

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS – PARTICIPANTS EVALUATION OF THE ‘THINK-MEET-DEBATE- INCLUDE-EUROPE’ EVENT

Demographic structure of the participants

The survey was conducted in two time periods – preliminary survey was conducted before the event and an evaluation survey after the event. The initial survey got 18 responds (out of total 80 participants), and 71 responds (out of total 80 participants covered by the project grant).¹ The initial intention of comparing the results before and after the event is therefore valid only to a certain extent, since the structure of the respondents differs significantly between the two. The greater part of the analysis will therefore be focused on the evaluation questionnaire with reference to the initial phase of the analysis when appropriate.

The structure of the participants was analyzed on the basis of written reports from the participating countries since the data we got from participants was not complete and some of the questions could not be evaluated through a written report from the participants themselves. Altogether there were 80 participants – 54 coming from partner organizations and 26 from Slovenia. The gender structure was to a certain extent biased towards women (41 out of 80 participants). Representation by country stayed in the parameters of the project proposal and is represented together with the category disadvantaged students in table1:

¹ Both stages of the survey were conducted via online questionnaires prepared for the participants in google documents. The problem of the low response level in the initial phase of the event can be attributed to two factors: i) some of the partner organizations chose the participants for the event later than agreed which led to the delay in the communication process directly with the participants and ii) overall problems with online communication with the young participants which was also an issue with sparking debate on the FB group and on the webpage for the event.

Country	M	F	Disadvantaged participants
Czech Republic	5	4	One participants a member of the Slovak minority
Germany	3	6	Three participants from immigrant families (Asia, Turkey)
Croatia	4	5	Two students from families with lower income
Romania	5	4	From the report: <i>'Most of the students participating in the project from Romania come from families with an considerably small income with regard to the european average. Especially we would like to underline the case of Eveline Dicu who as a university freshmen, with no income of her own, is sustained in her academic activity and in her volunteer work as a debate trainer by her parrents who both earn the legal Romanian minimum wage. That is a family income of a bit less than 300 euro/month.'</i>
Slovakia	6	3	Three participants were members of the Hungarian minority; four participants are coming from peripheral villages. None of the participants was from Bratislava.
Estonia	5	4	
Slovenia	11	15	Twenty-two participants were selected from the region of Pomurje which is the below average developed region with an above average rate of unemployment and income per inhabitant.

Tabel 1

The majority of the participants answering the questionnaire were from Slovenia. This is also due to the fact, that the event was open to other participants (the total number of Slovene participants covered by the grant was 26, while 33 answered the questionnaire). The structure of national origin of the participants who participated in the survey is presented in Chart 1. Two countries especially stood out in terms of non-responsiveness in the evaluation process – Czech Republic and Slovakia (4 out of 9 participants covered by the grant answered the questionnaire). The main problem with acquiring answers from the Slovakian delegation was the lack of communication skills in English of the participants who received special assistance during the event, while Czech adult leaders experienced difficulties reaching out to their participants and making sure that they filled the questionnaire.

Where do you come from?

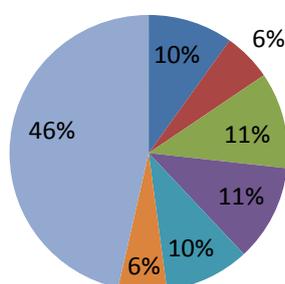


Chart 1

The structure of the participants taking part in the survey is presented in Chart 2. The majority of the respondents were debaters (72%, or 51 in total), followed by judges (17%, or 12 in total) and coaches (11%, 8 in total). The structure of the respondents reflects the overall structure of the participants based on their function at the event.

