



YOUNG LEADERS FORUM<sup>icd</sup>



# Young Cultural Diplomacy A Bi-Annual Journal

Theme: "Visions on the Future of Europe"  
(June 2013)





# Young Cultural Diplomacy

“Visions on the Future of Europe” (June 2013)

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## Introduction

“Young Cultural Diplomacy” is a bi-annual journal focused on topical issues affecting the global youth. The Journal was launched in June 2013 with the first issue entitled “Visions on the Future of Europe,” primarily concentrating on the outlook for Europe in light of the Euro Crisis. Contributors to “Young Cultural Diplomacy” are young professionals who have had the chance to experience the multifaceted European environment through either Study Abroad or Exchange Programs, or based on their various career choices. With a collection of articles and reviews, the Journal’s contributors intend to provide different perspectives on the aspects of the current situation of Europe based on their own experiences and within the realm of Cultural Diplomacy. This initiative represents an innovative and interesting tool in approaching various possible solutions to the current situation.

The intention of “Young Cultural Diplomacy” is to present proactive and positive perspectives on a number of complex and salient issues that have emerged in the 21st Century and are now currently affecting the youth of the world while simultaneously highlighting the beneficial impact of Cultural Diplomacy in political, social and economic spheres.

With this collection of articles and reviews, we intend to analyze, through the lens of cultural diplomacy and our experience in this field, a variety of pressing issues that are currently affecting the European continent. Topics to be addressed include; the question of identity and whether countries can hold on to their national, cultural heritage whilst being “united in diversity”, the role of culture and cultural institutions in protecting national economies from further injury, the responsibility of the globe’s main players in steering smaller or weaker nations towards prosperity, the future of the European youth and youth unemployment, and also the debate on quotas implemented within Europe’s audio-visual industries.

The term “Lost Generation” is being used more and more frequently across Europe when talking about the continent’s youth and it is our intention to present proactive and positive perspectives on the number of problems which have emerged during this prolonged period of economic downturn in Europe by highlighting the beneficial impact that cultural diplomacy can have in our political, social and economic spheres.



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## Can Cultural Diplomacy Save Europe?

By Giovanni Tonutti



Years have gone by since the start of what has been named as the Euro Crisis and it is now clear how the consequences of such a dramatic and unprecedented financial and economic downturns are far from be limited to this two aspects of our complex society. The social scenario in many European countries has drastically changed with an increasing number of people losing their jobs and seeing their incomes reduced. Domestic political tensions arose, projecting unconventional parties and movements at the highest positions in electoral polls and surveys.

Together with a strong critique of the policies of the local governments and with a call for change of the political elites in their countries, these movements are also associated by a populist approach towards the European Union and its dynamics. The Commission, the European Central Bank and foreign governments have become the scapegoats in this mounting rhetoric of protest and dissent in each country's political arena. Feelings of resentment and hostility have been constantly growing among Italian, Spanish and Greek voters, who see the so called virtuous countries as taking advantage of the relatively lower value of the Euro or simply not doing enough in order to rescue the union's survival. On the other hand, these very same countries are perceived by many Dutch, German and Finish voters as not worthy of rescue due to their deeply rooted corruption and inefficiency of their administrative systems. It is therefore easy to understand how as a consequence of this populist and anti-European tendency, stereotypes have re-emerged and with them an arising level of tensions among the people of Europe. Thus Italy, Greece and Spain are suffering from the crisis because of their very own Mediterranean laid-back essence, whereas Germany, the



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Netherlands and Finland are reluctant to engage in further financial commitments to the EU due to their Nordic rigidity and inflexibility. This is the general narrative adopted by different European media in the coverage of the current crisis and this is how great portions of the public opinion perceived the situation.

That friendly atmosphere of acquaintance, built by the national governments since the launch of the European project in 1957 and gradually fostered by the numerous economic and political agreements established along the way, is now under a serious threat. In my opinion even more serious than what is generally perceived. This crisis is in fact undermining not only the economic stability of the continent, but, most importantly, the pre-requisite for the existence of the union itself; that sense of affinity among the population that allowed the European project to take off. A change of direction by the European leaders is needed now more than ever in order to steer European public opinions away from the perilous waters of grim nationalism and populism. Leaders of all the members' states are now called to commit to a long-term political vision for Europe that necessarily ought to look far beyond the closest legislative or European election. In this perspective, the long-term approach represent the determinant factor not only for the future

success of Europe and its people on a global level, but for the survival of the European project itself. As mentioned above, the threats for the existence of the EU are now numerous and of different kinds. They involve the instability of the European financial system, the general loss of economic and productive competitiveness and most importantly they entail a widespread sense of disaffection, resentment and hatred of national voters towards regional institutions and foreign agencies and governments. All together, these factors highlight how this crisis is systematic rather than a mere and cyclical economic and financial downturn. Europe as it stands now does not appear sustainable. And sustainability, which represents (or at least should) the ultimate sole purpose of any organic society, cannot be achieved without the foresight of the whole the political and economic elite of the continent.

