



The European Debate Competition – Already on Its Halfway

With a digital beginning in Lithuania, debate competition of the Erasmus+ project *Debate Your Issue* (DYI) has also successfully taken place in Poland, Serbia and Latvia. The project's final stage is already half its way, and two more competitions – in the Czech Republic and Belgium, – and the final conference, await in the upcoming month.

“To tell the truth, half a year ago I was not sure about the promise that we will be going to our partner countries, but we all kept our hopes high. Meeting the DYI team and participants in person was a wonderful reward for the invested energy and time. It should be noted, that Serbian and Belgian partners had even harder Covid-19 restrictions for traveling, but they managed to work with the given circumstances perfectly. Fortunately, the odds are good and we will be able to meet in Prague and, hopefully, in Brussels as well. The same as before, we are keeping our hopes high,” says **Teresa Weiser**, leader of the DYI, Goethe-Institut Czech Republic.

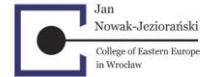
The aspect of interpersonal communication and face-to-face effect are highly valued also among participants. They highlight that the most saturated emotions and experience were gained when meeting peers from other, as well as, home countries. Competing, getting to know new cultures, even kitchens, and understanding that they [youngsters] all share the same passion for debating and thinking critically about what is going on in society – these are the benefits almost everyone points out and appreciate. As they themselves acknowledge – in the *ring* of debates they are opponents, but outside it – already friends.

“The first competition I took part in person was in Poland. I had forgotten what it was like to debate when you can see the other person and shake their hand afterwards. Also, I did not expect all the participants to be so friendly. We even now try to keep up with each other on Instagram and are excited to meet in another competitions. To my mind, the chance to meet new people is what makes this project so amazing. We get to debate together, explore the city, learn a language or two, and then it is like – we are friends forever,” admits **Niks Murāns** (Latvia).

In turn, **Dejana Golić** (Serbia) emphasizes that *“with every competition we realize how enjoyable this is – while debating and educating ourselves, we also get the opportunity to travel and meet young people from other countries, and all in all – make precious memories. Besides, I consider that prolongation of the DYI [due to the pandemic] made everyone's summer better. I am really looking forward to debating on some new interesting topics. Moreover, to find out something that I previously did not know.”*

Although the Belgian team has only joined in person in Poland, this has not diminished their enthusiasm for the debates and ability to take everything valuable from the project. For instance, **Aisha Van Roy** tells that was the first time actually having the chance to debate in real life, as DYI was also her first time debating ever: *“It enhanced my enthusiasm and interest in debating – I really found a new hobby. It is so fun and insightful to meet people from very different cultures and societies, try to understand different point of views, and to think more broadly about such a topic.”* **Laura De Pauw** adds that she has learned much through preparing and defending both sides of different topics and getting to know the other youngsters in a slightly less conventional way: *“I feel my view has extended. Learning about current issues, seeing them from a pro and contra side, and getting to know opinions outside of my day to day social circle.* However, **Aisha Van Roy** remarks, saying that for her it was kind of a discovery – how fun it is to get yourself out there and to actually do it [debate]. *“I am actually really excited to be a host in*

* Due to Covid-19, changes in the project are possible.



Brussels and to get the chance to be part of the jury, and I am curious how the other participants will like our capital city.”

Photo galleries from the previous competitions can be found [here](#).

*The next competition stages will take place: 19-22 August, Prague, Czech Republic; 2-5 September, Brussels, Belgium. The final conference of the project DYI will take place on 7 September, in Brussels.

For the latest information on the progress of the project, please visit: www.debateyourissue.eu, you can also subscribe to the newsletter at: <https://debateyourissue.eu/about-dyi/> and follow the DYI on [Youtube](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)

Project partners: [Mediawijs](#) (Flemish Digital and Media Literacy Centre, Belgium), [Goethe-Institut Czech Republic](#), [National Library of Latvia](#), [Lithuanian International Association of Youth Debate Alumni Jaunimo Debatai](#), [Kolegium Europy Wschodniej](#) (Eastern European College, Poland), [Novo Kulturno Naselje](#) (New Cultural Society, Serbia).

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