

# Latvian youth and their vision on the future of Europe

On 10-11 March 2007, 90 young people from all over Latvia gathered in Riga to debate about the future of the European Union. The discussion has resulted in the following proposals:

## Future of EU treaties

- The EU needs the Constitution, and it is necessary to encourage the adoption of the current draft Constitution, as it streamlines the EU's legal framework, outlines the future perspective of the organization, and may also be regarded as the unifying symbol.
- To adopt the Constitution, it is important to educate and inform the public on the EU core document through a more efficient use of the existing communication resources. It is necessary to develop a common strategy for the promotion of the Constitution among the EU citizens and to call on the member states not to politicise the process of adoption of the Constitution.
- It is suggested that a referendum on EU Constitutional Treaty should be held simultaneously in all member states.
- It is necessary to temporarily suspend EU enlargement to strengthen the Union from the inside.

## EU role in the globalised world

- It is necessary to strengthen common EU foreign policy by representing and balancing the interests of all stakeholders.
- We support further development of the existing EU Rapid Reaction units; however, the EU does not need a common army.
- Knowledge-based economies should be built up in developing countries.
- The EU should undertake a leading role in the area of environmental protection in the world.
- It should be ensured that each EU national may receive assistance at any EU member country embassy outside the EU.

## Long-term development of EU

- Environment friendly use of energy resources should be developed and energy source independence of the EU fostered.
- Support to development of science should be enhanced and international co-operation in this area should be facilitated.
- Transportation resources should be used more effectively, by facilitating the development of environment friendly modes of transport.
- To promote and popularise the use of public and eco-friendly transport.
- With the help of regulatory norms, to facilitate the use of EU environment-friendly technologies.
- It is necessary to promote the culture of economy in the society.

## **Democracy and civil society in the EU**

- A binding to member states regulatory framework is needed for the development of youth policy, civil society and supporting of youth initiatives.
- Equal access to information on opportunities for participation in all regions of member states should be facilitated in order to promote regional development. The presentation of information should be adjusted to the needs of target audience - EU residents.
- Focus should be on the observance of basic human rights.

## **EU social and economic model**

- Administrative and judicial obstacles interfering with free movement of the workforce within the EU should be diminished.
- Support to needy residents of the European Union should be increased in order to motivate them to improve their living conditions.
- To strengthen the protection of consumer rights, for example, by creating a uniform system of labelling foodstuffs in order to inform consumers about the origin and quality of their food.
- To design a common policy to limit the consumption of alcohol and tobacco products by increasing taxes and regulating consumption thereof in public places.

## **Youth and education in the EU**

- Common EU education standards should be developed for all stages of education, which would grant the right of equal competition and ensure greater opportunities for mobility to each scholar and student.
- Emphasis should be laid on the quality of education.
  - Linking theory to practice in training programmes. Various opportunities for practical experience should be ensured both to students of higher educational establishments and to school students – "shadow days".
  - International exchange of teaching staff should be facilitated, which would give teachers an opportunity to acquire the latest teaching methods and to improve their language skills. This would encourage scholars to choose teaching as a profession.
  - The learning process should be made more interesting by including methods and values of informal education processes within the formal education framework.
- To ensure the availability of formal education to each EU resident irrespective of his or her social status. EU and government institutions should financially support informal education and, as minimum, cover the administrative costs of NGOs.
- To enhance the role of informal education and its recognizability in society by launching active information campaigns. This would encourage a wider use of the opportunities of informal education.