

Roundtable-style workshops with local actors

The aim is to discuss the sources of Euroscepticism with the local leaders and find a way how to address them in the daily work, or daily routines of the local journalists and other opinion-leaders.

Austria

Workshops took place in various towns across Austria (Klosterneuburg, Salzburg, St. Pölten,), from 30/11/2017 to 09/12/2017.

Short description of the workshops:

- World of NGOs, nie? have organised 3 roundtable workshops with altogether 25 local leaders having various background and experience. The composition of the workshops was very mixed with local activists, researchers, teachers and communication experts.

Some messages from the workshops:

- “Erasmus youngsters are the real Europeans. They understand what advantages EU is bringing and they tie European knots for their future. They can be real role models for others.”
- “Local journalists would be more than happy to receive interesting EU information – information local citizens would be able to relate to their personal environment. They also would be ready to communicate what for the EU is spending money in concrete projects.”

Debates involved 25 citizens from Austria.

Bulgaria

Debates took place in various towns across Bulgaria (Pazardzik, Berkovica, Razlog), from 31/10/2017 to 22/11/2017.

Short description of the debates:

- Capital foundation conducted three workshops on European union with local actors in three different (type of) regions in Bulgaria under stage 2 of CODES project. We intentionally had the workshops in the same towns where we had debates on Euroscepticism in stage 1 of the project. Thus, we had the chance to compare what ordinary people and opinion leaders from the same region and town think on EU, and the challenges and opportunities connected to it.

Some messages from the workshops:

- The predominant feeling of local communities in Bulgaria is that the country has benefited from the EU integration, but the local communities and their individual members – not necessarily. That’s why it is difficult to communicate EU to a person, who doesn’t feel the real EU-benefit for him/her.
- One-size-fits-all approach is not working for EU communication. There are different countries, with different cultures and different target groups in every single county. What may work in one country may not work in another.

Debates involved 28 citizens from Bulgaria.



Germany

Debates took place in Stuttgart and Leipzig, from 28/11/2017 to 11/12/2017.

Short description of the debates:

- DGAP conducted two roundtable discussions with 30 local leaders in total during the second stage of the CODES project. The first event took place in Stuttgart (state capital of Baden-Württemberg in the South of Germany), followed by Leipzig (East Germany's biggest city save Berlin). The events brought together participants from different backgrounds, which could be grouped into three: Most numerous were participants hailing from the cultural and civil society sector; the second group works in higher education; finally, the third group were participants from city administrations or those involved in local and regional politics.

Some messages from the workshops:

- Almost all the participants pointed out that the most successful approach in communicating the European Union was to make it more approachable so that citizens could experience Europe in their daily lives. It was deemed crucial to give them a chance to establish personal and emotional connections apart from the rather technocratic and distant views of the EU they are otherwise confronted with.
- Criticism was raised by several local actors against both local and national newspapers that report too little on European issues.

Debates involved 30 citizens from Germany.

Hungary

Debates took place in Budapest, from 09/11/2017 to 10/11/2017.

Some messages from the workshops:

- Access to EU-related state research funds are rather limited therefore participants would support non-state structure of EU funds allocation.
- There is a lack of cooperation between the NGO sector and local municipalities/ mayors. The support of such cooperation would be needed.

Debates involved 25 citizens from Hungary.

Latvia

Debates took place in Riga and Alūksne, from 27/10/2017 to 08/12/2017.

Some messages from the workshops:

- There is very little EU in the current school curriculum.
- There is no sense of ambition on the EU-related issues at the top levels of political leadership. People cannot be convinced by very technical examples – they need to see their political leaders making important decisions and being respected by their peers.

Debates involved 57 citizens from Latvia.



Slovakia

Debates took place in various towns across Slovakia (Považská Bystrica, Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Košice, Lučenec).

Some messages from the workshops:

- Comenius University has conducted roundtable workshops with 27 local leaders having various background and experience. Most of the participants' activities were related to organizing cultural and/or sport events for their communities. Other participants were high school teachers, volunteers, local journalists etc.
- Many teachers who realize the importance of providing teenagers the proper education in the EU issues organize extra-curricular activities to supplement the formal system of education, however, this cannot fully compensate the lack of systematic work. Therefore we argue that it is in the EU's interest to engage in a discussion with national education ministries about the way the EU matters are taught at schools.
In case of pan-European campaigns, such as the European Parliament election campaign, it is also difficult to apply slogans and unified communication tools that are centrally designed for the whole EU. Local multipliers asserted that more decentralised, regionally customized communication is needed in order to effectively attract and engage citizens.

Debates involved 27 citizens from Slovakia.

