

Hans Adriaansens Student Awards
Research Report
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LCC International University - 2021

Plan

1. Introduction
2. Results of the interviews
3. Conclusion

Introduction

Youth years are always challenging. During this time people tend to explore themselves and the world around. This is a period when we are setting our life goals, creating relationships with others and trying to find our place in life. Each young person is unique, with a different perspective, mindset, worldview and dreams. However, what unites us is a hope. A hope for a better future. A strong belief that we can cause a change, that we can achieve our goals and our ideas and opinions matter.

Personally, I am really grateful for the Hans Adriaansens Student Award for giving me the opportunity to speak out loud about my concerns and hopes. I am also honored to make four voices of the participants of my research be heard all over Europe. These people are not connected to each other in any way. Moreover, they are coming from completely different corners of the world but at some different points of my life I was lucky enough to meet each of them. In this report you will read the opinions of a university student from a small city in Ukraine, a recent graduate from the country of Georgia living in Berlin, senior student from Spain and a young journalist from South Korea.

Participants are not all from EU countries, some of them are not even from geographical Europe, and this gives an unexpectedly broad view. We may live in different countries but we are all the generation of the future and we have to work on it together.

Results of the interviews

1. *Which challenges that today's European youth will need to confront concern you the most?*

Ukraine: The prejudice towards youth incompetence in the work sphere. Also, the level of education and awareness of work, studying, and internship possibilities that the youth from small towns and villages have.

Georgia: I am concerned about climate change and how nowadays youth will be able to deal with it. Even though some countries and companies already started acting and taking care of the issue, it is not enough. There are still a lot of people who dismiss climate change and think that it does not exist.

Spain: I am mainly concerned about two challenges: of course, the major problem of pollution and global warming, a legacy that comes from previous generations and that the new youth will need to combat due to the multiple problems that this situation presents, both for the environment and our safety and comfort. The second is the apparent increase in popularity of certain ideologies easily categorized as fascist, which attack the human rights of various communities, using violent or vexatious strategies that are rarely punished or avoided correctly.

South Korea: It became too difficult to get a job. Real estate problems (it is difficult to buy a house even if you save money for a lifetime, and the price of the house keeps rising), polarization (the absolute standard of living has increased, but the competition has become too fierce)

2. *Apart from these challenges, there is also optimism about some of the ways we might overcome them. What current developments make you most hopeful about the future?*

Ukraine: Many NGOs organize a lot of workshops, camps, and courses for people from villages. What's more, there are many grant opportunities given to those who want to organize a project or make their startup. For example, my friend created a startup that connects students and big companies to help the youth to find work opportunities.

Georgia: I think the fact that so many young people want to live plastic-free or have a will to change their diet to contribute towards the wellness of the planet is giving a lot of hope. It is becoming more and more popular to shop second-hand, use reusable bags and try to live ethically.

Spain: Fortunately, many countries seem to be gradually becoming aware of problems of this kind and, therefore, starting to act on them with certain laws or demands. At the European level, I am aware that measures are being taken to help reduce emissions in the countries that are part of the European Union, something extremely positive and necessary that must be persevered with and improved at all costs.

South Korea: I think there is a possibility of development because there is an ongoing discussion to solve the problem. I believe that the development of science and technology can improve the absolute quality of life.

3. Which abilities that you and your generation of students possess do you think will be valuable in confronting the challenges we face?

Ukraine: Flexibility for sure, being able to adapt to changes in today's fast-moving world. Also, thinking and acting fast, being ready to make decisions fast rationally and considerately. In addition, the multitasking ability which helps to combine different kinds of work.

Georgia: I and my peers have access to more information than anyone has ever had. We have different media sources from which we can get information about different matters. I think this helps to educate our generation while raising their awareness about issues. Also, the information does not come in only one form; besides news platforms, there are a lot of young "influencers" who try to communicate with younger audiences using social media platforms and persuade them to be more sustainable and ethical.

Spain: I think my generation, in general, is very aware of these two issues: we are one of the first (if not the first) native internet generations, -meaning we are constantly connected-, and although this fact is often criticized and even demonized, I think it makes us have a great learning potential, filtering information, understanding the reality around us and great critical thinking. We have access to an incredible amount of information, both educational and about current affairs, and this has made us create a network of values and moral principles that are enhanced and updated with new perspectives and ideas coming from all kinds of places and backgrounds. In short, we are a globalized generation, and although I am aware that globalization is a double-edged sword, I am also a believer that precisely because of this, we are one of the most open and aware generations so far, something immensely important to address problems and seek solutions to them from inclusiveness and critical thinking.

South Korea: Democratic way of thinking, the characteristics of the Millennial generation with wide inclusiveness.

4. Do you feel that your potential to contribute to society is overlooked, or even dismissed? Is the potential of your generation not used enough? How do you think this can be overcome?

Ukraine: Depends on the country and the size of the city. It's a lot about mentality as well. For example, there's a good perspective towards youth contribution and engagement in Ukraine. Many opportunities are being created in order to engage students to participate in social initiatives and government functioning. But there's much more that needs to be done to make more youth to be enrolled and aware.

Georgia: Yes, I think my generation's potential is still overlooked in the majority of cases. This mostly happens because the older generation still thinks of us as “too young to be a part of decision-making processes” which has the ring of truth in it as we still do not have enough life or professional experiences. However, at the same time, we should be part of decision-making processes as we will have to deal with them in the future, not older generations.

Spain: As I mentioned earlier, we young people are usually underappreciated for our “excessive” connectivity despite being one of the most academically educated generations and one that tries to promote more activism and awareness. I believe we are not heard enough when we talk about how important it is that different voices and stories are given voice to address issues. We are a pluralistic, connected generation with a lot to offer to the current landscape because of our vast difference in mindset from other generations, and unfortunately we are highly

stigmatized. I believe in the power of education and awareness as a long-term weapon for change, and for that we need our philosophy of tolerance, social responsibility and respect to reach higher.

South Korea: I think there are areas where the potential has been overlooked due to fierce competition and social pressure. I think it would be better if I care about the gaze of others and reduce the part of comparing me and others.

Conclusion

Afterwards, the generation of young people concerned about many different issues but we are all united. We are the global generation under constant connection, we have friends from different countries and continents. We are able to see and hear the issues happening in a different part of the world and we can raise the awareness of it in our community. Information is our instrument for a change. We are expected to deal with the previous generations' problems in the future but we will do it all together, as a global generation. Because of our vast differences in perspective from previous generations, we are a multicultural, linked generation with a lot to give to the present era, but we are sadly heavily overlooked. The trust in the long-term potential of education and knowledge as a tool for transformation, and to do so, we must uphold our philosophy of compassion, social justice, and reverence as a generation.