



inTegra



Apply to Our Future Europe!

Exchange Perspectives on Conflict and Diversity

Our Future Europe is an engaging exchange program for active youths (age 18-25) from the Netherlands, Serbia and Kosovo*. Explore how political, social and cultural differences influence the way we experience conflict. The program combines official and expert meetings with peer education. A visit to Belgrade, Serbia and an exchange in the Netherlands provide an intense experience. Participants get the unique opportunity to meet students from the Netherlands, Kosovo and Serbia and visit policy makers, civil society organizations and political representatives.

Additionally, there is a training component that focuses on increasing your skills in citizen journalism and active citizenship. Participants are challenged to share their views with others in society by writing articles and organizing activities for their peers, for example teaching a class about multiculturalism or a movie discussion at a student union.

All together Our Future Europe invites students to become part of an inspiring, vocal international group of youths that share a deepened understanding of European societies.

Apply now to Our Future Europe!

Theme of the project: conflict and diversity in European societies

European societies have a long history with each other. As a diverse continent Europe knows both division lines as well as overlapping interests. Dealing with conflict and with multiculturalism is not self-evident in this context. Our Future Europe seeks to gain mutual understanding on the complexity of European issues by exchanging perspectives.

During the program participants look at conflict and diversity at various levels: from the individual to the community; and from the policy maker to the citizen. Several topics relating to the overall theme will be discussed during the program in a way that multiple perspectives are covered. These topics include:

Conflict transformation. Everyone encounters conflict: in our daily lives, but also in the society we live in. Within the program you gain understanding about what conflict is and how you can deal with it constructively. How do we deal with past experiences and express grievance, while at the same time accepting a common future?

European Integration. The European Union once started as a peace project and is still committed to a common future. However, the social integration of European societies has been problematic. There are conflicting identities in Europe that are politicized in times of economic depression. In Western European states, political parties struggle with the effects of migration. Multicultural societies are a fact rather than an ideal. At the same time Eastern European states see high skilled labor leave the country. The Euro Crisis has increased strength of populist movements. What is the way forward for Europe?

The political relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Since the war in 1998-1999 and the declaration of independence by Kosovo in 2008, political relations remain tense. At the same time, citizens in both countries are seeking to continue their lives. What can citizens do to further the relations between Serbia and Kosovo?

* The designation of Kosovo is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Background

“Our Future” is a challenging and exciting exchange program established in 2003. Every year it brings together young people from Serbia, Kosovo and the Netherlands. It offers a unique opportunity to explore political and social issues faced by people and communities in these countries, in relation to the process EU integration. Coming from different national, educational and personal backgrounds and living in an increasingly diverse world, it is of great worth to understand each other’s perspective. The program promotes and supports active youth participation in establishing international and intercultural connections and understanding. The program is organized by a partnership of three non-governmental organizations: Integra (Kosovo, <http://www.ngo-integra.org/>), Youth Education Committee (Serbia, <http://www.ooo.org.rs/en>) and Linking Europe (the Netherlands, <http://www.linkingeurope.org>).

Participants

A group of 18 skilled and motivated youngsters from the Netherlands, Kosovo and Serbia (six per country) will be selected to participate in the program. Students who have an interest in the project’s themes and goals are invited to apply. A particular interest in European societies and/or the Balkan region is welcomed. Selection will be based on qualities such as team work, open-mindedness, social engagement and motivation. Reaching gender and a geographical balance will be considered during the selection of participants. Further requirements for participants include:

- Citizenship or permanent residence in the Netherlands, Kosovo or Serbia;
- Regular Internet connection and access;
- Fluency in English;
- Having good writing skills;
- Being able to attend all face-to-face activities envisaged by the program;
- Having the motivation to successfully participate and complete the program including organizing three peer-to-peer activities;
- having a valid passport and travel insurance to visit Serbia/the Netherlands.

The program

Selection process

The selection of participants takes place in the first two weeks of June. After reviewing the application forms, a pre-selection of suitable applicants is made. These applicants will conduct a phone/Skype interview with their national project coordinators. On the basis of the entire process, the final selection of participants is made.

Preparation Meetings

Before the visits to Belgrade/Utrecht, you will meet the other participants from your country in preparatory meetings. During these meetings the expectations and responsibilities for the exchange are lined out and all participants are required to prepare themselves for the exchange.

Study visit to Belgrade

From 11 August until 15 August the first face-to-face meeting takes place: the study visit to Belgrade, Serbia. Here the participants will visit institutions, including civil society organizations, embassies and government officials. Furthermore, participants exchange perspectives with the other participants on the program topics of European integration and conflict. Together participants also prepare your own involvement in society: choosing the workshop topic that you will present in the Netherlands and defining the issues and experiences on which you would like to write.

Blog writing and workshop preparation

In the weeks after the study visit, participants will write these articles, based on insights gained with the other students in Serbia. These articles are placed online and you will share them with friends, family and colleagues. Each participant prepares one workshop for fellow participants during the exchange week in the Netherlands.

Exchange in Ommen, the Netherlands

From 11 until 18 October 2014 an intensive exchange week awaits participants in the Netherlands. Everyone will give a workshop for the other participants which has been prepared beforehand. Furthermore participants will visit institutions that deal with diversity in the Netherlands and they will engage with Dutch society by sharing insights and perspectives on themes like multicultural society and dealing with conflict. At the end of the week, ideas and tools to engage with society are discussed.

Peer-to-peer activities

Following the exchange week, participants will share and discuss the topics and experiences that made an impact on them. They publish articles online and organize three activities for their peers. This can take the form of for example a political café, a class lecture or a movie discussion night.

Timeline

- 26 May, 2014: Call for applications
- 1 July, 2014: Call for applications ends
- 7 July, 2014: Selection results available
- 1 July – 11 August 2014: One afternoon of preparatory meeting before the study visit
- 11 August – 15 August 2014: Study visit to Serbia
- September 2014: writing articles and preparing the exchange in the Netherlands
- 11 – 18 October 2014: exchange week in the Netherlands
- 18 October – 31 December 2014: writing articles and organizing peer-to-peer activities

Participation Fee

During the study visit in Belgrade and exchange week in the Netherlands, accommodation, food and drinks, and inspiring visits will be provided. Dutch participants are required to contribute a participation fee of €60 and additionally the travel costs to and from Belgrade (estimated between €150-200). The participation fee for students from Kosovo and Serbia is €20 for the entire program.

Deadline

The deadline for applications is 1 July 2014.

How to apply

Please fill in the attached application form and send it before 1 July 2014, 23:59 hrs Central European Time to:

- Kushtrim Koliqi: info@ngo-integra.org (in Kosovo)
- Theresa Song Loong: theresa@linkingeurope.org (in the Netherlands)
- Neda Živanović: OFE@ooo.org.rs (in Serbia)

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