Function at the event

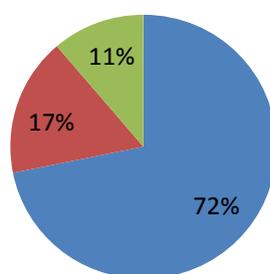


Chart 2

The majority of the respondents has been involved in debating for more than two years (62%, or in total 44) and has attended an international debate tournament in the past (80%, or in total 44). The structure of the participants indicates that the students had a chance to experience student mobility in the past and that they have a baseline for comparing this event to others and experience in impact of debate on their life. The event did however have a significant pool of participants that were given the chance to experience European mobility (a quarter of the participants), and did include students with fewer experiences (38%, or in

total 27). The event therefore presented an excellent opportunity for the student transfer of knowledge from more experienced to less experienced debater, while at the same time provided for quality of debating by more experienced debaters.

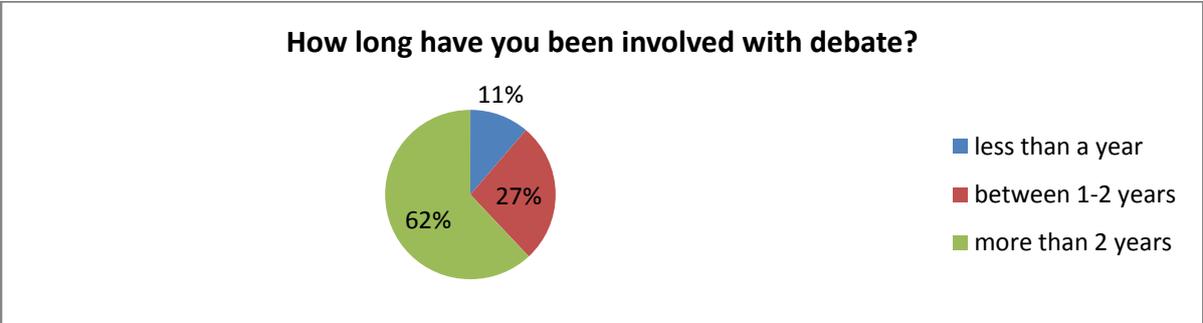


Chart 3

The preliminary questionnaire revealed that the motivation for the majority of the respondents to attend the event lies in their desire to debate with other students in an international environment (44%, or in total 8), followed by the answer that the event will be ‘a lot of fun’ (22%, or 4 in total).



Chart 4

Debated issues

All participants debated 6 topics under thematic field of the project proposal: i) the challenges high lightened in the Year for combating poverty and social exclusion; ii) mobility and iii) wider topics covering the principles of European values and identity. The topics selected after an open voting process with the partner organizations were:

- This house believes that the EU should grant amnesty to all illegal aliens currently living within its borders;

- This house believes that citizens should be entitled to a basic income without the requirement to work;
- This house believes that all workers should be legally entitled to profit sharing;
- This house believes that states should give financial incentive to companies that abolish animal testing;
- This house believes that all universities in the EU should be free of charge for EU nationals;
- Kosovo should be the first new EU member state from the Western Balkans and that Blue Card directive is harmful.

Prior to the event the participants were asked to assess the four topics that were chosen for prepared rounds and for the final round from different perspectives. The questionnaire revealed that: i) the most difficult, but at the same time the most interesting was for them the topic that Kosovo should be the first new EU member state from Western Balkans ii) the most boring, but at the same time the one that they agree with the most was for them the topic that All workers should be legally entitled to profit sharing; iii) the most important in Today's Europe and at the same time the least difficult for the participants was the topic that The EU should grant amnesty to all illegal aliens currently living within its borders and iv) the topic with which they disagreed with the most was the topic that The Blue Card directive is harmful, and the topic with which they agreed with the most was that All workers should be legally entitled to profit sharing.

