the EU don't need to expand too much, the co-operation need to be quick on important moments.



European elections need to be important, because the EU is an association. And all members of the EU need to have the right to vote on the ideas of the EU, whether you are from Poland or The United Kingdom, all people need to have the same right.



Also I think the judge system in the EU need to be lead by one country and I think that need to be the country with the most influence. Also there need to be a same punishment list, so that it's not that you get a punishment for 5 years for a murder in Belgium and in Bulgaria you only get 2 year punishment. It's important for people to vote on the EU because the association also has a big impress on the member country, further the co-operation between the country's gets stronger and a bigger confidence feeling will existence. Also the refugee's laws need to be the same, because refugee's easier get in Bulgaria then in The Netherlands. These laws need to be the same. So illegal people don't get that easy in Europe. I think that safety is a very important subject in the EU association and also connections with other country's need to be good. And EU always need to be stand open for other country's to help.

What is my Opinion?

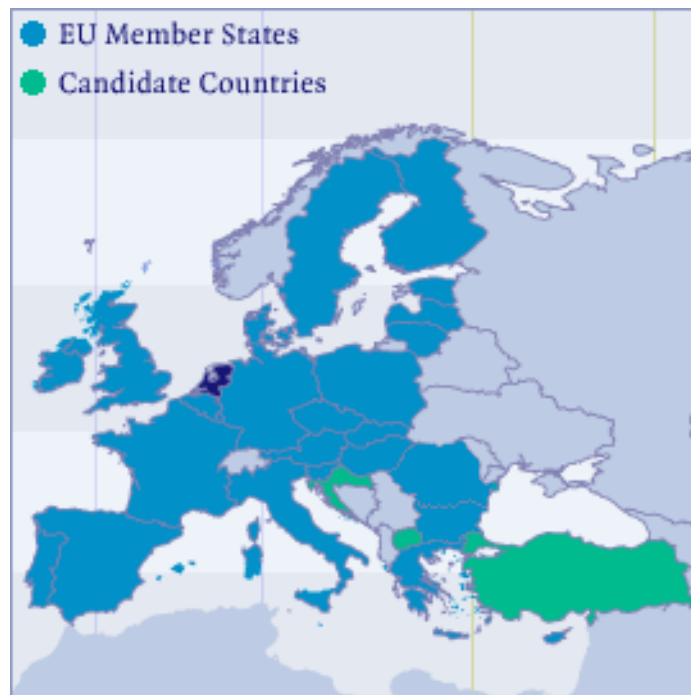
The point that need to get the most attention in my opinion is safety and judgement. I think this because you see that other country's are not so safe as they need to be and that they can get safer with help from the European association. The judge system need to have the same laws for all country's, so that you get the same judgement in all country's so there will be a lower of crime level. Also the custody's need to be the same, so you don't pay much or less money in a other country. What also is a very important point in my opinion is that the traffic rules need to be the same in whole Europe, so that you go to a other country with a safe feeling, and that you don't wait for surprises. Also the future needs to learn speak English, so it's easier for tourist to go from country to country. Europe need to be a strong co-operation, a rich. Al country's need to be dependent from each other. So there's no country that walk behind from the rest of the country's. There need to be a system that all country's get no financial problem's and that all country's are the same in the view of strength. There do not need to be poverty in other country's, and the EU co-operation don't need to be the big. Otherwise the plans and ideas will not result so good, the EU need to be a little and strong association. This was my opinion about the EU, and what I should do if I were a pre-minister.

Pepijn van Bilzen



Article: The EU and the role of The Netherlands

First of all we investigated which countries are IN the EU and which countries WANT to be in de EU. Just take a look at the map...



And than we had to find which institutions the EU has, look at this!

The EU consists of decision-making institutions that check and balance each other's power:

The **legislative branch** consists of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union

The **executive branch** consists of the European Commission

The **judicial branch** consists of the European Court of Justice

The Commission runs the EU day to day and defends the Community's interests. The Council of the European Union represents the national governments. The European Parliament, directly elected by the people of the EU, has taken on ever more tasks and powers over the past 20 years.



The EU member states have transferred some sovereignty to the EU institutions, which protect the interests of the Union, the member states, and the people. This keeps rights and democracy at the heart of the EU.

