

Azerbaijani delegation of the South Caucasus Youth Parliament visited Brussels

"DEMOCRACY STARTS WITH YOU! IMPROVING CIVIC PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM MINORITY AND RURAL AREAS IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION"

15 young representatives of the South Caucasus Youth Parliament visited Brussels from 18 to 23 February 2013 in the context of a study tour which has been organized by Konrad-Adenauer-Foundations Multinational Development Policy Dialogue.

The overall objective of this visit was to raise awareness among the students aged between 15 and 18, of the functioning of the EU institutions, in particular the European Parliament, and other international organizations.

The simulation of the South Caucasus Youth Parliament (in short "SCYP"), was created and launched in the context of the EU co-funded project "Democracy Starts With You! Improving civic participation of young people from minority and rural areas in the South Caucasus Region".

This simulation game takes place at three levels: first, at local level in partner schools. From each of the participating schools students are democratically elected to represent their schools' and classmates' interests on regional level, at the gathering of the South Caucasus Youth Parliament. At this level, the young members of the South Caucasus Youth Parliament join different committees and work out a resolution which is exposed to the vote of the assembly for its adoption. Once adopted, the assembly elects from amongst its members representatives who present the contents of the joint resolution to high ranking representatives of EU institutions in Brussels.

The objective of this three-level simulation is to give the students an understanding of the processes of democratic political participation and representation.

During the study visit the SCYP members had the honour to present the SCYP resolution to the MEP Jacek Saryusz-Wolski (EPP group), Vice-Chairman of the delegation to the parliamentary assembly EURONEST¹, and member of the delegation to the parliamentary cooperation committees EU-Armenia, EU-Azerbaijan and EU-Georgia. The SCYP resolution included among others recommendations in the fields of economy as well as of environment and education policy.

In addition to this high-level meeting in the European Parliament, the study tour participants had the pleasure to meet Mrs Joanna Jarecka-Gomez, Head of the "EPP international relations service" who provided the students with an insight into the inter-parliamentary work of the European Parliament and the EPP in general. Mr. Marek Hannibal, the advisor in charge of the South Caucasus at the EPP's international relations service, subsequently explained the parliamentary relations between the EP and national parliaments in the South Caucasus and their involvement in the parliamentary assembly EURONEST in particular.

Beside the European institutions, the delegation became also acquainted with the functioning of other international organizations and their respective deliberative assemblies. In this regard, the group has been welcomed by Ambassador Torbjørn Froydnes, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the Council of Europe's Liaison Office in Brussels. The subsequent presentation which was held by the political advisor Mr Ilya Subbotin, enabled the students to

¹ The "Euronest Parliamentary Assembly" is a parliamentary forum, consisting of representatives of the European Parliament and of the Eastern European partners and aims to promote cooperation and further economic integration.

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learn more about the work, structure and the objectives of the Strasbourg-based international organization, which are notably the promotion of democracy, the protection of human rights and the rule of law in Europe.

The members of the SCYP also received information about the NATO structure in the context of a visit to the "Allied Command Operations", SHAPE, as well as about the relationship between NATO and Azerbaijan in particular in a meeting with Mrs. Despina Afentouli, coordinator for the Caucasus Engagements Section, Public Diplomacy Division of NATO headquarters in Brussels.

During a visit at the BeNeLux Secretariat-General, where the secretary general Dr. Jan Van Laarhoven himself introduced the history and the content of this regional cooperation between Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, the students received „food for thought“ in terms of ideas and suggestions for cooperation possibilities, or respectively possible forms of regional cooperation.

The Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture (EACEA), furnished the delegation in addition with extensive information on EU funding opportunities and programs in Azerbaijan and on how the student can participate in calls for proposals as well as in calls for application for scholarships.

The program was completed by a visit at the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Kingdom of Belgium and Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where the group was received by Ambassador HE Mr. Fuad Isgandarov. .

Please also visit the project website:

www.dswy.eu !