Your Europe Your Say
Brussels, 18-20 April 2013
Final Report and Evaluation
# Table of Contents

1. Context ................................................................................................................................................................. 1

2. Prior to the Your Europe Your Say event ..................................................................................................................... 2
   2.1. Background .......................................................................................................................................................... 2
   2.2. Members visits to schools ..................................................................................................................................... 2
   2.3. Preparation by the schools ................................................................................................................................... 2

3. The Your Europe Your Say event ............................................................................................................................... 4
   3.1. The welcome address ........................................................................................................................................... 4
   3.2. The welcome activity ............................................................................................................................................ 4
   3.3. Evaluation of the welcome activity ....................................................................................................................... 4
   3.4. The workshop on the 15 political priorities for EESC New Presidency’s programme ........................................ 5
   3.5. The plenary session .............................................................................................................................................. 6

4. Dinner and dance event ............................................................................................................................................... 8
   4.1. Venue ................................................................................................................................................................. 8
   4.2. Catering ............................................................................................................................................................. 8
   4.3. Salsa and zumba class .......................................................................................................................................... 9
   4.4. DJ ......................................................................................................................................................................... 9
   4.5. Evaluation of the dinner dance event .................................................................................................................. 9

5. Cultural activities ....................................................................................................................................................... 10
   5.1. Zaabär ............................................................................................................................................................... 10
   5.2. Parliamentarium ............................................................................................................................................... 10
   5.3. Evaluation of cultural activities ........................................................................................................................ 10

6. Transportation .......................................................................................................................................................... 11
   6.1. Thursday 18 April 2013 ................................................................................................................................... 11
   6.2. Friday 19 April 2013 ...................................................................................................................................... 11
   6.3. Saturday 20 April 2013 .................................................................................................................................. 11
   6.4. Evaluation of the transportation ....................................................................................................................... 11

7. Media coverage and promotional activities ........................................................................................................ 12

8. General feedback from participants ......................................................................................................................... 13
   8.1. Key remarks from feedback form ..................................................................................................................... 13
   8.2. Open ended questions ........................................................................................................................................ 14

9. Analysis and concluding remarks ................................................................................................................................ 15
   9.1. Welcome .......................................................................................................................................................... 15
   9.2. Workshops ....................................................................................................................................................... 15

10. Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................................ 16
1. Context

This report aims at evaluating the 2013 Your Europe Your Say event. It will provide an overall description, evaluation and analysis as well as making recommendations to improve future editions.

The project “Your Europe Your Say” is an annual event organised by the European Economic and social Committee (EESC). In this event, three students from each of the 27 EU countries, together with a teacher, were invited to Brussels to discuss, debate and vote on the EESC’s political priorities for 2013-2015.

This year the objective of the event was to give students the opportunity to participate in a workshop to choose the top three political priorities of the Presidency and to further their knowledge of the European Union and understand the role of the EESC, as well as that of civil society in the framework of the community decision-making process.

EU-turn was contracted by the EESC to welcome the participants, organise cultural activities for them and organise transportation around the city for the three days. This included bringing participants from the airport to the hotel (Schuman), to Parlamentarium, Zaabär and the EESC building. EU-turn was also responsible for planning an icebreaker activity, organising an evening of dinner and dancing as well as creating and distributing the information letters and kits for participants.
2. Prior to the Your Europe Your Say event

2.1. Background

The fourth edition of “Your Europe, Your Say” event took place in Brussels from 18-20 April 2013. A total of 110 students and teachers were invited to the youth plenary session (Germany and Malta had 2 teachers in their group). The event was launched mid October 2012 using a dedicated page on the EESC website. At the same time, several thousands invitations were sent to head teachers, teachers and individual schools in all Member States as well as to potential multipliers such as European and national organisations, networks and administrations related to youth and education. The deadline for applications was 30 November 2012 and the 27 participating schools (one for each Member State) were selected at random by EESC members on 5 December 2012 from among the 847 applicants. Furthermore, two other schools from each country were put on a reserve list.