What about the presidency? Did we take part in that too? YES!

Since 1958, the Netherlands has held the Presidency eleven times: in the second half of 1960, 1963, 1966, 1969, 1972, 1976, in the first half of 1981 and 1986, the second half of 1991, the first half of 1997 and the second half of 2004. The Dutch presidencies of 1992 and 1997 resulted in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992) and the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997).

What about the rest of our role?

The Netherlands and the EU

As a founding member of the EU, the Netherlands has played an important part in promoting EU integration and in pioneering closer European ties. As a small country, it has much to gain from a strong European legal order. An organisation such as the EU, driven by common, rather than national interests, offers smaller countries protection. The Dutch economy, strongly geared to exports, has benefited hugely from EU membership. Dutch agricultural and manufacturing goods now reach their European customers much more easily. Three-quarters of Dutch exports go to other EU member states. The Netherlands is the EU's second biggest agricultural exporter after France.

Conclusion

We think that we played a good part in EU. We think it's very, very important to have an institution as the EU. In the future we hope that every country in Europe can join the EU, because it makes us economical and political much stronger.

Sanne, Bente, Denise, Richelle



The keyword is understanding

- Consequences of increased international relations

When I was a part of the Comenius exchange my eyes opened more to the world. It was my very first exchange and made me learn much about myself and life in particular.

Before the exchange I knew that Europe is a continent full of different cultures and ways of living, but I didn't know how much it differs. The differences made me realize how many lives and ways of living there are only in Europe, and even more in the rest of the world.

I learned a lot only in the few days my exchange student was living with me. From previous travels around the world I've seen some other cultures but none provide such understanding as to live together, if only for a while, with someone coming from another country.

Without actually notice you've got preconceived ideas and thoughts about people from other countries.

These can either be strengthened or disappear completely by an exchange,

most likely the last alternative. I think better contact with others around the world is good for people's apprehension about each other. All about the earth there are prejudices to punch in. Cultural clashes can appear though. Hopefully you can get through these and see the differences of other cultures with a new sight.

It's also very useful to see your own life with the eyes of someone else. Home blindness is common, so it's doubly important. To understand how other people are apprehending Swedes is really interesting.

To get to know other peoples way of living, just like in an exchange, will provide a greater perspective of life. Some people are thinking of their selves, their city and their country as the only thing happening in world when so many other lifes are spinning in other parts of it. More contact with these parts gives better capacity to apprehend reality. It can be incredibly good for the self-image to know that you aren't the only thing happening on the planet.



In a perspective of society I believe that increased understanding through an exchange can make the racism fall of. According to me racism is a totally unnecessary and stupid way of thinking which shouldn't exist in the world. Unfortunately it does and we humans have to make it disappear. To succeed I think the keyword is understanding. Through an exchange the understanding for other cultures are augmenting much, as I've mentioned above. This could actually be able to prevent hostilities between countries, which could lead to a more peaceful world.

Today we are living in a society where it's very easy to keep in touch with citizens all over the earth. Through the internet, an increased travelling and so on it's easy to learn a lot about the international society. To succeed with an international career or just make one's way while travelling language is extremely important. It's easy to forget how useful it is to talk English but once you use it you're immediately aware. I think an increased use of the English language and more international

contacts around the world are very important for the future development of society.

An exchange, and other international contacts, can accordingly enlarge peoples views of life a lot. This can have great consequences in the society. I've received a better understanding for the countries of Europe and their differences through this project. This is something I hope will be of great use later in my life. I really think so.

Amanda Angelöv, SP08A

Sweden



The Portuguese teenagers and the European Parliament

The European Parliament elections are coming, and Portugal is getting ready for choosing who we want to represent our rich and multicultural community. But, what about the future voters?

There are many advertisements on the cities' streets. "We, the Europeans" it's a great slogan, but does it work? Well, there are some contrasts among the Portuguese younger population, and the main problem is not the lack of information, but the increasing disinterest about politics.

Although this fact is quite negative, the Portuguese government provides many citizenship activities, like "Parlamento Jovem" (Teen Parliament), which was an excellent opportunity for me to learn and experience about such an important social organ as the Parliament is. Of course, we're really glad that our Law-project (made by some students of the 10th grade) was voted and will soon be discussed at the House!



