

Press release

Young Europeans Warn Against Fight Club

Cologne/Berlin/Paris, 17 March 2014 – How does the young generation see Europe and what kind of Europe do its members wish for? For more than one and a half years, young students of the French university Sciences Po and the Free University Berlin have grappled with young Europeans' attitudes towards the community of states. About 2,000 young people of the same age were surveyed in Germany and France. Their findings come with a solemn warning.



“Is Europe made for us?” | Photograph: Frank Rumpenhorst for TerraEuropa © 2014

The good news: “Our generation is more European than many think”, as 18 year old student at Sciences Po Katharina Meeh summarises the results of the work performed by her and twenty other young adults from Germany and France. Supported by TerraEuropa, students of the venerable Grande École Sciences Po and the renowned Otto Suhr Institute at Berlin’s Free University have engaged in intensive dialogue on their generation’s attitudes towards

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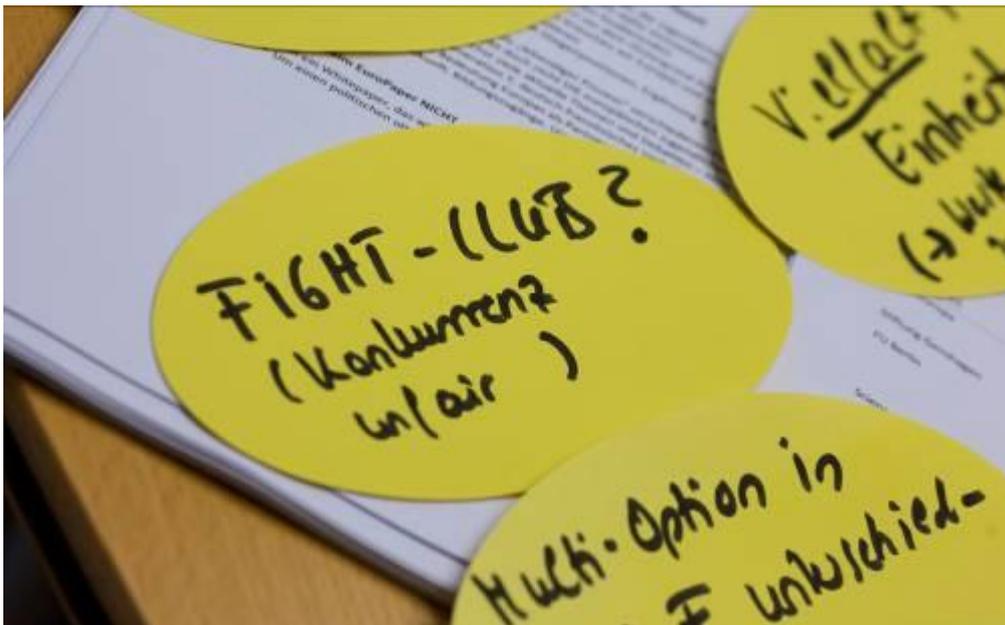
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Europe and the issues they deem most relevant for the future. 2,000 of their peers have been surveyed by the international opinion research institute Ipsos on the same matter during the past year. The results were subsequently complemented by focus groups with students in Paris and Berlin.

Europe is more self-evident than EU membership

“40 percent of people aged 18 to 29 can imagine living and working in another EU country. Almost as many consider membership in the European Union very important. This is encouraging to begin with“, holds TerraEuropa’s initiator, Michel Marlière. More than any generation before, the young generation is evolving in a Europe that is a matter of course to them. At the same time, they hardly know what to make of EU membership’s political relevance. “Almost half of the respondents would like to see more independence for their home country vis-à-vis the EU. That should actually set off the alarm bells for all the proponents of the European idea“, says Michel Marlière. This a point of view shared by the students at both top universities.

Fight club Europe? | Photograph: Frank Rumpenhorst for TerraEuropa © 2014



Mounting pressure on the young generation

“In our generation, we see little of ourselves in this important big project“, says Sonje Schwennsen, who is pursuing a Master’s degree in European Affairs at the Free University in Berlin. “We live to see how everything is faltering and how social burdens in Spain, Portugal and Greece are at our generation’s expense, while European free movement is simultaneously called into question and more and more people turn away from the European idea.“ On the one hand, modern information society is said to offer uncountable opportunities, while on the other hand, students feel helpless in the face of increasingly unfair competition. “Many political decisions do not sufficiently take our lives’ realities and our generation’s interests into account. We fear that, for many people, Europe will turn into some sort of fight club“, as Sciences Po student Marc Fort puts it in a nutshell. With the support of TerraEuropa, the students now want to appeal to politicians and businesses in an open letter. Moreover, TerraEuropa wants to induce reflection on Europe in more countries und continue the survey in Southern and Eastern Europe.

About TerraEuropa

TerraEuropa is an international platform in order for young adults to exchange their ideas on Europe among themselves and with representatives from politics, business and society. It was initiated by Michel Marlière, a French entrepreneur who chose to live in Germany. In the face of growing euroscepticism and separatism, he aims to encourage the young generation to more actively engage in Europe and participate more strongly in shaping the European House. TerraEuropa cooperates with Stiftung Genshagen, the French university Sciences Po, the Free University Berlin and the Franco-German Youth Office. Ipsos, the international market and social research company, is partner for opinion research.

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More information on TerraEuropa:

www.terra-europa.eu

Press contacts:

Information office TerraEuropa, Karin Lange

Burgstraße 27

10178 Berlin

Germany

Phone: +49 30 24086-674

Fax: +49 180 5 223285

E-Mail: terraeuropa@a-b-one.de