2.2. Members visits to schools

EESC members were actively involved in the Your Europe Your Say project. From January to early April 2013, contact points for communication or another EESC member acting on their behalf visited the selected schools in their respective countries for an information session about the EU, the EESC and the event. In line with event participation rules, schools on the reserve list could also receive a visit by one of their national EESC members before the end of the 2012–2013 school year. In total, 43 visits to 27 Member States took place.

Individual information sessions were organised for members visiting the schools upon request. Additionally, a PowerPoint presentation in 23 languages, the information material and some videos were made available to members on USB stick in mid-January 2013. Information material about the EU and the EESC was sent to the schools mid-January and a press release was issued for each visit. Contacts with national and local media were established in cooperation with the European Commission Representations. Finally, the visits were promoted also through the EESC website and the Your Europe Your Say Facebook page.

2.3. Preparation by the schools

This year’s theme was slightly different from previous editions: students had to elaborate on the Proposal for the EESC’s political priorities for 2013-2015.

All of the participating schools received a document in early February with the 12 proposals for political priorities for 2013-2015. The pupils were asked to propose additional priorities (no more than three) and to rank all 15 priorities in order of importance (one point = least important and 15 points = most important). Most of the schools proposed three additional priorities and ranked all 15 in order of importance.

After having received all the contributions from the 27 schools, the 15 best priorities were selected to be discussed in the working groups in April in Brussels.
3. The Your Europe Your Say event

3.1. The welcome address

On 18 April evening, after registration, participants were welcomed by Henri Malosse (EESC President), Neelie Kroes, (European Commission Vice-President), Jane Morrice (EESC Vice-President) and Peter Matjašič (European Youth Forum President) who delivered speeches in the Atrium of the 6th floor of EESC building.

3.2. The welcome activity

The welcome activity for the Your Europe Your Say event was held on the first day the participants arrived in Brussels, right after the welcome address. Its aim was to encourage the participants to get to know one another and to help set a tone of friendship, cooperation and discovery for the three-day event. The welcome activity was named “Icebreaker” and it allowed both students and teachers to learn something about Europe.

Behind each individual nametag was a name of a table (e.g. indigo iguanas) and each person had to find their group (composed of 7 or 8 people, each from a different country). As a group, they were asked to complete a short quiz with 10 questions about culture, history and logic. The team that completed the quiz first came to the front to have their quiz corrected and was given the opportunity to choose a gift for their team. Fifteen gifts (of chocolate, waffles and candy) were wrapped up and placed on the stage (one for each of the teams).

At the very end of the activity, participants were also asked to introduce themselves to 10 new people in less than 10 seconds. This encouraged movement and dynamism that got the participants excited.

3.3. Evaluation of the welcome activity

The icebreaker activity worked very well and participants were very enthusiastic about responding to all the questions on time. The length of time and the difficulty level was reasonable and this short activity facilitated cooperation between participants who had just met each other.

Additionally, many participants were tired because they had to travel most of the day to get to Brussels. Since the icebreaker was at the end of the day, many of the participants were tired and wanted to rest, however as soon as the game began they demonstrated enthusiasm. In future editions, it would be recommended to complete the welcome activity earlier on in the day, to ensure full participation.
3.4. The workshop on the 15 political priorities for EESC New Presidency’s programme

The workshop of the event took place on Friday 19th April in the EESC building. It was organised in the frame of an inter-institutional cooperation with European Commission DG Connect. The goal of the workshop was to let students:

- Elaborate on fifteen political priorities and build visionary scenarios around them: “what a great Europe it would be if such priorities would be implemented”;
- Reflect on the challenges and opportunities that the implementation of the priorities would arise;
- Generate ideas on what to do together to fulfil the priorities;
- Rank the priorities in order to identify the top 3 that will be included in EESC New Presidency’s programme;
- Following their group work, the pupils selected the priorities of most importance to their future and to the Committee, namely:
  1. Developing the European concept of getting a first job;
  2. EU bursaries for students from low-income families;
  3. Encouraging young entrepreneurs.

The teachers had the occasion to meet in a separate room where they introduced themselves and shared their impressions of the event. As a result of this meeting, they agreed to share their email addresses (the EESC sent the mailing list) in order to create a network.
3.5. The plenary session

On Friday 19 April, the morning session before the workshop was chaired by Ms. Jane Morrice and Henri Malosse.

