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Living on the Edge

The Edgeryders conference, “Living on the edge” was held in Strasbourg on 14 and 15 June 2012. It provided an opportunity for the Edgeryders community and political actors at a European level not only to meet but also enter into constructive dialogue.

The first day kicked off with an introduction of the people who were invited. These were high level officials from various European institutions, as well as active members of the Edgeryders online community. Since its inception on the web, the project has sparked an in-depth reflection on a “different” vision present and in the future of young people in Europe throughout the various facets of their active lives (education, employment, intercultural living, resilience, commons and social activism). Amongst the political actors present at this conference were the vice president of the European Parliament, Mr Pittella, the head of division of the Council of Europe’s social cohesion research and early warning division, Ms Farrell and finally Ms Toledano Laredo, a high level official working for the European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs.

The second day of the conference focused on thematic issues picked out by the Edgeryders community. One must not forget that this is an online community which helps its members to exchange experiences and benefit from peer-to-peer learning. These presentations sought to stimulate a debate targeted at political actors at a European level. They also served to enhance co-operation among young and active citizens, full of energy and enthusiasm and public sector officials who are often perceived as distant from these citizens and the problems they encounter in their daily life.

Amongst the different themes tackled, Mr Wozniak also dealt with the priority of local level activism. During his intervention he provided a pertinent example of how Polish citizens’ activism led the government to re-consider its decision and ultimately to reject the ACTA treaty. Here he also stressed the power of networking with merely a telephone number and email address citizens can mass mobilize and put considerable pressure on the government and its decisions.

Two other interconnected themes were raised: the education system and employment, these are of crucial importance to youths especially during the current economic crises. Many people question the current system which is primarily based on traditional values. The intervention by Mr Vickers stressed the importance of giving young people more creative space in order to allow them to raise financial resources so they can become entrepreneurs. Ms Grosu, emphasised the need for an alternative vision of the way of



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working life, noting that if youths worked less they would be more likely to fulfil their potential.

Even though once is not custom, the conference “Living on the edge” led to a qualitative exchange between European youths seeking a better “reloaded” future and representatives from European institutions. The results of this exchange, to be fed back by representatives to their respective institutions, could help to smoothen the transition for youths between education and the labour market.

See final proposals for the Edgeryders’ Guide to arise from the Conference:
<http://edgeryders.wikispiral.org/finale/where-edgeryders-dare>



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