

Report of the World Development Report Discussion

The World Bank Country Office in Skopje, January 18, 2006

Country: Republic of Macedonia

Date of Consultation: January 18, 2006

Time of Consultation: 12:00 – 14:00h

Place of Consultation: The World Bank Office, Skopje

Participants that anticipated at our event: 13

List of the organizations with which they are affiliated:

1. Youth Voices Group - Macedonia
2. European Youth Parliament - Macedonia
3. International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience - Macedonia
4. Student Organization at The Law Faculty, The university Ss. Cyril and Methodius University - Macedonia
5. Blue Sky Network, British Council - Macedonia
6. Youth Education Forum - Macedonia

Organizer of Consultation: Youth Voices Group - Macedonia

Facilitator of Consultation: Ivica Cvetkovski, Youth Voices Group - Macedonia

The participants were aged between 18 and 27; they all came from urban areas and were either students or attending secondary school.

The discussion was directed towards several questions from the WDR questionnaire and the participants made a full effort to provide bona fide answers to the following questions:

1. Did you ever call, write to, text message, or email someone living in another country?

2. How often do you communicate with people living in another country, using each of the following methods? Is it at least once a week, at least once a month, once every few months, once a year or less, or never?

To begin with, the general attitude of the participants towards this question was that electronic communication is available for all of them personally. This happens due to the fact that they are members of different governmental or non-governmental organizations and they have a constant need for communication with people from abroad. The participants emphasized the internet service as the most important means of communication that embraces all the other. Internet service is far better provided for this kind of organizations than for the common youth population. However, they all agree that internet access for the overall population is in poor condition. The reason for this is the outstandingly high price of internet service in the Republic of Macedonia, which makes it almost impossible for people to have home internet access. The situation has been slightly improving the past few years, but it is still inadequate for the general population.

4. Assuming that it is legally possible for you to move to another country to work, would you?

The opinion for this question was divided into two separate directions, the first regarding the personal attitudes of the participants and the second concerning the beliefs and reasons why a certain group of young people tend to leave the country permanently .

The participants agreed that they would leave the country for a definite period of time mainly for the purposes of gaining education and experience. However, their choice was to live and work in the Republic of Macedonia. When asked why, they unanimously answered that the main reason are the close personal relationships and friendly surrounding. All in all, both the foreigners and the natives find the culture in the country welcoming and appealing. For instance, some of the participants claimed that even if they were paid ten times more in another country, they would be willing to come back and work in the Republic of Macedonia.

On the other hand, they are aware of the process of brain drain. They summarized the reasons why this practice takes place with a particular group of young people. Their belief is that the main problem is the lack of information young people can get concerning their future education and occupation. The majority of young people leaving the country comes from the minor places in the Republic of Macedonia, where the quality of life and the possibility to inform themselves for all kinds of issues are below the standards in the capital and other major cities. Furthermore, the media and the older generation are the ones to be blamed for creating a bad image of the situation in the country.

The participants strongly believe that the governmental institutions will not solve this problem by themselves. But, they hold that there is an urgent need for a Youth Council to be formed in the Republic of Macedonia in order to provide information on youth issues on national level.

5. For each statement given below, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree by circling the corresponding number.

5.1. The government should require all young people to perform one or two years of national service.

The two years of national service, without a doubt, would be a great advantage especially when it comes to students of social sciences. This type of service will provide the experience that cannot be gained at university simply by learning the theory and not putting it into practice. However, this does not apply to students of the natural sciences.

There is a disproportion between the number of graduated students of a certain profile and the number of them that can be absorbed by the adequate government institution. Another problem is the type of selection that will be used.

5.2. Military service is good experience for young people.

At the beginning of the discussion the major part of the participants looked on negatively on the issue of military service. However, they changed their mind during the course of the discussion. After giving it a second thought they realized that, after all, it would be a valuable experience for the upcoming time in their lives. Moreover, they would be able to get a real picture about all kinds of surroundings, both rural and urban, as opposed to their current ones.

5.3. My country should set limits on the import of foreign movies, television programs and music in order to protect our local culture.

The participants opposed setting limits on the import of foreign values since they believe that it would be a violation of the human rights. They are certain that globalization is not a phenomenon nor some passing trend. It is an inevitable process from which we gain more than we lose, mainly in the field of information that concerns each and every aspect of life in the rest of the world. People come to think that they do not live 'in the middle of nowhere' and they are able to observe the modern trends and compare them with the ones they have in their country. In this way people create a system of values and could use the models set by other countries in solving the problems at home. The only way to face globalization is not to oppose it, on the contrary, is to exchange our cultural differences with other nations worldwide.

6. Nowadays it is easier to see or buy things (clothes, music, movies etc.) that come from somewhere else in the world. Does this make you happy?

As already mentioned in the previous question, the import should be compensated with greater export of products in which production we have a comparative advantage over others.

7. Who has the biggest influence on the three following aspects of your life? Is it yourself, your parents and relatives, your friends, or the government?

8. How much do you feel you have been consulted (or your views have been taken into account)?

In regards to the person someone will marry, the attitudes are that in the urban areas the choice is entirely made by the future spouses, but in the rural areas there could be influence coming from the parents.

The other two aspects are interconnected and they relate to education and professional orientation as a consequence. Moreover, an interconnection can be traced between the personal choice and the influence from the government. The types of profiles that are created depend on the needs of the labour market which is shaped by the decisions for further development of the country. In other cases, the influence from the parents can result in making wrong decisions for the education and professional orientation in the future and consequently people will not use their full potential and creativity.

10. How much of what you are learning/have learnt at school/college do you think is/will be useful when you start working?

The knowledge we gain at university is only a small part of what we need to be successful as employees. The result of this is the constantly increasing awareness among youngsters for the need of informal education and practice outside the classroom. Even though the grades are the only means for evaluating the knowledge, still that is just a knowledge in theory, which is less important in real life situations.

12. How do you view your employment prospects over the next five years? This can be any kind of work you do to support yourself and your family. Would you say they are very good, good, neither good nor bad, bad or very bad?

Despite the high level of unemployment and other serious problems in the country, the participants believe that the situation is going to be improved. Still the improvement will happen gradually during a longer period of time. Although the general opinion ranged over taking gradual steps, there were certain individual opinions that the Republic of Macedonia could make a quantum leap and shorten that long period of time only by taking advantage of all the proposed possibilities.

Notes:

There were several points mentioned by the participants that should be taken into consideration:

The discussion may not give the real feedback information due to the fact that the participants chosen for the discussion are a part of the most active youth population involved in a variety of activities mostly in the informal sector.

There is a need for establishing a fair on youth issues which will drastically improve the flow of information about different benefits concerning the youth all over the world. Also there is a need for: various discounts; free entrance for cultural and scientific events; redirecting the student taxes from the state budget to the university budget; opening new youth hostels and lowering the prices for them; providing a student canteen which will serve the students a complete, warm and inexpensive meal.

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