



Daily Europeans – avant-garde or dreamers?

OpenForum Cascais (March 12 - 14, 2009)

What are OpenFora?

OpenFora are weekend debates. Their objective is to bring together people from all Europe – regardless of their age, social or professional background – in order to exchange views and experience on topics related with current social and political life in Europe. So far, we have realised six of them (see <http://www.openfora.eu>)

OpenFora setup spaces where European diversity can be experienced in practice. They are not conferences where showmanship is the top priority. They are not target at a specific group – be it youngsters, academics, politicians, media professional, or whatsoever. Instead, OpenFora welcome all interested people, that are willing to actively participate in a European wide debate on topics that are important to them.

Background of the debate

Some people consider themselves European activists. But what does that mean? People that feel responsible for the future of Europe? People that engage in social and political initiatives related to European identity? People who move freely in Europe for professional and economic reasons? People that have investments abroad?

Do these people belong to the avant-garde of a long-term and ongoing process of social change, or rather to an irrelevant minority of dreamers that lost contact with the majority public?

European institutions, and notoriously the European Commission, invest lots of money in programmes that promote European citizenship, European identity, European diversity, European this and that. Some of these programmes are targeted at students (Erasmus), young professionals (Leonardo da Vinci), youngsters (Youth in Action), artists and its market (MEDIA, Culture), and many other kind of professionals.

These different projects foster networks that bring together quite a few people, who have daily contacts with peers outside their own nation state, who work and travel abroad, who have friendships in

different parts of the continent, who speak English as a lingua franca often in their private lives even.

The Erasmus Programme, for example, has promoted an increasing number of students to leave their country during the last 20 years. Some obvious results are international personal relations, be it friendships or bi-national couples.

Nevertheless, surveys clearly show stability in the images European citizens have of their neighbours. Could this mean that beneficiaries are a segment of society, who represent the middle-upper economical class? Even if programmes like the Youth in Action are open to everyone, who is really profiting from them?

Such a public investment presupposes a positive social impact. What do people gain from living *Europeanly*? Is *Europeanness* essentially based on manifest European activities? How do peers react on the European lifestyle and activities of individuals?

This Open Forum will rely on the self-reflection of the participants. Starting from an experience sharing participants will be invited to collectively debate on future challenges and to draft some conclusions.

We will also draw on the experience gained during the OpenForum Berlin “Expanding Citizenship in an Age of Migration”, where we already learned about the difficulties of interesting local and even migrant people for a European perspective.

We will also concentrate on shaping the opening discussion as controversial as possible in order to attract a local “non-Europeanized” audience.

Rota Jovem, our local partner, has been doing European projects for young people with deep conviction for sixteen years. Together with our guests, we intend to discuss the core of what we are and what we want to achieve.



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Phase 1

Thursday, 12 March 2009

- 18:00 Latest Arrival of Participants
- 19:00 Opening of "OpenForum 8 (Cascais)"
Panel discussion on the topic: "Are youth projects a good investment? "
Moderator: Rui Montez (Citizens of Europe and Rota Jovem)

Phase 2

Friday, 13 March 2009

- 09:00-11:00: Round 1:
"Experiences"
- 11:00-11:15: Coffee Break
- 11:15-13:15: Round 2:
"Challenges"
- 13:15-14:15: Lunch
Cascais - Discover an International Village
- 20:00 Dinner

Phase 3

Friday, 14 March 2009

- 10:00-12:00: Round 3:
"Conclusions"
- 12:00-14.00 Closer and Lunch
Departures