Androulla Vassiliou (European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth), Joost Van Iersel (Group I member, President of the Section ECO), Xavier Verboven (Group II member) and Pavel Trantina (Vice-president of Group III) delivered a speech to students and teachers in room JDE62.

In the afternoon, the plenary session for the presentation of the final ranking of priorities (as from the workshop) was chaired by Jane Morrice and Henri Malosse. Ana Gorey, chair of the Movement towards a European Education Trust (MEET), on “High-quality European education for all” European citizens’ initiative, and Martin Wittenberg, founder of “One single tariff” European citizens’ initiative (on flat rate monthly phone tariffs in Europe), held speeches (followed by a question/answer session).
4. Dinner and dance event

On Friday 20 April 2013, a dinner and dance event was organised for all of the participants of Your Europe Your Say as well as some EESC members and staff.

4.1. Venue

The evening was hosted at the Tram Museum and this museum’s unique atmosphere provided an ideal decorum of old and contemporary Brussels. Since the entire museum was reserved for the event, students, teachers, members and staff were able to freely explore all the different transportation vehicles on display at their own will. It was a suitable venue for the group composed of approximately 130 people and many people (participants and EESC members) verbally expressed their positive thoughts. This venue would provide an ideal location for future editions of the Your Europe Your Say event.

4.2. Catering

A catering was organised for the event and it included a cocktail menu, with finger food and drinks as well as a hot buffet for the main meal. A self-service juice bar was available the whole evening. The food included some vegetarian options as well as different kinds of meat (chicken, beef, fish). As a whole, the verbal feedback given was that the meal was very good.
4.3. Salsa and zumba class

A salsa and zumba class was given after the dinner at 20.00, to encourage all participants to dance. A dance instructor was reserved who was very successful in getting the students, teachers, EESC staff and members to dance to well-known popular music. The instructor’s enthusiasm and relevant music, motivated approximately three quarters of the attendees, to dance and as a result, this set the tone for the DJ set which proceeded from 20.45 onwards.

4.4. DJ

A DJ was present at the dinner and dance event at the Tram Museum. The audio equipment (microphone, CD turn tables etc.) of the DJ was used during several speeches and presentations by the school (traditional dances) at the beginning of the evening. After the salsa & zumba class, the DJ flawlessly tied in the music to get the attendees dancing until 22.30.

4.5. Evaluation of the dinner dance event

The dinner dance event was held after the plenary session and its purpose was to celebrate the Your Europe Your Say event. During the event more than three quarters of the people attending the dinner dance event participated in the salsa and zumba class as well as the dancing afterwards. This demonstrates that the evening was very well received.
5. Cultural activities

5.1. Zaabär

The EESC organised a cultural activity for the participants at Zaabär on the day of their arrival. This chocolatiers company not only demonstrated the art of making chocolate, but it also gave the participants the chance to create their own and to take their creations home with them. This activity gave a welcome introduction to the city of Brussels since the capital is also known for its chocolate.

5.2. Parlamentarium

The EESC organised also two visits to Parlamentarium, the European Parliament’s visitor’s centre. The first visit was organised on Thursday afternoon for the participants that arrived in Brussels in the morning and the second was on Saturday morning, for those that were leaving in the evening. This activity allowed participants to gather general knowledge on the subject of the European Parliament and the European Union.

5.3. Evaluation of cultural activities

The Zaabär activity was extremely popular amongst the participants and many students commented on their written feedback form that it was one of the things they enjoyed the most about their visit. Additionally, lots of positive verbal feedback was given regarding this activity. Going to Zaabär not only allowed for the participants to take part in a fun welcome activity, but since they were divided into three workshops it also gave participants a chance to meet their peers from different countries.

As shown in the written feedback, 35% of students expressed that the one thing they would change about the event was that they did not have sufficient free time to visit the city. As time during this event is limited, giving the participants a list of activities and sights to see in Brussels would not only help respond to the comments and feedback given, but it would also allow them to make the most out of their visit.
6. Transportation

6.1. Thursday 18 April 2013

Most of the participating groups of Your Europe Your Say arrived at Zaventem Airport during the day on Thursday, 18 of April 2013. Upon arrival, several hostesses were stationed at the welcome desk of the European Parliament, with posters and roll-ups that were very visible to those arriving in Brussels. The people present at the airport greeted each group and provided them with an envelope, which included their information kits as well as the bus tickets for their journey to and from the airport. They were then led to the city bus so that they could make their way to the hotel.

