

Voice of the People

Manuscript
EU and youth politics
BRT, Germany

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Translation

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Presenter: 0:00 – 0:36

In Europe, there live 75m people who are between 15 and 25 years old. The European Union subsidizes and numerous exchanges and organizes special projects so that they can get to know other Europeans and their cultures. “Comenius” subsidizes school exchanges, while “Erasmus” is aimed at students at universities who want to spend some time abroad in other European countries. Between 2000 and 2006, €3,52m was granted for these projects. Despite their popularity, more and more young people are not interested in politics. The turnout of the European elections has diminished constantly. Therefore, the question arises: What do young people expect from EU politics?

1. Question: What do MPs for Europe actually do in parliament?

Markus Söder, CSU secretary general: (0:43 – 1:05)

Europe is our future and many decisions that are taken today are decisions by the European parliament that are to unite Europe to make it a counterbalance to Asia and the US. That is why the European ideas are so important and incidentally, it is not only about practical politics but also about peace and freedom. The European Union guarantees peace and freedom.

2. Question: What else can the EU offer apart from internships?

Markus Söder, CSU secretary general: (1:12 – 1:55)

The European Union is a framework; we need to be able to establish prosperity, peace and freedom in the long term. We need more common regulations and especially a bigger economic market in order to be able to vie with Asia, and especially China. The European Union is the perfect opportunity to unite smaller markets and form one big market. Furthermore, the European Union is Europe’s opportunity to be more attractive on an international stage and vie with competitors, such as the US. For the US, Europe and its history and confessions are something special. They originated in Europe and were brought to the US. If you go back in history, you can say that Europe’s export “best sellers” are human rights, peace and freedom.

3. Question: How can young people influence European ideas and politics?

Markus Söder, CSU secretary general: (1:59 – 2:41)

The first thing to do is to become politically involved. That goes for the city where they live, their state, their country and for Europe; they should become member of a political party, because this is where they have the best opportunities to influence decisions. From there it is pretty easy to become a MP for Europe, for most of the new EU MPs are young people. Take for example, the CSU, which sent two very young people to the European Parliament to be able to represent young people's interests better. The second thing to do is to read the papers, watch TV and inform themselves about what is going on in the world. For they can influence decisions by taking part in ongoing discussions. By the way, there are many discussion groups that are politically involved. Europe needs this kind of cooperation.

4. Question: What advice would you give young people who are interested in European politics?

Markus Söder, CSU-Secretary general: (2:46 – 3:20)

You always have to bear in mind that Europe is made up of many smaller units. You have to make sure that people are aware of the fact that European politics influence also the small units. Take, for example security measures, how decisions are taken for the smaller units and energy politics are topics decided on by the European Parliament. There are such a lot of decisions that are taken by the EU. However, what is more important, in my opinion, is not to forget about the fundamental ideas pursued by the European Union, such as peace and freedom by concentrating too much on practical problems. That is what makes Europe so strong. Our history was not always determined by peace and freedom; we were divided for a long time. Now, Europe is finally united and that is a great opportunity, especially for young people.