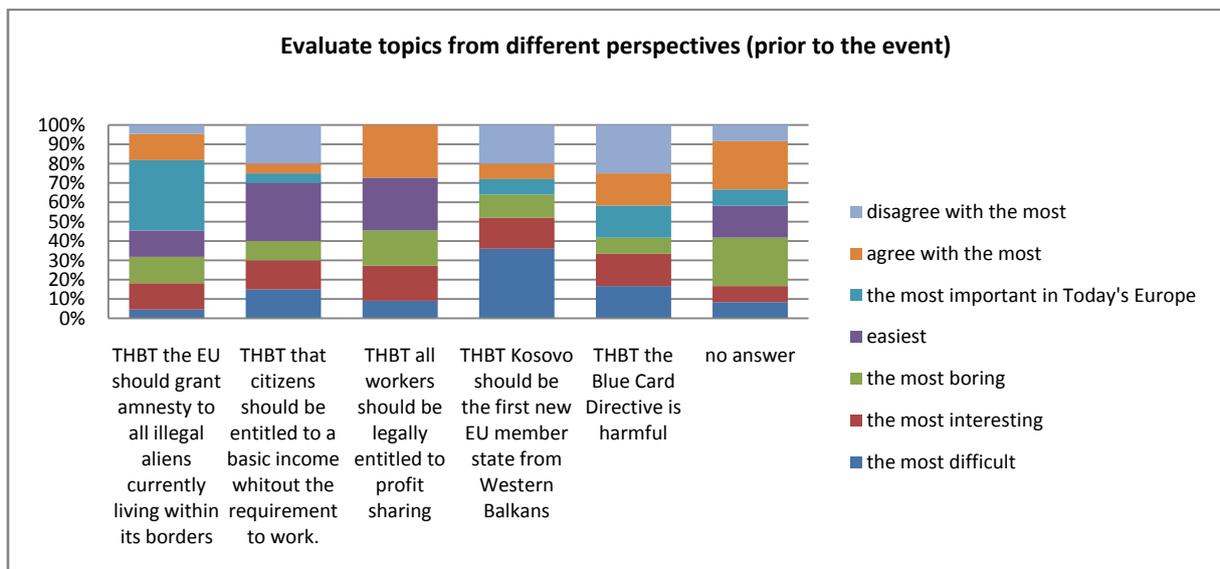


Chart 5

After the event the students were asked to assess which topic areas they believe they have gained the most knowledge about and the category that the participants believed that they

have gained the most knowledge about was ‘migration and immigration in the EU’. The answer reflects the participants’ general interest to debate the topics, since they have chosen to debate them in the topics selection process and later also chose the topics that The EU should grant amnesty to all illegal aliens currently living within its borders to be the most important for Today’s Europe. The answers reveal that it is very important for the participants to acquire ownership of the issues through including them in the selection process and that it is the role of the event organizers to carefully select the thematic areas and different topics, but that the student participants have to be actively involved in the process of the selection of the final issues to be debated since that increases their level of commitment to the preparation process and stimulates the preliminary process of familiarizing with the issues. The questionnaire also revealed that the European youth is interested in the same topics in all countries of the EU which further substantiates the claim that international events, where students deliberate about the common problems is indeed desirable, as well as necessary if our aim is to create transnational discussion detached from national limitations. The methodology applied at this international event presented the students with an opportunity to debate the issues they selected to be the most relevant from a pros-cons perspective in an international environment which led to an stimulating learning process since the majority of the respondents (50% and more in each category) indicated that they have learned a lot about the debated issues (see Chart 6).