Future developments and scenarios of Europe represent some of the most heartily felt issues which the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy has been observing and focusing on in the past years . This is not only due to our support and believe in the European project as an irreversible and as the only feasible path for the future of the continent, but also for our awareness of the uniqueness of the European Union as a living product of



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cultural diplomacy in practice. If we are to use President Costantinescu’s definition of cultural diplomacy as the a course of actions, which are based on and utilize the exchange of ideas, values, traditions and other aspects of culture or identity, whether to strengthen relationships or enhance socio-cultural cooperation, then it easily identifiable the role that European institutions have so far played in this direction. Yet it now appears that the efforts in engaging in such practices has been, if not abandoned, at least neglected and marginalized by the majority of European institutions and agencies. The exchange of ideas, values and cultural aspects is the direct responsible of the spreading out of the foundation of a Europhile public opinion. Thus in our view, Cultural diplomacy represents one of the very few and precious tools that Europe detains in order to reach the topos of sustainability which we are all called to strive for.

The answer to the question on the modus operandi of such approach remains the same: foresighted policies to be carried out regardless the trends reported by polls and upcoming elections. The first major outcomes will be noticeable only in the long run and this therefore implies a total support and commitment to such cause. It is about opening Europe to its citizens, it is bringing Europe in every town of the continent and not just vice-versa, it is about highlighting the numerous shared

values of our European identities as well as the huge numbers of peculiarities that make our continent unique. Initiatives such as the institutions of the European Capitals of Culture should be potentiated as they represent unique opportunities for a grassroots approach to cultural diplomacy conciliating in the best way possible the dichotomy of “United in diversity”, often perceived as unsolvable.

The Erasmus Program as well represents a projects whose results are under the eyes of each of us: the creation of a European network of like minded students who have concretely experienced the implications of a United Europe and had the chance to benefit from it by enriching their academic as well as personal background. Europe and its leaders should now find the courage not only to maintain these initiatives alive, seeing the proposals of cuts to the funding that have been put forward recently, but also to encompass them within the other priorities measures for the re-launch of Europe. This is a commitment that Europe cannot prescind from and which cannot be delayed any longer for the sake European project itself.



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## Our European Dreams

*A documentary capturing Young Visions on the Future of Europe*

By Lucie Gil



Do you have a European dream? For sure Valentin Chaput does. If you ask him where he comes from, he will tell you that he is “a European born in France”. In spring and summer 2011, this recent graduate of Sciences Po Paris and confirmed pro-European, decided to pursue his own European dream by realizing a unique and original project. He went through the 27 member countries of the European Union (EU). He also visited Croatia, which will soon enter the regional organization, and Turkey, which has still and again quite a complex relationship with the EU. Traveling mostly by train and using couch-surfing, he met more than 150 young Europeans

to exchange with them on their vision of Europe and the EU construction, their perspective for the future in that regard, and their potential European dream. The result is a 183-minutes movie, compiling an amazing number of testimonies and thoughts about Europe. At the same time, Valentin Chaput created a website (<http://myeuropeandream.eu/>) on which you can find the whole project’s evolution, as well as information and views on the European construction. This is also a platform on which you can discuss and exchange materials such as photos, articles, videos, and music.

In that extent, the initiative could definitely be seen as one of Cultural Diplomacy in practice, bringing young people from all over Europe together. Valentin Chaput would then probably be a perfect cultural diplomat, seeking to promote and share as more as possible the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the continent. Diversity is the key point as to refer to the European Union’s motto: “Unity in diversity”. This value seems to be at the very heart of the emergence of a European identity, together with what Valentin Chaput calls “humanist political values”. According to him, “it appears that the European identity is first defined by an adherence – sometimes unconscious – to humanist political values”. “It is not an identity you are born



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with. It is an identity you have to adopt” adds Máté, one of the interviewees. Thus, if it is true that there is still a long way to go before Benedict Anderson’s “imaginary community” comes to a substantial existence at the European level, I would argue that the process is well in progress.

