

EP Elections and Beyond: Active Participation of EU citizens at All Levels

First Transnational Reflection Group Meeting

29-30.11.2018 (Friday)

Bratislava, Slovakia

In the course of two days 24 young leaders from 9 European countries (Slovakia, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Austria, France, Greece, FYROM and Italy), 4 partners representatives, 4 esteemed speakers and several GLOBSEC team-members immersed into the complicated task to assess the current state of our European Union and draft realistic recommendations to European decision-makers, national policymakers, the civic and business communities. The work will result in a Policy Brief, incorporating the suggestions developed by the group, to be disseminated through the networks of the Project partners and the personal networks of the young leaders.

While the 1st day was used for networking among the group and providing a little bit of history and culture connected to Slovakia, we had a very busy 2nd day. We began with a roundtable discussion, taking a stock of how we see the EU today-what works and what not. The State Secretary for foreign affairs of the Slovak Republic Frantisek Ruzicka and the Director of GLOBSEC Policy Institute Jakub Wisniewski kick-offed the conversation with opening remarks. There was much of concern on the mind of the participants, including lack of engagement by citizens, environment, populism and the necessity to commit to the European project with the benefits, responsibilities and values attached. Yet, an overall agreement occurred that we should work to keep and fight for the EU, as it is the best option we have.

The lively discussion was followed by working groups exercise. We had 5 topics: 1. Education and opportunities for the youth, 2. Migration, internal and external security, 3. Environment and sustainability, 4. Employment, social affairs and inclusion and 5. EU as a global actor. In smaller circles the participants attempted to identify the current challenges and opportunities for the EU, Member States and citizens.

In the next roundtable session, the work moved to the level of discussion what is next for Europe. Our kick-off speakers the Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia Ladislav Miko and the Deputy director of GLOBSEC Policy Institute Alena Kudzko focused mostly on the participation and engagement of the citizens as a tool to introduce changes in the EU decision-making processes. The participants had many and diverse questions and remarks, including the role of education, more direct connections between European policymakers and citizens and the upcoming European Parliament elections.

Our last working groups exercise dealt with the ambitious attempt to provide recommendations for what to do next in the specific topics of the groups. These suggestions varied from bottom up to top down approaches, targeting EU decision-makers, national governments, corporations and civil society.