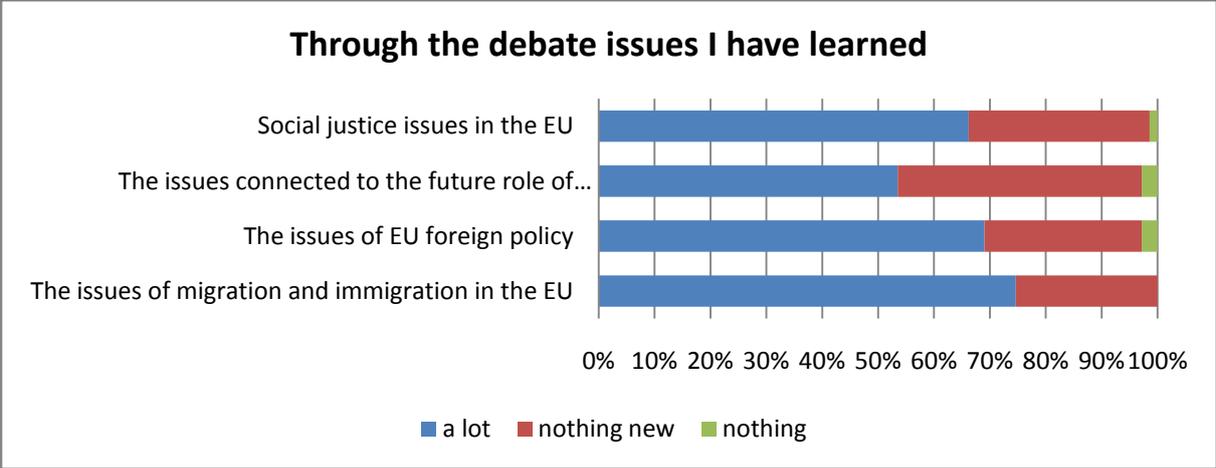


Chart 6

Evaluation of the event and its methodology

The general satisfaction of the participants with the event was highly rated, since it revealed that 75% (or in total 53) of the participants had very good general feelings about the event and another 22% (or in total 16) participants had good general feelings about the event.

None of the participants believed that they had either bad or very bad general feelings about the event.

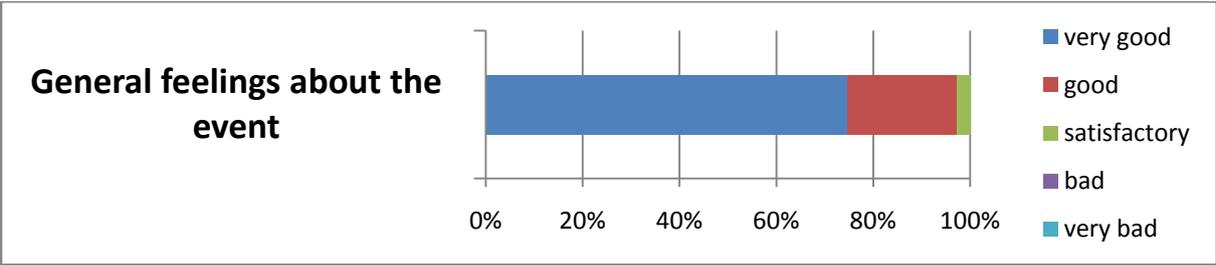


Chart 7

For more careful observation of the event divided the general evaluation of different aspects of the even in three categories: event methodology (as the baseline of the event); even logistics and organization (as a measure of general well being of the participants) and supporting activities (as a measure of satisfaction of non-debate related activities).

