



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Y VOTE CONVENTION
SOFIA, BULGARIA

RESULTS BOOKLET



This event is part of the “My Europe, My Say” Project and is organized with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

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“My Europe, My Say!” is a European project, implemented by a consortium led by the World Organisation of the Scout Movement- Bureau Européen du Scoutisme (WOSM). The consortium includes AEGEE-Europe and 48 independent youth organisations and covers 30 countries. The project encompasses various aspects, all the way from capacity building tracks to large scale youth exchange events to interactive spaces of dialogue between young people and decision makers. This convention was one of the activities under the project, and received the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

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Table of Content

Words of Welcome	1
The Convention	2
Introduction to the EU institutions	3
Mental Health and its importance	3
Mind & Body: How to improve well-being?	5
EU-policies on Health and well-being	6
Simulation: How much do we need?	6
EU Youth Dialogue	7
Health in Society	7
Lifestyle reflection: Health and Me	8
Recommendations drafting	9
Recommendations	10
Results in numbers	12
Y Vote	13
AEGEE-Europe	13
How to Vote?	14

Dear reader,

In the context of 8 topics identified by the EU Youth Strategy for the period 2010-2018, every one of them is considered fundamental and important for fighting for youth rights, but Health and wellbeing is the only one that is vital.



The Erasmus plus programme has always had a strong focus on projects which promote sports and healthy lifestyle, but actual well-being has started to be a brought discussed topic in the past 2 years since the EU Youth Conference in Tallinn, Estonia, when the topic of Mental Health was identified as part of the new 11 Youth goals which are the focus of the new EU Youth Strategy 2019 - 2027.

Although the Mental Health topic was not the only one discussed during the Y Vote Convention in Sofia, in AEGEE, we are considering it as the next big issue for the young people and it is indeed visible that AEGEE as one of the biggest youth interdisciplinary organisation in Europe is more and more focusing on the healthy mentality of its members and the young people it represents. From a [Mental Health booklet](#) to training for trainers on the topic of Mental Health - AEGEE is getting more deeper into the topic.

In that sense, I am more than happy that my local had the chance to host the Y Vote Convention on Health and Well-being as our local organisations has been working on different projects and initiatives on the topic in the last few years and it was a great opportunity to experience the 4-day event and witness the drafting of the Recommendations on the issues connected with it for the years to come.



Elitsa Hadzhieva

Main Organiser of the Convention and Financial Manager of Y Vote

The Convention

As a project, we want to encourage young people to make informed choices at the European Parliament elections and learn more about topics that are relevant for young Europeans. Therefore we organise Conventions along the topics of the EU Youth Agenda where participants learn about the functioning of the EU and discuss how to become active citizens. In these events, the goal is to

1. Learn about the EU institutions with a strong focus on the European Parliament, voting in the European elections, one of the EU youth agenda topics and its role in the European Union, youth policy in the EU with the focus on Structured Dialogue.
2. Learn about the current work of the EU and its competences in the respective topic and discuss these issues with policy makers.
3. Draft Recommendations in the form of a Youth Agenda that will be brought to policy makers.



The Recommendations are later brought to our final conference in April 2019, which will happen in Torino, Italy. Together with other NGOs and participants from all over the continent, we will gather all Recommendations from all Conventions into one Youth Agenda for Europe.

In the following pages, you can find a wrap-up of our actions!

Introduction to the EU institutions

The European Union with its history and institutions is a complex system that we all heard about somehow, but we need to understand it a little bit in order to really discuss the influence. After all, the EU institutions are the European peoples' institutions.

In this session, participants learned about the how the European Union works throughout the four European Institutions connected with the decision-making process within the EU, how the law-making is working and the [division of competences](#) between the EU and the member states.

The workshop started with a short presentation on the theoretical part and continued with an activity on where the different policies stand into the division of the competences: exclusive, shared or supportive. It continued with a group discussion on what has the participants identified as a good or a bad thing in the European union and they listed as positive things like open borders, set standards in competition, roaming, stability and peace and educational opportunities. However, on the bad side it was stressed that there is a lack of information about EU activities, lack of democratic representation as the only institution elected by the EU citizens is the European parliament and unclear agenda on how the EU plans to act upon the climate change issue.

