



Millennial Dialogue Project launch FEPS/FES “Krisen-Kinder?”

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Activity Report

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The event took place in the Kalkscheune venue in Berlin, Germany on the 5th of May 2015. Jointly-organised and sponsored by the Foundation of European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) the event launched the Millennial Dialogue Report, a study focusing largely on the 'Millennial Generation', often known as 'Digital Natives' or 'Generation Y'.

The launch highlighted the political attitudes of young people, aged between 15 - 35 in Germany, Italy and Poland in background of economic crisis, youth unemployment and general precarious working conditions in Europe.

It became evident that the 'Millennials' across the analysed spectrum are politically disengaged, when compared to their parents or grandparents' generation.

In this context the event also aimed at presenting possible solutions to re-engage this new apolitical generation.

After a short introduction by Mrs. Bettina Luise Rurup, Head of the FES Department on Politics and Society and Ms. Maria Freitas, FEPS Junior Policy Advisor, the Millennial Dialogue report was presented in full by David Lewis, CEO of AudienceNet. AudienceNet is the research agency responsible for gathering and analysing the data of the Italian, Polish and German Millennials.



pictured: Maria Freitas, FEPS Junior Policy Advisor

The results of the Millennial Dialogue report served as a kick-off for discussions between progressive German representatives and a representative from academia.

In the aftermath of the debate, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Political parties and politicians should engage more in online campaigns and social media ;
- Young people are weary of politics and do not trust politicians;
- Politicians are not close to younger generations.

Speakers' main points during the debate

Yasmin Fahimi, SPD General Secretary

- The political system is more permeable for people who want to get involved
- Today's generation is disengaged but it does not result from individualization but actually due to the fact that solidarity is not taken seriously
- The young generation feels that it is not worth it to get involved in politics
- Reconnecting to young people is a daily challenge – SPD new live digital program which is to assess the impact of digitization on people's life
- Risk of the digital world - reduce democracy to like or dislike? Democracy is also about developing an opinion
- How to motivate young people to leave the online and take part in real politics?

Johanna Uekermann, SPD Youth President

- There is room for improvement in the relationship between SPD and the young German socialists
- Failure of politics during the last years results from the fact that schools and universities became escape free from democracy. Schools need to be more democratic and encourage engagement
- Densification of school and of University content does not give young people the time to engage in politics. Young people make a future assessment - is it important to have good grades or to engage in politics?
- We use the classical means of communications (schools, pubs), social media (higher reach out). But much more could be done in this respect
- We are in power now with the grand-coalition and we should introduce a guarantee of young people to have a permanent contract
- Young people simply do not trust politicians; this is what the report tells us. This is a matter that we should address
- Politicians do topic hopping - use a very blurred language, do not take political stances. Or is it because there are no young politicians? We only have grey hair politicians
- Credibility - you need to work very hard for this. SPD needs to do major improvements

Marian Schreier, Germany's youngest mayor

- People ask themselves - can I make a difference? In Germany there is a certain fatigue, the Greek crisis, the crisis of the Mediterranean
- The task of politicians is to show that there are alternatives
- What is new today - ability to take action on the side of the State. Transfer of powers to

Brussels sometimes ties the political promises of the federal state

- In the past we had large homogenous political blocks. But nowadays we have an increased individualization
- Scottish referendum good example of mobilization of the young people. Energy, momentum in the streets
- Merkel is a good administrator of status quo. She refrains of making political statements. SPD could have done something. Conservatives are a more business as usual party
- Form and language do play a role for young people. Using the wrong language it can isolate the young people from the politicians.
- We have an acceleration of the media in today's world and the media tend to abbreviate the issues

Julia Friedrichs, author on social inequality themes in Germany

- The relationship between young citizens and politicians is destroyed. Political debates are detached from what is important to citizens
- Generation of the 60+ owns Germany and young people dissatisfied with the German political class
- Concerned about isolation - Merkel's popularity is the fence - she maintains the status quo. No one really speaks about the remaining 20%. But we should not forget that there exists a social fragmentation. Social cohesion should be communicated



pictured (left to right): Johanna Uekermann, Marian Schreier, Julia Friedrichs, Yasmin Fahimi, moderator

Conclusions:

It stood out at the end of the conference, the relative importance of "marketing" vs. content and the personality of political leaders. All speakers more or less agreed, that "political substance", choice of topics, and personal integrity of politicians would be, in the end, the right tools to reach out to younger people. The importance of innovative forms of communication, online campaigns, social media etc., was also raised.