When asked about his motivations when he decided to set up myEuropeanDream.eu, Valentin Chaput explains that “this movie comes from the intimate conviction that younger generations living Europe in their day-to-day life now have the responsibility to redefine the European project, help solve its problems, redefine its borders and think of the common identity that gather them to bring back the European political dream”. The movie opened with Liliana’s statement: “I was really positive about Europe but as the years go by, I am not so optimistic”. The financial crisis, the lack of solidarity, the absence of a real economic union, immigration, the increase in populist and extreme right ideologies, global warming... Many areas of concerns are emphasized by the interviewees. Most of all, “we don’t know what we are struggling for” says Sarantis, we lack of a vision for the future, and we do not know where we are going. However, if the movie acknowledges that we must be worried, it also suggests that we have the capacity to define and recreate our own vision about Europe.

A much more optimistic list can then be opposed to the one above: peace, democracy, human rights, freedom, rule of law, stability... These are some of the humanist values we were talking about. They founded the dream of the European political project’s fathers, among them

Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann. Hearing the young voices of the movie, we can say that this very same dream is still alive inside EU member states and quite attractive for a number of those who are not yet part of the organization. The European project has not evolved as many of its citizens, especially among the popular and middle classes, wished. The “no” at the referendum of 2005, in France and the Netherlands, was a bitter reminder of that fact to the EU technocrats. Fair enough. But let’s not forget the greatest accomplishment: though the EU is now stuck in austerity measures and a number of national considerations, it brought us lasting peace and security for the first time in history. We can still discuss if the attribution of the last Nobel Peace prize to the EU was justified, I personally firmly believe that it was very welcome in that regard.

After watching the whole piece, I came to the conclusion that we definitely have reasons to be optimistic and to believe in our European dreams. Seeing all these people, from my generation, reflecting together about the European project is a truly hopeful sight. We may be the “generation crisis”, entering the labor market at a time of unprecedented economic turmoil, but we are also the “generation EU”, the “new Erasmus-generation” as Charlotte says in the movie, the one that was born and raised with the Maastricht treaty and the very first one of fully European citizens. Since its starting point, the European project has progressed through successive crises; let’s seize the opportunity to progress one more time. Let’s dream about Europe.



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## Germany voted as the Most Popular Country in the World

*BBC Global Poll Highlights the Success of German Cultural Diplomacy: an Analysis of the Political and Historical Reasons*

By Alexander Rogala

In May 2013, the BBC World Service released the findings of its annual Country Ratings Poll, in which more than 26,000 people around the world were asked about their perceptions of 16 of the biggest players (plus the EU) in global international relations. Perhaps both somewhat surprisingly and unsurprisingly, Germany came out on top as “the most popular country in the world” with a 59% “mainly positive” rating and a 15% “mostly negative” rating. Though Germany’s prominent position as an economic powerhouse and influential political actor cannot be lightly dismissed, the efficacy of Germany’s modest internationalism may not prove tenable after the exigent pressures to lead in a post-unipolar world accrue and the long lived vision of power without entangling involvement dissipates.

Germany’s ascension was not fortuitous. The conditions set forth during the Potsdam Conference in 1945 consisted of war reparations to be paid to the Allies and a dismantling of the German military industry. The atrocities of World War II left an indelible mark on younger generations, spawning a resolve to rectify the injustices of the world through institutional cooperation and sound economic interdependence as they grappled with profounder questions of memory, identity, and collective guilt. Bereft of the capability—philosophically,

politically, and legally—of employing military forces abroad, Germans of the 20th century found softer means of expressing their interests around the world. Under the enveloping protection of the American military industrial complex, Germany could afford to focus on projects to ameliorate a damaged public perception by developing amiable bi- and multi-lateral relations and building networks of exchange with regional neighbors.

Thought leaders and policy makers rethought the idea of a global superpower. Instead of attempting the forbidden but also undesired path of amassing physical military might, Germany turned toward soft power through cultural diplomacy—an endeavor cheaper, more enduring, and more ideologically consistent with contemporary German values. Cultural diplomacy thus became a central and primary tool in German foreign policy.