Mental Health and its importance

One aspect of health and well-being that is rarely talked about, is Mental Health. This workshop introduced the concept and its importance in our lives to the participants. The focus of the session was on the concept of Mental Health itself and not on individual Mental Health issues.

Firstly, the participants were brainstorming on what are their daily tasks, what are their goals for life and what is needed to achieve them. This made them aware that a good Mental Health is needed to live a fulfilling life and reach their personal goals.

Examples for daily activities

- Eat, cook healthy
- Sleep
- Work
- Study
- Walk the dog
- Social interaction
- Entertainment/relaxation time
- Sports & mediation
- Be positive & be happy

Examples for life goals

- Be happy
- Travel
- Be satisfied with life
- Develop yourself
- Found a family
- Have a fulfilling job, a career
- Reaching potential
- Have friends to share life
- Be healthy

To find out what aspects belong to Mental Health, participants were split into small groups and received cards with an aspect on it connected to Mental Health. These were for example emotional well-being, self-esteem, healthy work-life balance or coping methods (based on the [Mental Health Guide of AEGEE](#)). The participants explained the meaning and the connection of the aspect to Mental Health to each other and brainstormed on what Mental Health meant to them.



The participant's ideas were compared to the definition of the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Health and Mental Health:

"Mental Health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (...) Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." (WHO)

This definition seemed very abstract to the participants and the aims hard to reach. The subjectivity of a feeling of well-being was emphasized and visualised in the Mental Health continuum. According to it, the health state can reach from well-being over emotional concerns and problems to mental illness. Shortly, the concept of mental illness was defined as a permanent illness and distress with a changing perception over time and culture, which is the reason to not go into detail of this aspect. The constant changing state of subjective well-being was made concrete with examples from the daily tasks collected at the beginning.

Mind & Body: How to improve well-being?

Centuries ago, the wise Romans said: “Mens sana in corpore sano”, meaning “a healthy mind in a healthy body”. This session emphasised to keep the connection between body and mind well. Also, concrete strategies to improve well-being were discussed and practiced.

Through a small role-play scene with two people representing the mind and the body, it became clear that mind and body cannot be viewed and treated separately but only together. One example of this is when the body has not had enough sleep and is on the edge of getting sick while the mind does not allow the body to rest but just continues as usual with daily tasks. Many of the participants could relate to this. It followed a small input of specific examples of the connection e.g. that biochemical process or hormones can cause illnesses that look like a mental illness or that back pain often has no physical reason. Following such theoretical input, the body-mind connection was put into practice with a Yoga breathing exercise in which both mind and body focus on the same thing.



Apart from this example of the mindfulness concept, which aims at improving the quality of the moment and of life with a fully present mind, several self-care strategies were introduced: The RAIN model; Wise mind; Meditation; Flow; Resilience building; Self-confidence and Self-compassion ([Mental Health Guide](#)). The participants explained them to each other, looked into similarities and differences, how each connects mind and body and what seems doable for them personally. The session ended with a [progressive muscle relaxation](#) after Edmund Jacobson as another example to practice mindfulness and improve the connection of mind and body.

EU-policies on Health and well-being

Health is a broad topic that is connected to numerous actors that directly or indirectly influence health of individuals and of the society. To get a better understanding and in order to create a systematic overview, participants collected individuals, organizations, decision-makers and authorities that are linked to the topic and sorted them relating to their impact on the local, regional, national and international level.

After this introduction the focus was set on the European Union as actor in the field of Health. For this reason an overview about the different fields of EU action was presented to the participants, pointing out the efforts in the fields of Prevention, Sport, Nutrition, Sexual Health, Diseases and Health Threats, Cross-Border Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals; as well as the connection to related sectors, such as Environment, Work and Transport. In the following step the participants were divided into four expert group, each of them working on a specific field of action. The topics were:

1. Cross-Border Healthcare and eHealth
2. Prevention on Tobacco and Alcohol
3. Mental Health
4. Nutrition and Physical Activity

Each group designed a poster and prepared a presentation to introduce the topics to the other participants. After the presentations there were lively discussions on the different topics, including problems and prospects of initiatives, the framework of potential EU action and on the impact of culture on implementing these policies.