I've made a small survey concerning what some Portuguese students know (or don't) about the elections that will take place at Portugal on June 7th. The results confirmed the lack of interest, but it won't be an excuse for not spreading this important fact: nowadays, there are 375 millions of people that can vote for the European Parliament. If you're not a part of that number yet, please do not stop caring about it. Many adults are missing their opportunity, but you'll have your chance for choosing who you want to approve the laws of most direct impact in our lives as European citizens.

We, the European Union's citizens of a future that only can be promising if we would fight for it. Hard times are coming and being experienced actually, but our generation is not lost while we stand together in such a familiar environment as the European Union's.

Catarina Ribeiro Santos

Externato de Penafirme – Portugal

LEARNING ABOUT CITIZENSHIP - A PERSONAL POINT OF VIEW

Education has now, more than ever, a crucial role in the formation of responsible and independent young people. The educative systems must give to the young the opportunity to gain knowledge, attitude and essential components in the following domains: getting ready for life in a democratic society, being prepared for the work market and for the spiritual side of life. In order to keep up with this evolution, school must adapt by stimulating the student's political socialization, by preparing them for lifelong learning and by assuring the Human Rights and the democracy at school level. This means to involve the students in the decisional chain in school by direct participation in meetings of all the students, or by indirect participation, through delegates or representative members of every class or level. In our project "Learning citizenship in school, for life", we had the chance to participate directly to all the activities, to vote, to fill in questionnaires, to take interviews, to organize elections for the students' delegates – because this project was based on our opinions and beliefs. Of course, students should always be involved in the taking of decisions because the school works for them, but that doesn't happen all the time – and we should change it.



More than the general participation, this project has offered me a special opportunity to visit another country in the European Union – Portugal. Being my first trip abroad, this visit has impressed me very much; I've kept many pleasant memories, known lots of students, I've even become friends with some of them. I think Portugal is a beautiful, developed, modern and very clean country (I was impressed with all the recycling they do and the alternative energy sources that they use) and we can apply here, in Romania, many things that I've seen over there.



When we arrived there, we've been welcomed with a lot of enthusiasm



by our hosts. The family that I've lived with has treated me not like a guest, but as a member of their group, which made me feel like home –and I thank them for that.

During our visit in Portugal, while at school, we've taken part in many activities. I've enjoyed the most the dance lesson – with traditional Portuguese dances and some others from all over the world – and the time all the students from the project meeting worked together to realize a “Save the planet” banner.

In the last day at school we had the opportunity to present something characteristic for our country, so we've put on traditional costumes from Romania and we taught them a traditional Romanian dance called hora. We all danced together in the school's cafeteria.

For me, this has been a splendid week, I've learned many things and I've made new friends. I will never forget this journey, this chance that I had due to the multilateral project in my school. Thank you!

Denisa Zamfiroiu, XI F

*The
School Group “Constantin
Brancoveanu”
TÂRGOVIȘTE, ROMANIA*

Elections to the European Parliament



Between 4 and 7 June, elections to the European Parliament will take place in the 27 member states of the European Union. The polling days vary from country to country and in some countries people will participate both in the elections for the European Parliament and in other local elections on the same day. In Portugal voting will take place on 7 June, a Sunday.

In these elections people will vote in national political parties which in turn are affiliated to political parties at European level. Five European Commissioners will also run as candidates in the election.

After the elections, 736 Members of the European Parliament will be elected by proportional representation to represent about 500,000,000 Europeans. If by the time of these elections the treaty of

Lisbon had been ratified, the number of the Members of the European Parliament would have risen to 751 and the powers of Parliament would also have increased. However, these elections will still be held under the provisions of the Treaty of Nice, mainly because of the failure of the referendum in Ireland.

Three million euros has been spent in a campaign to encourage people to vote in these elections. The campaign started on 1 April and an online campaign started in May. Lots of posters have been translated into the 23 languages of the European Union and have been displayed across it. Sentences used in them such as “How should we help balance family and career?” / “How much should we tame financial markets?”, try to show the importance of the European parliament in solving major problems and encourage turnout.

Voting is one of the basic rights of all citizens in democratic countries. People should be aware that it is a way of being responsible for their future and vote.

*Daniela – Externato de Penafirme -
PORTUGAL*