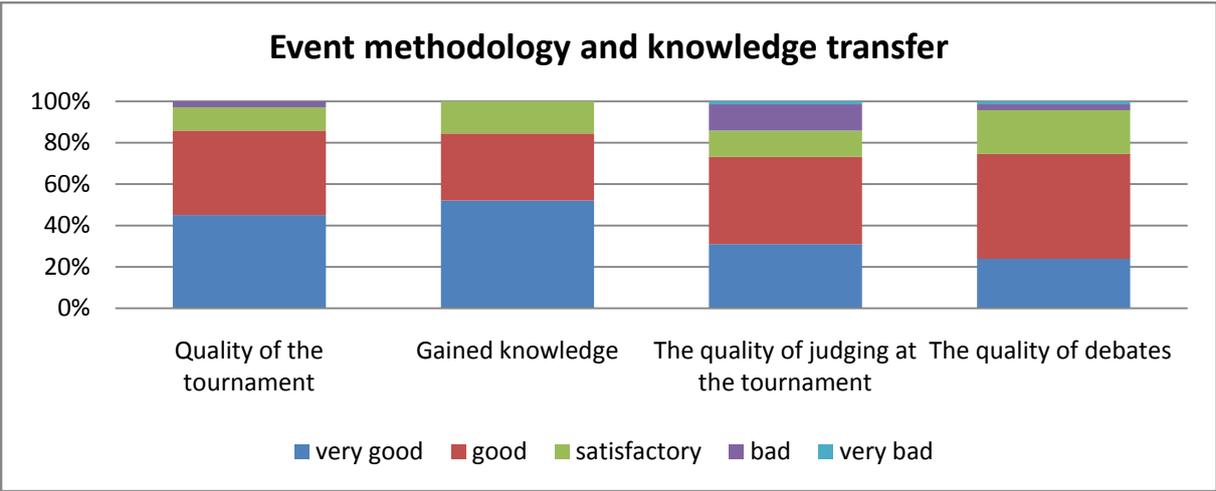


Chart 8

The methodological framework of the event was based on formal debate, which is defined as ‘structurally balances communication event about an important issue, where the opinions of two (or more) opposing standpoints are confronted and the opinions are presented alternately with the aim to persuade the judges and/or the audience’. The event followed the rules of the World Schools Debating Council under which in each debate round two teams meet to debate an issue from pre-given positions. There are 3 team members on each side who give four speeches and have the same amount of allocated time to persuade the judge and the audience to support their side of the issue. The debates are evaluated based on the

criteria of style, argumentation and strategy. The judge's decisions do not reflect their personal belief about the topics, but follow a set of pre-defined evaluation categories.

The quality of the event methodology was divided in four categories, which are presented in Chart 8. The overall quality of the tournament was the highest ranked category, since more than 80% of the participants believe that it was either very good (42%), or good (40%). The category of gained knowledge received the biggest share of answers in the category very good (43% of the respondents) and came close to the assessment of the quality of the tournament. Least favorably assessed was the category of the quality of debates, since only 22% of the respondents believed that they were very good. This answer is somehow surprising compared to the assessment of the quality of the tournament, but reveals that the participants have high expectations about the level of the debate, which shows that they are critical and aware of the standards a quality debate round should fulfill.

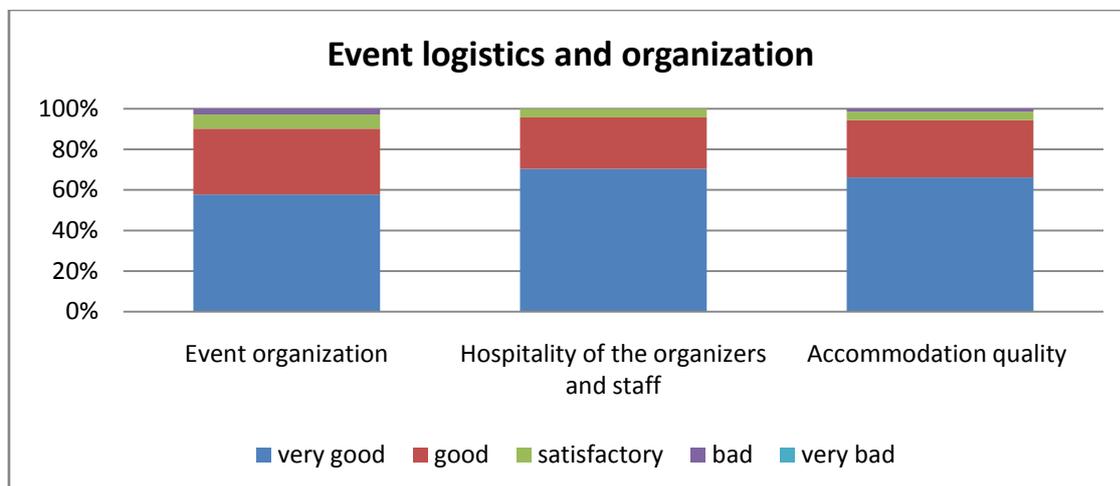


Chart 9

In the area of logistics and organization the event received the highest marks. The category that got the best overall evaluation was the hospitality of the organizers and staff (98% believed that it was either good or very good), followed by the accommodation quality in Hotel Jeruzalem, Ljutomer (96% of the respondents believed it was either good or very good). The last, but still with an overall 92% mark of either good or very good was the category of event organization (Chart 9).