Simulation: How much do we need?

Money is always needed to put policies into practice. This simulation was created by the [Council of Europe](#) to give insights on the difficulty of decision making on budgets to reach health related goals defined in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). The task was to reallocate the global military budget to fill the funding gap for the goals number

- 2 - no hunger
- 3 - good health
- 4 - quality education
- 6 - clean water and sanitation

In small groups the participants had to decide how much budget should be allocated for the four mentioned goals, while keeping in mind that there are another 13 goals to fund. The groups reported how much they would spent on which goal. After the reporting, they were informed that firstly the [Overseas Development Institute](#) predicted a comparatively low budget for each goal and secondly, that their overall budget was equal to the worldwide military spending in 2014 (about \$1776 billion).

A discussion followed on the need of a military budget compared to reaching the SDGs and ensuring human rights for everyone. Also, it became clear that a prioritisation of the SDGs is not easy to make. It was also assumed the the predicted figures might not be accurate for real spending needed. There was also a reflection on the decision making process in the group. In general, it was very difficult for the participants to cope with a very high budget like that, which is probably true for everyone including politicians.

EU Youth Dialogue

Aiming at the better understanding of how the topic of the Convention and drafting Recommendations to policy-makers is related, a session on the EU Youth Dialogue (previously Structured Dialogue), was delivered.

The Treaty of the European Union explicitly says that young people should participate in democratic processes, and therefore the Structured Dialogue was created as one of the key actions of the Erasmus+ programme. Our session started with a theoretical part of how the Structured Dialogue process was created, how it changed to the EU Youth dialogue. Furthermore, we elaborated on the EU Youth strategy, its main objectives for the next years to come and how the European Union is supporting its member-states in competences as Education, Vocational training, Youth and Sports.

The session ended with a presentation of the already drafted Recommendations during the previous six thematic Y Vote Conventions and a short explanation on why their Recommendations are actually important.

Health in Society

Individual health problems have an effect on the society, and the society affect how individuals deal with their health. The workshop created awareness on this connection and gave an opportunity to reflect on habits, structures and what policies could be implemented to improve the overall health.

The session started with an overview of opinions and arguments on societal health related issues. For that participants had to position themselves on a line sorted by whether they agree or disagree, and explain why they are standing at that place for the following statements:

- People who are only fairly ill should come to work.
- How much is health and well-being connected with social inequality in your country?
- How are the norms in your country: is it easy to talk about Mental Health problems or not?
- Who should pay the costs of medical treatments: the society or the individual?

Following the exercise, there was a brainstorming on different health problems arising at societal level. On the one hand, many disease-related problems were mentioned, such as obesity, cancer, diabetes, dementia or antibiotic resistance. On the other hand, there seem to be structural issues such as underemployment of medical staff, long waiting lists, medicine prices, organ transplantation or insurances.

One of the problems was chosen as a start for a [fishbowl discussion](#). In this discussion style, two circles are made: a big outer one and an inner one with four places. Only the people in the inner circle are allowed to speak up, but people can change from the outer to the inner circle. A lively debate developed on the question: "Over 51% of the EU population ([EC](#)) was overweight in 2014. Being overweight causes many other health problems. What is the impact on society and how can this problem be tackled or the causes be reduced?". Many solutions from improving education to direct measures such as labelling food for healthiness were mentioned in the discussion.



Another concrete policy direction was discussed: “How can health for all be promoted in the EU and the equal access to health care be assured by policy measures?”. The ideas developed during it were laying the basis for the Recommendations drafted afterwards. The participants very much liked fishbowl discussion and also took it as an example of participation in society.

Lifestyle reflection: Health and Me

During the Convention, several actions were implemented to try out ways for a healthy lifestyle. On the last day followed a reflection of them as well as take-home ideas how to implement them in the daily life of the participants.