By establishing a number of governmental institutions and fostering the growth of private organizations in cultural affairs, Germany sought to engage intimately with the world. Not only did entities with hefty budgets like the Goethe Institute and DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) export the German language and cultivate the allure of heavily subsidized German higher education institutions; prescient



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political and social actors revamped the entire societal framework to incentivize cultural exchange abroad as well. The education system, for example, sends about 30,000 students a year between the ages of 15 and 17 to spend up to a year in a foreign high school to focus on developing language skills—an invaluable asset for a modern economy. Furthermore, after graduating high school at the age of 19 (soon to be changed to 18 in some German states), a staggering number of German youth embark for a year to work and travel through a variety of private and public programs, with destinations ranging from Australia to South America. These deliberately conceived and constructed mechanisms within German civil society afford thousands of young Germans the ability to grow and learn through interaction with a diverse set of cultures and subsequently effect abroad a greater understanding of German culture and values.

Germany’s laudable efforts to enhance peaceful political and economic interdependence through cultural exchange are certainly partially responsible for its position in the BBC ranking. What is palpably apparent to much of the world in 2013 is the icon of Germany as a non-interventionist economic powerhouse with a comfortable and stable standard of living. Though animosity in southern Europe stirs and swells responsively to calls for fiscal austerity and further institutional integration in the European Union, scours of foreigners continue to flock to Germany, as evidenced by the million that came to work in 1012, the greatest number since 1995. Unlike China, whose anti-democratic

tendencies blight attempts to entice newcomers, and the United States, whose history of military interventionism has deeply scarred its public image, Germany has thus far refrained from messy international entanglement and achieved a spot on “the world’s most beloved”.

But what is not certain is whether an economically prospering country purporting liberal values and adherence to human rights can maintain an effectively passive and deferent political position toward other actors around the globe who continually infringe on democratic rights and violate international norms with regard to human rights. Due Germany’s rapid growth and sudden successes in the past five to ten years, pressure has increased from all sides—a certain responsibility is expected from the world’s giants to do more than simply espouse a contemporary liberalism of rights. As the financial and military capabilities of the United States slowly and agonizingly erode, a world in philosophical and political distraught searches uninspired for someone to address the deplorable calamities in Kosovo, Rwanda, and Syria. Germany can’t, won’t, and shouldn’t ever be the same blundering superpower that the United States has been since the dawn of the Cold War. But perhaps it is because of its newfound esteem that Germany is primed to do something—something that can at least nudge our world in the right direction. To be at the top of the list holds both honor and an implicit obligations; to repent entrenched and intransigent behind the veil of history is not enough. Perhaps dropping down is both necessity and consequence.



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## Culture and Creative Industries to relaunch Economic Growth

*A Review of the First Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy in Italy*

By Lisa Labath



What role can culture and cultural industries play in re-launching European states economies? How can the international law and international institutions safeguards the our cultural heritage? To what extend does cultural diplomacy represent an effective tool for international cooperation and conflict prevention?

The First International on Cultural Diplomacy in Italy tried to answer some of the questions, with a particular focus on the situation in the “Bel Paese”. From June 12th to 14th, the beautiful city of Rome provided the landscape for an intense forum of discussion that saw the participation of a number of prominent

speakers from the field of politics, diplomacy, arts and culture. The great cultural contributions of Italy for centuries in the fields of the arts, music, cinema, and cuisine have made the country a cultural icon for many states worldwide, and the perfect setting for a conference on culture and diplomacy. The International Symposium outlined Italy’s innovative practices of Cultural Diplomacy, including the challenges and successes that the nation has encountered. In addition, the symposium underlined practices that can effectively strengthen relations between Northern and Southern Europe. It presented, explored and analysed Italy’s historic and current foreign relations, and emphasised the ways in which the country has directly and indirectly used Cultural Diplomacy as a tool to improve its international standing and its relations with other countries; a tool that is of very high importance especially in these times of European crisis.

Examples of cultural diplomacy from the public sector, private sector and civil society were reviewed, with a particular emphasis on the ability of successful Cultural Diplomacy practices to ameliorate relations between Northern and Southern Europe in order to overcome the current crisis and to alleviate the long-standing Italian North-South divide. The preservation of Italian



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cultural heritage and the issues of illegal art-trafficking were also dealt with, thanks to the presence and contribution of art critic Prof. Dr. Achille Bonito Oliva and Dr. Edouard Planche, Program Specialist and Cultural Property Expert from UNESCO.

