



## Your Europe-Your Future. Youth debates for tomorrow's Europe

During the consultation period in February 2007, two main activities were organized to gather the opinion of Estonian youth about the future of Europe. Young people from secondary schools and universities had possibility to express their ideas on while writing essays about 6 different topics related to the different policy areas. In addition, all member organizations of Estonian National Youth Council and other youth organizations had a opportunity to fill in the questionnaire. Questions were asked related to topics like education, environment, democracy and the future of constitution, social dimension and foreign policy of EU. All essays and questioners where gathered and analyzed by of Estonian National Youth Council. Most post popular topic among youth turned out to be the future of education polices and environmental matters. According to that we would like to introduce you the main ideas related to educational and environmental issues.

1) To ensure sustainable development of European society, the member states need to guaranty that education up to upper secondary school level is provided free of charge and it is accessible to all young people living in EU in spite of their social, ethnical or religious background. Also, education has to be offerd to all irrespective of children's personal learning abilities, regional peculiarity or disabilities.

European Union needs to keep focusing on importance of vocational education. To promote vocational education among young people the cooperation between employers and vocational school should be supported. For example trough traineeship possibilities and professional traineeship mentors at companies, common projects and direct job offers after graduation. In the situation of international labour market and moving labour force it's important to knowledge and bring even more into public awareness the need of international side in vocational education and the mobility of students attending vocational education institutions. It includes traineeship possibilities at foreign companies that will give student's better overview of different equipment and working culture.

Accessibility to higher education should mainly be assured trough strong and transparent student allowance schemes in member states. Also, the funds provided for mobility schemes are not always sufficient.

To receive more of a holistic overview of the young person's skills, values and competences we have to emphasise more on non- formal education. Member States should recognize the competences gained thought non- formal education as a significant part of personal growth. It's relevant to set certain unified standard measures how to recognize and compare the skills, values and quality of competences people have obtained trough non-formal education.

For example, the measurement can be done through evaluation of person's portfolio that describes all aspects of person's experiences and gained competences. The results should be mutually acknowledged by employers and formal- learning facilities through Europe The recognition of non – formal education should not only be part of the employment procedure but also it has to be made possible to take the competences into account when entering higher education, professional higher education or vocational

education. Mutual recognition in every European country would in a way also simplify student mobility.

To implement the new ideas of non-formal educational advantages it is important to talk about non-formal education, its benefits and its possibilities for recognition already in secondary and upper secondary school. Promotion of recognition should be conducted mainly by employers itself. It also gives schools and enterprises possibilities to work more closely already in earlier stages of education and help young people to make their choices for the future.

2) Environmental issues cross all the state borders and for that reason European Union needs a common energy strategy and mutual vision about the future of our living environment. For example, Europe should consume less nuclear energy and scientist and researchers should cooperate to find possibilities for new alternative green energy.

One of the biggest polluters of our air is transportation, both for private and cargo use. European Union should invest in new railways and bicycle roads, especially in less economically developed countries, instead of focusing on new highways and promoting therefore the expanding use of cars. Using public transportation should be promoted through good connection possibilities and cheap fares. Cars could be limited by car taxes and fixed car amount per person or family.

It's crucial to decrease the amount of ship accidents and oil leaks. Actions can be taken through limitation of sea cargo transportation, cargo could be directed more to railways.

Environmental thinking could be also changed through tax system for industries and people related to their environmental actions. Therefore, Member States should review their tax policies and modify it accordingly.

Careless actions related to environment is often caused by lack of information. Environmental topics should be taught and introduced in different school levels more thoroughly. Teaching should involve practical examples and show possible results of careless action. Also, social advertisements including ones that promote environmental friendly lifestyle should be shown constantly on TV and in other media channels. This kind of activities should be supported by governments and by private industry.

We all need to keep in mind that every hasty move could slowly destroy our world.

### **To conclude**

- its relevant to all young people to have free access to education.
- vocational education should be prioritised
- cooperation between schools and employers should be strongly supported
- next to formal, non-formal education needs our special attention and recognition in the society.
- Europe needs common energy strategy
- public transportation should be supported and cargo transportation moved more to railways
- tax system can influence environmental friendly actions
- environmental thinking can be taught in schools