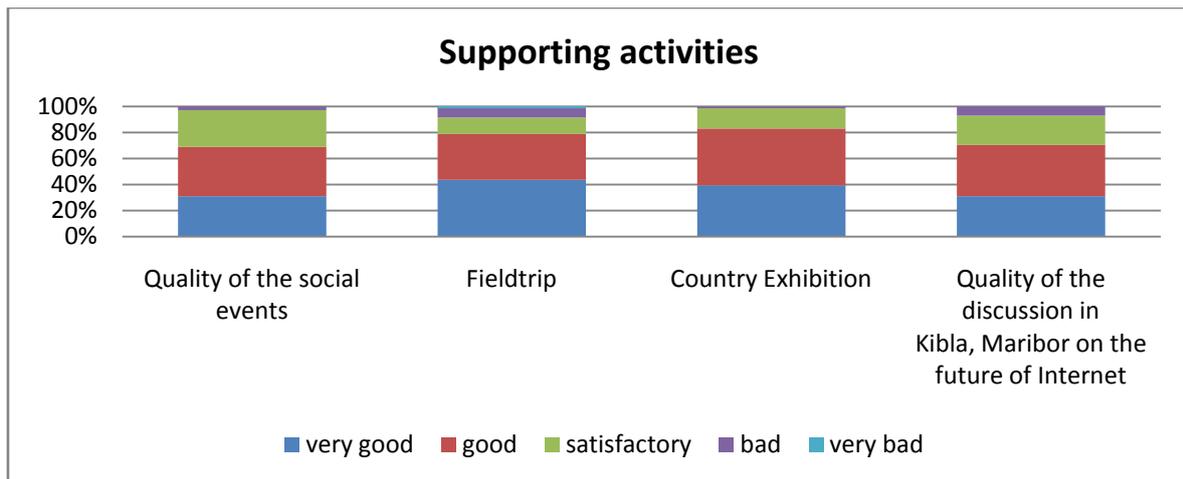


Chart 10

In the category of supporting activities we wanted to see what forms of supporting activities the participant's value and believe should be a part of an international debate event. The participants in general evaluated the quality of the social events very low compared to other categories. Still 30% believed that the social events were very good, with additional 38% supporting the notion that they were good. Best assessed category of supporting activities was the fieldtrip to surrounding Ljutomer area through which the participants had a chance to familiarize themselves with the natural heritage of the region while visiting the Jeruzalem wine hills and healing springs, cultural heritage while visiting the old Maribor city centre and a play by a local theater group and urban culture the city through a guided tour of Maribor. The least favorably assessed category was open discussion about the future of internet in Kibla Multimedia Centre, although the participating adults recognized it as a very valuable tool of public presentation.

Additionally the questionnaire aimed to reflect on the promises presented in the project application and Chart 12 represents the views of the event participants on the issues. The analysis reveals that in all eight categories the great majority either totally agrees or agrees that international events like this one help to fulfil the goals of the Europe for Citizens Programme (from 74% in the goal to raise awareness about the functioning of the EU to 98% in fulfilling the goal of connecting young people in the EU and wider). The last goal was also the one with which the greatest share of the participants totally agreed.

