



**Restoring the sense of politics  
through youth participation:  
Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine**

**International Conference**

**Kiev, Ukraine, 10 June 2017**

**FEPS Activity Report**

**FEPS**

ACTIVITY REPORT  
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**FMS**  
Foundation Max van der Stoep

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN  
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES  
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE  
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The conference started with the introduction and opening remarks of the representatives of FEPS, FMS and IDSP. The focus was on the idea of conducting such a conference and the lack of useful researches and analytical materials in the context of study the involvement of the youth in political processes.

Also the co-organisers pointed out about the necessity to share the best practices between different countries and organisations in the way how to attract young people to be politically active. The situation in different European countries with the youth is similar with the situation in EaP countries. The presence and participation in the conference of more than 15 foreign guests and experts was a good indicator of the relevance and interest of the topic.

The second block was devoted to a short presentation of the research results. The purpose of the research was to study the presuppositions that affect the state of political activity of the youth in these countries, as well as the structures of youth organizations and ways of their manifestation. It was useful for the participants of the event to learn about the difficulties that arose in the process of preparing the study. The highlight of the research was a survey, which was carried out in a very short time and gave the opportunity to obtain useful information for reflection.

The first panel's discussion was on the social portrait of the youth in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The main theses of the discussion were:

#### 1. Block – Challenges of Youth

- Lack of education / no proper educational system
- Work perspectives, problems to find a first job
- Money
- Housing: people up to 30 live together with parents or even grandparents
- Labour migration
- Consensus regarding EU- and NATO membership, but no clear common sense that it is not about joining a political union, but developing your own country in a European direction
- Trust in politics is low, at the same time few young people want to become political active

#### 2. Block: Beyond Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova

- Youth in neighboring and more authoritarian countries like Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus and Russia faces quite the same social challenges.
- Retreat to privacy, strong focus on family and friends
- High reluctance to get politically active

#### 3. Block: The generation of optimism

- Every generation met its own challenges and so also this generation will coop with its challenges
- Couple of months ago the so called "Generation Putin" surprised us and will surprise us hopefully many more times.



- This generation is more critical than any before.
  - This generation is digital native, they use new technologies and moreover (especially in this region) develop it forward.
  - High self-identification with the EU and European values, even being ready to die for these values in the previous years (compare this to the rest of Europe).
  - Visa-free regime as a chance or next step for this generation, but no final solution. Moreover, a big part is unable to travel due to financial conditions.
4. Block: What can this generation do?
- Knock at the doors of your governments if they do not want to loose you!
  - Decentralization of Ukraine as a chance for young people to take over more responsibility in their rural or urban area of living.
  - Joining political forces like the SD Platform is a good step, but both the single members and the organization needs to be ready to take over mandates.
  - This generation can become agents of change!
5. Block: What can organizations like FMS, FEPS and FES do?
- Give this generation valid and strong arguments in their hands (youth studies)
  - Bring them together not just in their country, but also interregional (taking into account the same challenges and their discussion, which can lead to new dimensions of dialogue away from the political conflicts between the countries)
  - Be an advocate for the countries back in your home country or Brussels

The second panel's discussion was dedicated to the three main questions on the participation of the youth in politics, the representation of the interests of the young people in politics and ideological landscape for the youth.

A useful component of the conference was the discussion in the format of an open microphone of the need to change the meaning of politics with the help of young people by all participants. There were several remarks about the fact that, that young people find it difficult to navigate in the political space, taking into account ideological blurring. In addition, young people do not have idols or good examples to follow from among politicians. There is a merger of parties and ideologies, the formation of broad coalitions that lead to deformation of installations. Young people should feel their participation and responsibility. Young people want to be heard. They need to understand that their voices influence on something.

It is difficult to forecast electoral behavior of young people in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. A significant part of young people decide to participate in the elections at the last moment. The answer of politicians of such a mood is that they concentrate their efforts on working with a more permanent electoral group, and youth organizations are attracted for their own interests.

Young people are ready to join and be more active when faced with a number of problems, especially in the sphere of education, job search, the formation of a young family,



inaccessibility of quality health care. There is an understanding that nobody will solve these problems for them. But there is also a situation in which the active part of the youth is a very small fraction. The overwhelming majority is passive enough.

The youth of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is directly or indirectly affected by military conflicts, and the degree of this influence depends on the phase in which the conflict is located. Young people are often the agents of confrontation and are subject to serious ideological and semantic pumping from the side of the opposing parties.

Politicization of problems, related to conflicts reduces the interest of young people in this issue. Young people who are the part of social and political life are mostly involved, and their position often depends on value and ideological guidelines. Territorial integration is not a priority for the overwhelming majority of young people. They are much more worried about issues of a decent standards of living, education and health.

The motivation for young people to come to the elections is to realize the importance of their participation in public and political life. Moreover, it is possible only through political education. Politics and politicians should be more accessible, processes should be more transparent. Values should be at the heart of political parties and movements. Young people are also often the driving force of revolutions. Mature political classes sometimes use the protest moods of youth to achieve their own selfish goals.

Radicalization and nationalism is a very serious threat for many countries. The response to such manifestations can be the consolidation of social democratic organizations and enlightenment work among the youth.

Classical parties no longer attract young people. They are focusing more on the new formats and ideas, which are often could be found in anti-establishment movements. Politics has to be sexy to attract a broader number of young people.

An interesting remark was voiced about the possibility of appearance of new instagram parties because the form is also an important component for public interest. Rapid technological development and increasing volumes of information flows cause fragmentary perception and reluctance to delve into the essence of processes. Politics of a new pattern, which resemble more actors or pop singers, can perfectly take advantage of this situation.

Theses also sounded that young politicians, getting into power, become part of the system and stop working on upholding youth issues. It is necessary to constantly monitor politicians by manifesting an active civic position.