The participants that arrived at Gare du Midi, Gare de Schuman or Gare du Luxembourg were greeted by hostesses and brought to their hotel. They then joined the rest of the Your Europe Your Say participants at the activities.

In total we organised the transportation of 110 participants throughout the day, with the use of shuttles and buses.

6.2. Friday 19 April 2013

On the day of the plenary session, all participants were greeted at the hotel and accompanied to the EESC by foot. Additionally, in the evening all participants and some of the EESC staff and members were brought to and from the Tram Museum by coach.

6.3. Saturday 20 April 2013

On the last day of the event, participants were brought from the hotel lobby to Parlamentarium on foot. Finally, each group used bus tickets given to them at the beginning of their stay, to take the bus back to the airport at their own leisure.

6.4. Evaluation of the transportation

This year’s transportation was much less complex than the previous year’s when coaches were used to bring participants all over the city. Since the hotel was only a 10 minute walk away from the EESC and Parlamentarium a coach was only needed to take them to Zaabar and to the Tram Museum. It is highly recommended that next year the same measures are taken and a hotel near the EESC is reserved.

It is important to note that the greeting and transportation for this year’s event went extremely smoothly considering the 110 participants arriving at the airport and three different train stations. The fact that only one of the flights was delayed and that there was no significant traffic in the city centre, allowed the team to operate on schedule.
7. Media coverage and promotional activities

The Your Europe Your Say event was covered by media in the form of articles, both online and in print.

Visits in the schools by the EESC members had a positive echo in local media. In several Member States, local journalists attended the visits and in 13 Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) the local press (on line press as well) reported about “Your Europe, Your Say” (see annex).

The event was also covered on social media with a dedicated account on Facebook (“Your Europe Your Say” page) and Twitter (“@youreurope”). Interactions on the FB page increased in the three weeks before the event (with an average of 4,000 reached users).

During the days of the event, a peak of 19,522 interactions on the FB page was reached, while on 19 of April (workshop day) there was 341 tweets containing the hashtag #YEYS with a potential audience of 281,184 users. (source: tweet-tag.com).

The EU Commission DG Connect Digital Agenda and Futurium twitter and Facebook account were “linked” to YEYS ones and had a strong cooperation in order to increase the social media audience.

Follow-up of event’s pictures sharing and comments is ongoing mainly on the Facebook page.

Furthermore, the following promotional activities have been carried out:

- Individual press releases for each EESC member going local and general press releases for all members visiting schools;
- Appropriate decoration of the Belliard footbridge one week before and during the event (banner);
- Distribution of a FR/EN bilingual brochure produced for the event;
- A video of the event is published on the web, on YouTube and on Facebook and sent to the participating schools and other selected recipients.
8. General feedback from participants

At the end of each edition of the Your Europe Your Say event, students and teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire comprised of 14 questions. 11 questions asked the participants to rate their experience from 1 to 5 (poor to excellent) and two additional questions were open-ended and asked what they liked the most and what they would change. When comparing the three editions of Your Europe Your Say, there are several key points of interest to observe.

8.1. Key remarks from feedback form

The visit by an EESC member

Participants rated the visit by the EESC member to be instructive and the average score on this question was 4.1 on 5. Although the visit was seen as beneficial, some of the students that participated in the Your Europe Your Say event were not present at their school when the EESC member came to visit. In future editions, the EESC working group will ask the schools to ensure that the students, who have been selected to come to Brussels, are present when the member comes to visit.

![Graph: Was the visit by the EESC member to your school instructive?](image)

Website

Each year, information about the event is included on the EESC website. Although this aspect of the event has been rated among the lowest consistently throughout the three years, it is always rated 4 or above. Therefore although the clarity of information on the website could be improved, it is still a well-respected tool. In 2013 this question was rated a 4.2.