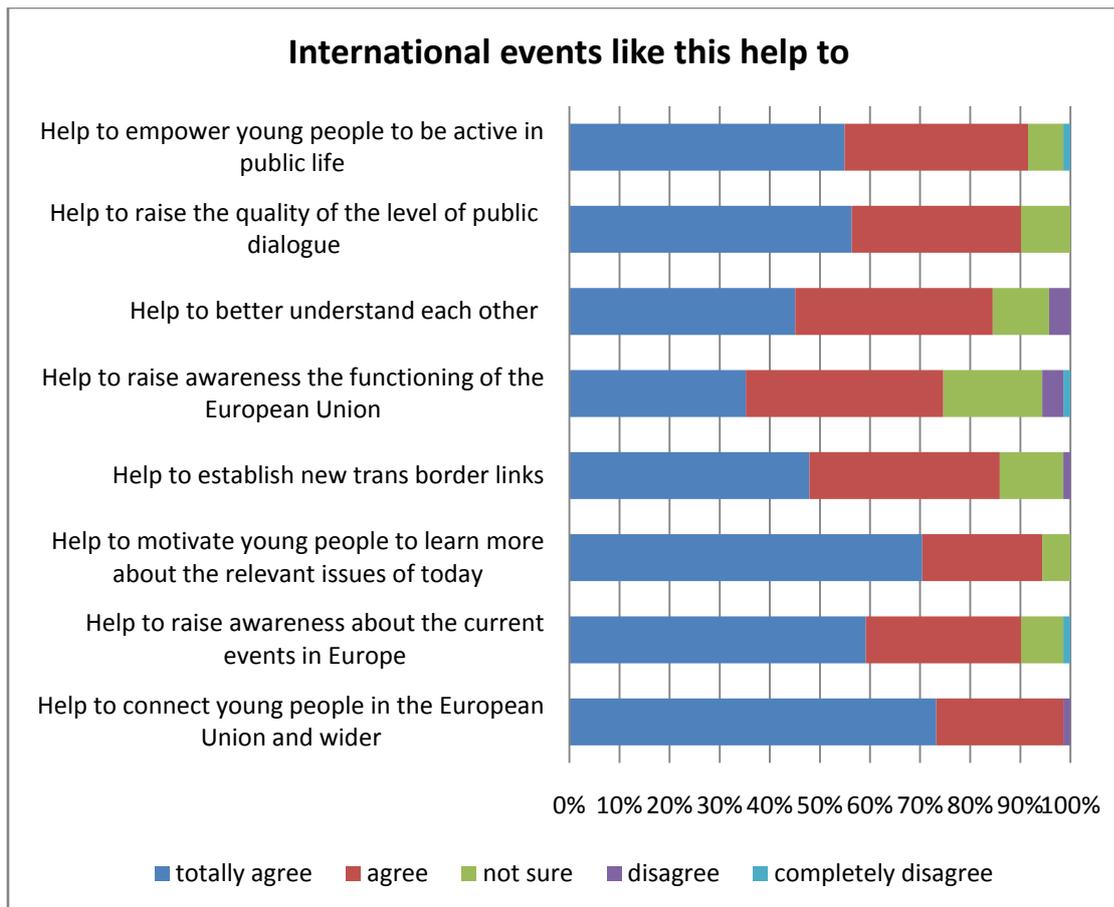


Chart 11

The categories with which more than 50% of the respondents totally agreed were also that events like this one help to raise awareness about the current events in Europe, that they help to motivate young people to learn more about the relevant issues of today, that they help to raise the quality of the level of public dialogue and that they help to empower young people to be active in public life. Although the categories of helping to raise awareness about the functioning of the EU and in terms of increasing mutual understanding didn't score so high they still reveal that the great majority (more than 70% believed they either totally agree or agree with them).

Recommendations for the future and conclusion

The recommendations that the participants expressed in the last closed question confirmed the answers they gave in the evaluation of the event. The call for change was expressed most loudly in the category of evening activities, where 71% of the respondents either totally agreed or agreed that there should be more of them. In the categories of implementation of the workshops related to the i) judging of the debates; ii) debate theory and iii) content workshops 65% of respondents either totally agreed or agreed that they should be added to the event or that there should be more of them (that expectation was especially present in the category of workshops related to the judging of the debates).