1. Sports activities were underlined during the programme. In the morning, there was a workout session offered before breakfast which included running to a nearby park and some exercises.
2. During one of the breaks a Yoga session was offered. It consisted of breathing exercise, sun salutation and several stretching exercises especially useful after a long sitting period.
3. The hostel we were staying at offered vegan dinner and a breakfast buffet with vegetables and fruit. Also in the coffee breaks fruits were offered; the participants would have even liked more.

The sport activities were very welcomed by participants and inspired them to include some of them in their lives back home. In the reflection session, the participants shared very different eating habits and were able to reflect what was good for them and what not, e.g. eating with family and friends besides cooking yourself was mentioned to have a positive impact on well-being.

Recommendations drafting

To draft Recommendations, a brainstorming of ideas was done. The ideas were grouped together, and participants were free to choose which field to work on and drafted a first version in the groups that formed.

All groups were able to give feedback to each other which was incorporated in the original statement before discussing and finalising them with the whole group again.



Recommendations

Health and well-being have a direct and very visible impact on everyday life. It became visible during the Convention on Health & Well-Being, that especially Mental Health is not yet enough in the focus of policies and talked about in societies. The various existing policy measures concerning health were discussed and it was made clear that the EU already tackles many issues such as tobacco or nutrition. Still, the discussions underlined that there are many health issues to solve still, such as obesity or cardiovascular diseases.

Therefore we, the participants of the Y Vote Convention about Health & Well-being, propose the following Recommendations:

Sports

We strongly suggest the creation of public sport spaces in- and outdoors, in order to offer free and easy access to physical activities to a large scale of the population and to promote these opportunities.

We recommend to financially support educational institutions and companies that are offering sports activities and supporting human powered transportation.

Nutrition

We strongly recommend implementing a standardized food traffic light system by 2025, that informs about how healthy a food product is. Additionally, the EU should actively inform their citizens about this labelling via different means.

Sexual Health

We strongly encourage implementing a funding scheme for NGOs, educational institutions and other relevant actors on different levels for projects concerning sexual health education, starting by 2020.

The proposed education should favourably be containing social media outlets to increase awareness of the following topics sexual consent, gender equality, LGBTQI+ and their equality in society, patient rights and availability of anonymous STD-testing and contraception and other sexual stigmas.

Mental Health

We strongly encourage the European Union to support the member-states in the topic of mental health as a part of the formal and non-formal education.

In the field of formal education, we suggest regular meetings with psychologists and training for teachers in primary and secondary schools regarding mental health. In the field of non-formal education, we suggest more programmes related to the topic of mental health.

Transport

We encourage the EU to develop a programme aimed at progressively implementing more car-free zones across European cities while promoting human-powered transportation, creating greener public spaces and improving infrastructure towards accessibility for all.

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Results in numbers

26

Participants

4

Days

17

Different nationalities

21

Years old on average

41%

is the average increase in knowledge
about the EU Institutions.

46%

Members of AEGEE

80%

Have had the chance to vote

10%

Of these people did vote

More than 90% of participants...

...(strongly) agree that participation is important and can change outcomes of political decisions.

...(strongly) agree that the political institutions are of importance.

...(strongly) agree that they gained new knowledge about the EU and its institutions due to the workshops.

...(strongly) agree that they gained new knowledge on Health & Well-Being.

...(strongly) agree that the topic of Health & Well-Being is of importance on an individual and societal level.

...(strongly) agree that they are motivated to increase their participation.

...think that active participation of citizens is important or even mandatory.

Y Vote

Y Vote is a Europe wide campaign designed to encourage young citizens to make informed choices in the European Parliament elections 2019. This will be reached by improving and developing the knowledge and skills of young people about the elections and European institutions. Y Vote aims at empowering and motivating young people to participate in society and become involved in democratic processes. These actions will tackle the current low understanding of and information on European institutions, mistrust and apathy and the low voter turnout, especially among young people. The project has previously been organised for the 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections.