![Graph: Was it easy to find information about the event from our website?](image)
Overall experience

Finally, participants found their visit to Brussels for the Your Europe Your Say event very valuable and have consistently rated it with a 4.5 on 5 for the past three years (between “good” and “excellent”). This demonstrates that the participants of the Your Europe Your Say event were very pleased to participate in this three-day event. Furthermore, as demonstrated below, the average rating given to each question on the feedback form is rated very highly.

The average score for every question on the 2013 feedback form was 4.5 out of 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for 2013 feedback form</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. Where you happy with the welcome you received?</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Were you happy with the hotel and room allocation?</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3. Were you happy with the overall organisation of your visit?</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4. Was the visit by an EESC member to your school instructive?</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5. Was it interesting taking part in the workshops?</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6. Was it easy to find information about the event from our website?</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7. Was it easy to find information about the event from Facebook/Twitter?</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8. Was the material distributed during the event useful?</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9. Was the subject of the event relevant?</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10. Were the organised activities outside of the EESC interesting?</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11. On the whole, did you find your visit to Brussels rewarding?</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2. Open ended questions

In 2010, the first edition of the event, participants expressed their great appreciation for the opportunity to take part in a mock-up plenary session. Many of the written comments showed that they felt very privileged to be invited to come to the EESC and that they enjoyed meeting other students their age.

In 2013, students also commented on how much they appreciated meeting others their age from all across Europe and speaking their mind. They especially appreciated the fact that the priorities set out by the workshops were going to become the priorities of the EESC. They also very much liked the activity of making chocolate at Zaabär as it allowed them to meet and at the same time take part in a fun experience. Finally, for some the Your Europe Your Say event allowed them to believe in the work that the EU institutions are doing.

Lot of students positively commented about the event:

“I thought ‘small’ nations wouldn’t have equal opportunities to speak aloud but I was wrong and I am really happy about it.”

“The trip to the chocolate factory was very interesting and fun.”

“The best part was making a speech on something which was a high priority for me.”

“I liked the chocolatier most but I liked everything about the past two days, it was very interesting and nice to meet new people from other countries.”
9. Analysis and concluding remarks

For the 2013 edition of Your Europe Your Say, the feedback was extremely positive. In general, both students and teachers greatly enjoyed themselves and almost all rated the event with a 90%. Additionally, even though the members’ visits to the schools could be improved, the overall score on the feedback form was 4.5/5. Although the great majority of the questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction among the participants, a few key elements could also be improved upon.

The aspects greatly enjoyed were:

9.1. Welcome

One of the most highly appreciated aspects of the Your Europe Your Say event was the welcome given to the teachers and students. Both participant groups clearly indicated in their survey that they were very happy with the welcome they received and on average rated it as a 4.7/5. Specifically, this demonstrates that the welcome given at the airport, train stations, hotel and the EESC, were noticeably helpful and appreciated. Having resourceful, positive and welcoming people present upon the arrival of the participants is key to setting the tone for the event and should be repeated in future editions.

9.2. Workshops

As the centrepiece of the Your Europe Your Say event, the workshop session was also greatly liked by the students, teachers and EESC members. Overall the participants rated this aspect very highly with a 4.7/5 and one student said that “meeting new young people from all over Europe and discussing the priorities with like-minded, optimistic youths” was what they liked most.
10. Conclusion

Overall, feedback given both orally and written demonstrated that the 2013 edition of Your Europe Your Say was a success and was greatly appreciated by all those that participated. As mentioned, the fact that the hotel was within walking distance to the EESC was a big advantage to the smooth running of the event. This simplified the transportation throughout the city and provided an additional sense of security. Rethinking the EESC member visits to the schools could also be a good opportunity for the online resources to be used in a different way and encourage more discussions and interactions between the students and the EESC.

The students were enthusiastic about the workshop, but a parallel activity should be developed for teachers as well (e.g. conference on presentation of EU projects related to education).

As the questionnaires showed, most of the participants gave the event an average rating of over 90% and this shows that the Your Europe Your Say event is one that works very well and could simply benefit from small changes!

The students were enthusiastic about the event! Here are some highlighted comments:

“Ms. Jane Morrice was the most charming and helpful person ever, thank you!”

“I hope and expect that the priorities we set out will influence the leaders of the Committee and they will soon be put into practice.”