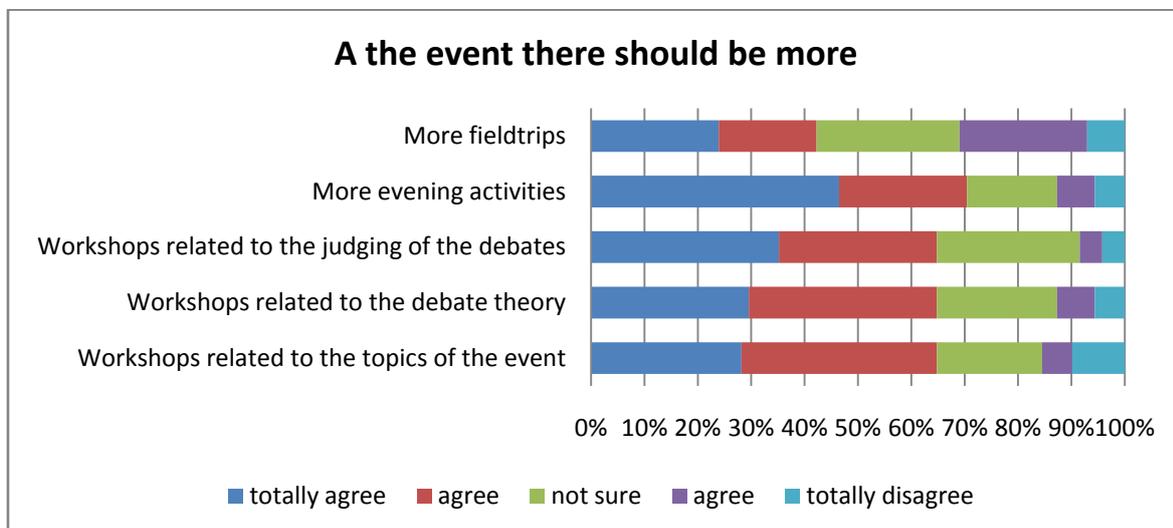


Chart 12

Other recommendations followed from the open-end questions that the participants were asked to answer in the last part of the questionnaire.

In the open-end section of the questionnaire following the event the participants of the event were asked to answer the questions related to the content of the event (which topics connected to the EU they would like to debate in the future); what are their perceptions of the shortcomings and the benefits of the event and what are their suggestions on social events in the project.

RECOMMENDED TOPICS

- Issues connected to minority and human rights
 - o EU should forcibly settle the Roma
 - o We believe in same sex marriage
 - o Multiculturalism benefits the EU
 - o We fear the rising right wing parties in the EU
 - o All countries of the EU should adopt affirmative action policies in their political system to ensure equal representation of women
- EU enlargement
 - o The expansion of the EU should be never-ending
- Migration and immigration
 - o We support open borders
 - o EU policies on integration are insufficient
- Common Agricultural Policy
 - o EU should abolish the CAP
 - o There should be no GMO in EU
- Development of a closer union
 - o EU should have a standing army
 - o EU should have a common foreign policy
 - o EU should be abolished
 - o EU does not have the competencies to become a leading global actor
 - o The competencies of the EP are too weak
- Economics
 - o EU should abolish the Maastricht Criteria
 - o EU bailing out Greece was a mistake
 - o EURO will collapse
 - o EU should not bail out Ireland
- Other
 - o We should abolish animal testing
 - o Intellectual property rights are a burden to economic development
 - o There is too much corruption in politics
 - o The state should not subsidize the arts
 - o Countries of the EU are too vulnerable to terrorist attacks

Recommendations:

- More discussions about the EU with EU representatives
- Longer
- Exhibition debate with judges/coaches
- Workshops on the related topics
- More social activities in the evening

Recommendations for social events:

- Country exhibition
- Break night party
- Get to know party
- Mafia
- Formal opening and closing ceremony

The general remarks at the end of the questionnaire reflected the concerns of people in the previous sections – too few social activities, not enough free time and to some extent the quality of judges at the tournament. The question of a tight schedule could be partially addressed through the extended period of the event duration which will be taken into consideration when planning other similar events. The question of the quantity and quality of the judges was addressed through inviting a wide network to participate at the event but it was logistically undoable, since there were not enough judges to have a broader panel.

The recommendations from participants at the end of the questionnaire revealed what they would like to see organized as social events and what are their main concerns about the event as it was. Although the majority of the respondents did have recommendations and offered critique in the above mentioned categories the final remarks of the participants revealed two things – that they want a longer event with the same methodology based on the topics that are connected to the EU. The project partners learned a lot from listening to the young participants and will, when possible, take the students recommendation in consideration in the future.