Y Vote is AEGEE-Europe project which is supported by various [partners](#), such as

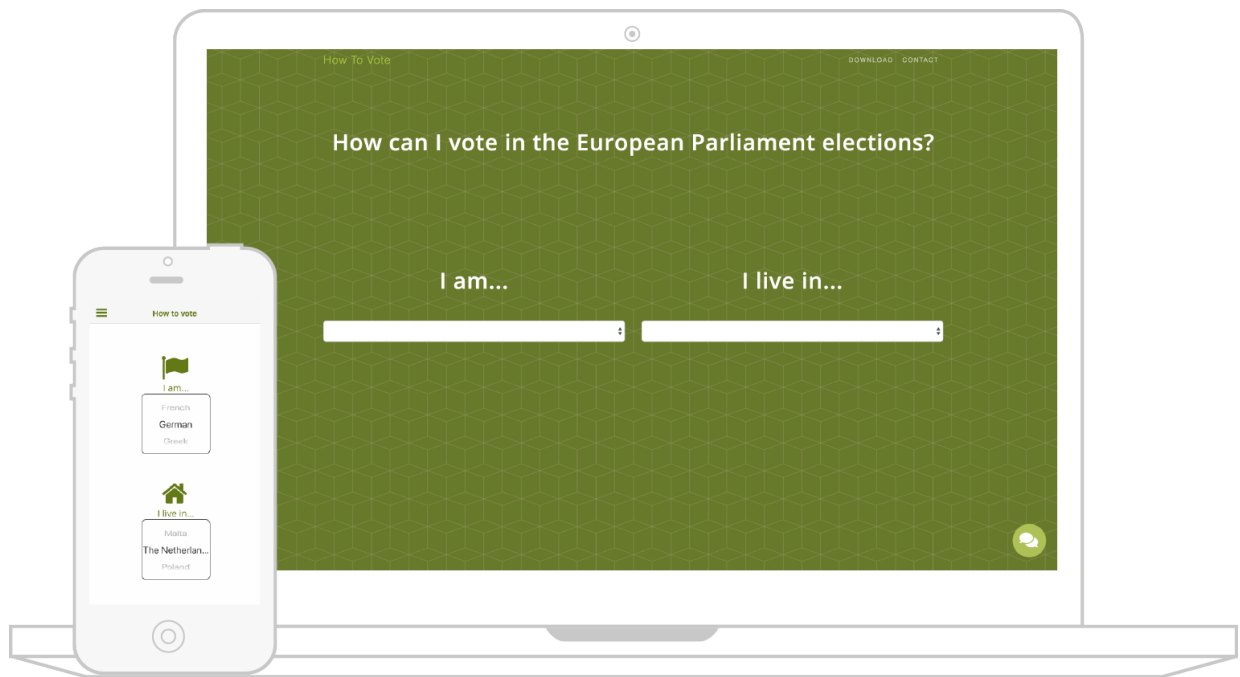
- EDUOpinions
- The European Youth Forum (YFJ)
- Young European Federalists (JEF)
- Erasmus Student Network (ESN)
- European Movement International (EMI)
- This Time I'm Voting – The official campaign of the European Parliament
- The European Parliament
- POLIS 180
- #MEGACampaign by the European Civic Forum
- Eyes on Europe
- World Organisation of the Scout Movement
- EU40

www.yvote.eu

AEGEE-Europe

Founded in 1985, the European Students' Forum, "Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe", is now one of the largest interdisciplinary student associations of the continent. AEGEE strives for a democratic, diverse and borderless Europe, which is socially, economically and politically integrated, and values the participation of young people in its construction and development. AEGEE empowers students and young people in Europe to take an active role in society. It creates a space for dialogue and learning opportunities as well as acts as their representative towards decision-makers. Moreover, AEGEE strengthens mutual understanding and brings Europe closer to young people.

www.aegee.org



I'm an Italian living in Brussels, how do I vote?

This question – or at least in a similar way – will come to the minds of many European Union citizens. The root of the problem is that every member state sets their own regulations for the elections and therefore the conditions vary immensely.

We believe that **voting should be easy.**

For this reason, we have created the “How to Vote” app. By choosing your nationality and country of residence, you will get an overview of the specific regulations you will face for the upcoming elections. Who is eligible to vote? How does the registration process work? What ways of voting from abroad do you have? If you decide to vote in your country of residence, which criteria do you need to fulfil?

Our app is now available on any device. It can either be downloaded for iOS in the App Store, for Android in the Play Store or accessed online at

www.howtovote.eu



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