The conference, co-organised by the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy and the Società Dante Alighieri, was hosted by the President of the ICD, Former Deputy Prime Minister of Italy and Former Mayor of Rome and, Francesco Rutelli. After the welcome dinner on Wednesday evening featuring the introductory remarks made by Prime Minister Enrico Letta, Minister of Foreign Affairs Emma Bonino, and Bruno Bottai, the President of the Società Dante Alighieri, the first session took place on June 13th in a frescos-decorated conference room of the Italian Senate. The debate and discussion about the Italian vast artistic and cultural heritage, titled “The Power of Culture for Communication, International Cooperation and Peace” was the subject of an extremely interesting and lively debate, attended by several of Italy’s dominant political figures. Alongside Massimo Bray, Minister of Cultural Heritage and Tourism, and Gaetano Quagliariello, Minister for Constitutional Reforms, the panel of speakers was completed by the President of the “Biennale di Venezia” Paolo Baratto, the Director and Founder of the ICD, Mark Donfried and by Massimiliano Fuksas, a world-renowned architect, who enriched and broadened the debate with his inspiring cultural visions on Italy and the rest of the world.

For the second session of the conference on June 13th the audience moved to the

Società Dante Alighieri, in the beautiful Palazzo Firenze few meters away from the Parliament House. The session on “Cultural Heritage, Italian Language, Creative Industries: Italian Distinctive Features in the World” was opened by the Former Mayor of Rome Francesco Rutelli, and it unfolded through the speeches of Giovanna Melandri, president of MAXXI Museum, art critic Achille Bonito Oliva, Gianni Puglisi, president of the UNESCO National Italian Commission, Paolo Peluffo, Vice President of the Società Dante Alighieri and Francesco Aloisi de Larderel. Adele Chatfield-Taylor, CEO of the American Academy in Rome, informed the public about the “Rome Prize” that is awarded each year to a group of promising young artists and academics, offering a year of free board and working space in Rome for the winner.

At the end of the extensive two days of lectures and discussions, concluding remarks were made by President Rutelli on the rooftop of the Traianus Market’s Museum, where the group of participants and speakers was joined also by the former Minister of Education Prof. Profumo. As one of the founding member states of the European Union, Italy has traditionally served the role of a key mediator in political and economic negotiations regarding EU policies. The importance of lasting investments in culture and Cultural Diplomacy was once more stressed. Now more than ever, in the context of the urgent current crises in the European Union, Italy has been called upon once again to take on this role of a key mediator, a concluding remark on which all of the speakers and participants agreed.



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## Protectionist Quota in the European Broadcasting System

*An Analysis of the EU Legislation regulating Audiovisual Products*

By Sophie Ogden



In our day-to-day life, visual entertainment plays a large role. Add to this a growing interdependent world where everybody can share information in record time. The audio-visual industry (television, radio diffusion and cinema) constitutes an important part to the cultural landscape of Europe and it has a great impact on the European political, social and economic spheres. This has led the European Union to slowly intervene in this area by setting some quotas. Normally, when thinking of quotas in the audio-visual world, one would be thinking of France (the father of protectionist policies) and not of the EU.

Unsurprisingly, it all started with the pressure exercised by the French cinema lobbyists on the government. In the end

of the 60's, they were worried about the declining audience in cinemas and the growing success of American movies. This problem did not only affect France but also some other European countries like the UK. Back then the French national control office imposed a quota of minimum 50% of French movies within the national broadcasting system. In the 80's with the emergence of commercial TV, the issue of quotas became essential. Broadened to all kind of audio-visual artworks, the issue shifted, thanks to French lobbying, to the European community level. In the meanwhile, the introduction of satellites allowed information and programs to circulate without borders. The first step taken by the European Commission thus consisted on the release of “the Green paper on the establishment of the common market for broadcasting, especially by satellite and cable” in 1984. It had no legal effect but laid the foundation for further action. In 1989 thus, the first directive “Television without frontiers” was adopted. This directive imposed a minimum quota of European programmes within the member states broadcasting systems. Such programmes include for instance telefilms, documentaries, cartoons which have a European production and edition. However, sports events, commercials, news, teleshopping and games were excluded from the



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directive. To be classified as European, the programs must match a number of criteria such as the language, the setting, the nationality of authors and workers, etc. It also intended to create more competition within Europe and to generate a network of exchange of artworks between different TV entourages. With the years, the legislation improved and adapted itself to new kind of shows and technologies that invaded the IT market. Though the core rationale of the legislation was preserved, in 2007 a very big change was adopted. With the Audio-visual Media Services (later updated in 2010), a distinction was made between linear services and non-linear services. For instance non-linear audio-visual providers must offer a relatively large choice of European products.

