

“Shaping and debating the future of EU”

Projects financed under Europe for Citizens

Project partners: Jaan Tõnisson Institute, Genista research foundation, Europski edukacijski forum, Foreign Policy Initiative BH

Description of the project:

The future of EU has become an issue that cannot be overlooked, especially in the light of the recent economic crises and of the current war in Ukraine. The issue is not only about the future enlargement of EU, but the core of the problem is to find an answer to the question: “will EU become a federal state or will it remain as a Union of states?” The question has a profound impact from the constitutional law (in both MS level and EU level), but the answer also determines the course and development of sectorial politics and policy making in EU and MSs. Financial, fiscal, economic, social, defence, foreign etc. policies will all be affected by the answer.

Thus the aim of the project is to launch and implement a debate in the participating countries about the future of EU, focusing at the above-posed question. The participating countries have been chosen with a specific focus to obtain an opinion from “new” (Estonia, Malta), “newer” (Croatia) and candidate countries (Bosnia), representing different regions of Europe and having thus a different approach and attitude. The debate will take place at different levels (nationwide, regional etc), involving different stakeholder groups (policy makers, civil servants – but focusing at those groups who will be directly affected by the EU sectorial policies: youth, entrepreneurs, socially disadvantaged etc) and using different forms (debates in media, open moderated public discussions, “questions and answers” etc). The focus of debates will be to analyse the question through different policy areas, which helps to increase the knowledge of the participants about these fields.

The information gathered during the events will be systemized, analysed and presented to national and EU level politicians, decision makers and officials (including a comparative analysis of the results from each participating country). This ensures that the voice of the people is heard and helps the citizens to participate in shaping the future of Europe.

General objective of the Programme targeted by your project:

To foster European citizenship and to improve conditions for civic and democratic participation at Union level.

Specific aims of the Programme targeted by your project:

Encourage democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level, by developing citizens' understanding of the Union policy making-process and promoting opportunities for societal and intercultural engagement and volunteering at Union level.

Rationale:

The proposed project is in full accordance with the objectives of the current call.

1. The project helps to foster European citizenship through engaging people from different countries to participate in a debate about the future of EU. During the project, the outcomes derived from other countries will be incorporated into the debate (e.g. if the opinion in country A differs considerably from that in country B, it will be tackled, analysed and debated in all participating countries). Also joint debates in media will be organised for representatives of each participating countries.

2. The project helps to improve civic and democratic participation through organising a series of debates in participating countries. The focus of the debates will be to discuss the future of EU (federal state or a Union of states) through specific sectoral policies and by showing that the question is thus not an abstract one, but touches each of us through the design and implementation of these policies. The results of the debates will be presented to relevant national and EU-level politicians, civil servants etc.

3. The project helps to encourage citizens' participation at Union level and develops their understanding of the policy making process in the EU. As described above, the future of EU will be debated through specific sectoral policies. This will increase the knowledge of the participants about the different EU sectoral policies, policy-making process and mechanisms, means and ways to participate in the process etc. It will also increase the awareness of the participants about the opinions and attitudes of people living in other MS (see the composition of partnership explained above)

4. The project is specifically focused at the issues related to the future of Europe. The future of EU has become an issue that cannot be overlooked, especially in the light of the recent economic crises and of the current war in Ukraine. Will EU become a federal state or will it remain as a Union of states has profound impact on the financial, fiscal, economic, social, defence, foreign etc policies both at MS and EU level. The activities within the project will address all these issues. The results of the debates will help to ensure that the voice of the people is heard and it helps the citizens to participate in shaping the future of Europe.

Activities:

The activities will take place in four project partner countries: Estonia, Malta, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The countries participating represent "new" (Estonia, Malta), "newer" (Croatia) EU MS and a candidate countries BiH, representing also different regions of Europe.

The activities will take place in each country on a national level, but also on local / regional level. On the local level the activities will take place in Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu and Narva (Estonia), Valletta, Mosta and Rabat (Malta), Zagreb, Zadar and Dubrovnik (Croatia) and Sarajevo, Banja Luka and Mostar (BiH). In each location debates involving different stakeholder groups (policy makers, civil servants – but focusing at those groups who will be directly affected by the EU sectoral policies: youth, entrepreneurs, socially disadvantaged etc) will take place.

Activity plan / work programme of the project:

The project will be implemented by the project teams working in each country. Each team has an administrator who coordinates the activities and information dissemination in respective country. The overall technical project management (reporting, financial management) will be coordinated by Estonian partner.

The project is designed as series of discussions / public debates that are carried out in all participating countries. **The main topic of the discussions is future of EU** and its status as federation or national states federation. In order to enable most practical and down-to-earth fact and knowledge based discussions and to avoid pure abstract and/or biased clash of opinions:

- The discussions / debates focusing at the future of EU will be organized by sectorial policy (financial, fiscal, economic, social, defence, foreign etc) topics, relevant to the target groups;
- In all events an expert panel is developed consisting of sectorial experts, civil servants, policy makers and representatives of civil society organizations to shape and form the core issues of the discussion as well as for providing relevant facts and research / surveys based information for the general discussion
- All discussions will be managed by experienced moderators provided by project partner organizations;
- Joint debates in media will be organized for representatives of each participating countries;
- Feedback of project participants will be gathered in order to make self-assessment of the project.
- Summaries of the discussions / public debates will be published on the project partners' websites. The systemized and analysed results will be presented to national and EU level politicians, decision makers and officials (including a comparative analysis of the results from each participating country). Thus the voice of the people is heard and it helps the citizens to participate in shaping the future of Europe.

The foreseen activities are designed to reach the project's needs and objectives by encouraging open debate about EU future. The debates enable the democratic and civic participation of citizens at Union level and enhance their understanding and involvement of the Union policy making-processes. In principle the project participants will be involved in the decision making process on the EU level.

Of particular value and importance is the regional coverage achieved by the project (the activities will take place in all major regions of the participating countries) and the involvement of various disadvantaged and / or less-involved groups (youth, unemployed, elderly etc), who will be incorporated into the overall discussion about the future of EU through relevant sectorial policy debates.

It is vital to bring the debate about EU future on the grass-root level and involve more general public. Considering the political and economic instability in Europe today (Ukraine crisis, financial fluctuations) and trend for globalization, there is a strong need to discuss the future evolvement of EU, not only keeping in mind the genuine economic and monetary union, but also the wellbeing its people as well as joint foreign and defence policy. It is important, that in on the grass-root level the discussion will be held cross the EU member states as well as in the candidate countries. The importance is bigger for the "new" and "newer" MS, as for them the question of greater federalization may seem more dangerous (as they came from very different forced "unions").

Duration of the project: January 2015 – June 2016