Since the debate was initiated at the European level, a struggle emerged between proponents of national sovereignty in controlling their audio-visual, the emergence of commercial tv and the erasing of borders in the audio-visual field. But the question bared all its sense: the audio-visual industry is part of the common market and is a cultural service producing cultural goods that can be exchanged. Over time, it had been said by numerous medias themselves that quotas saved the European audio-visual industry. Indeed European programs are generally more expensive for TV channels than their American counterpart and without a quota system would have not survived the fierce law of competitiveness. A good example of what this imposition brought

is the German show “Derrick”. At first it was solely diffused in order to meet the quotas. However the show encountered a big success in many countries pushing the productions of following seasons and generating a general positive spillover effect in the German Television industry. Alongside the regulation of the broadcasts, the European Commission paper focuses also on the financing and support of the audio-visual sector, which for a matter of brevity matters we will not examine in the article.

Certainly, audio-visual production lies within that category of goods that can be simplistically defined as art and art has always represented one of the principles vehicles for cultural diplomacy and intercultural dialogue. By implementing such protectionist policies, often so harshly and indiscriminately criticised, the EU not only allowed the survival of many national audio-visual industries, but also provided its citizenship with the opportunity to discover the multifaceted cultural reality of the continent. This process is one piece of the puzzle that contributes to the European integration and to the creation of a European identity. With this idea the so-called “Eurocrats” have put a lot of expectations in the audio-visual industry to construct a European consciousness. Much more can still be done, especially if we consider the funding and incentives given to our audio-visual, to help our creative industries not only to survive against the global competition but to become a driving force of our economic, social and cultural development.



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## Are we a Lost Generation?

*An Opinion on the Current Youth Unemployment Issue*

By Dante Kotsinas



European Union, April 2013: within the affluent group of countries in The Old Continent, approximately 5.627.000 young people are recorded as unemployed—a figure that equals, more or less, the sum of the populations of Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia and Malta . Some might say that this is populist and dramatic as a comment. Nonetheless, drama – i.e.- theatre was established in order to educate and rouse the peoples. Thus allow me the dramatic comment on the unacceptable dramatic fact that the hordes of unemployed in the EU can fill nine of its countries.

Nevertheless, after years of crisis, economic recession and austerity measures throughout Europe, all the leaders of our continental chessboard seem to be united in an attempt to tackle the soaring youth unemployment rates.

President François Hollande has been making, the past few weeks, deep touching announcements regarding a lost generation of Europeans, a generation “scared” and “on hold”. Other European officials like Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, and Ursula von der Leyen, Germany’s Minister of Labour, have been making similar comments and have announced measures like special credit lines for small- and medium-sized businesses from the European Investment Bank which aim at fighting the youth unemployment issue. The “Youth Guarantee” project, also promises that every European under 25 will have a job, training or further education. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced a summit on youth unemployment which will take place in July with the participation of all the EU labour ministers.

All these proposals and announcements that have recently been said, after years of imposed suffocating austerity measures in countries like Portugal,



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Greece, Ireland, Cyprus, Spain, Italy and not only: measures that have led to deep recession, disinvestment and thus, arguably, to unemployment. Debates over the implementations of such measures are now igniting the international economic and political arena, generating numerous disputes between some of the major international institutions such as the European Commissions, the European Central Bank and the IMF. The latter, moreover, lately admitted a number of mistakes in the econometric model which supported the harsh cuts imposed to the Greek public sector. But it is clear to almost everybody that those “experiments” were one of the major factors, if not the greatest factor, in generating these unprecedentedly high youth unemployment rates across Europe; 11% in the EU, 26,5% in France, 26,6 in Ireland, 40,5% in Italy, 42,5% in Portugal, 56,4% in Spain and the outrageous 62,5% in Greece.

Though I personally am in favour of a more united Europe, I still have my reservations. I am apprehensive and naturally distrusting of the policy makers and institutions that helped contribute to the crisis, though they are now fervently trying to rescue us from it. Since the Lehman Brothers collapse, there has been somewhat of a domino effect throughout the rest of the world. I propose that we take a different approach to economic rehabilitation. Instead of trying to “rebuild” the system that brought on this crisis, we should consider trying to forge a new, more autonomous approach so that we don’t have to accept the “flexible” working schemes, low paid jobs,

and unpaid placements that feel imposed.

This isn’t about northern vs. southern Europe or any schism in the European Union. The young people of all countries suffer from similar, if not the same, issues and should work together to find common solutions ourselves. We should question the implemented policies that drove us into the crisis and think about how we can replace them with ones more equitable. Our youth and imagination are some of our best assets. Our generation has successful entrepreneurs, is more educated than any previous generation, and is more politically engaged. I am confident we can create something new and that the work of young people is the key to bringing about a better Europe.



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