



TGS
EUROGROUP
since 1968

NEWS LETTER

Happy Easter from TGS!

TGS Staff

What we are about to live will surely be an unusual Easter for many points of view: no outings, no outdoor picnics, no walks but ... this does not prevent us from celebrating it! We will be in our homes, together with our loved ones, looking forward to a time when we'll soon be able to get out and meet our friends again. TGS Eurogroup will be there, waiting for you all. And while most social activities of the association have been necessarily put on hold, we have been working hard with passion and creativity to explore new possibilities and new experiences for the youth.

The whole world is fighting against the current pandemic, but the Salesian Family surely has an advantage point: from Don Bosco it has inherited a charism made of prayer and action and it is made up of people who, even as they entrust themselves to God, commit themselves personally to helping the most needy. In the run-up to Easter our Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, renews the invitation to pray: "even in these moments we must turn to God, to the Lord Jesus, and ask for the strength of the Holy Spirit" by resorting to the intercession "of our beloved Father Don Bosco and our Mother Help of Christians".



TGS18+ Bruxelles 2020

Maria Grazia Ballerano

*Do you want to do a good deed? Educate the young!
Do you want to perform a holy act? Educate the young!
Do you want to do a holy thing? Educate the young!
Truly, now and for the future, among holy things, this is the holiest.
(St. John Bosco)*

After 5 years from its first edition, TGS18+ Educational Programme has now become a consolidated activity in the various offers of TGS Eurogroup association. A journey in the heart of the European Institutions, with the main goal of letting students better understand how EU itself works.

Last January, from 25th to 29th, with a group of students aged between 16 and 19 from various provinces of Northern Italy, we left Italy to go and discover the European Union in the most enjoyable of ways: through a travel experience, a distinctive trademark of TGS Eurogroup. A five-day journey in which they visited the European Parliament, the European Commission, the European Council, but also had the chance to meet the Italian community who lives and works there, as well as civil society organisations operating in Brussels and, last but not least, to discover the Flemish city under the touristic aspect.



Every journey worthy of this name begins even before the departure, with expectations and a good dose of excitement and curiosity. Will I like the food? Will I understand their language? Will it be interesting? Will I miss home?

But students never fail to surprise you. They came back from this journey self-conscious and enriched in personal relationships and experiences, new friends, pats on their shoulders, lively chats in front of freshly brewed beers in fancy local pubs, long talks about the day that had just passed by, or about life in general. And stories to tell.

Stories, like the vivid and naked truth account that our dear friend Mattia, an Italian expat who lives and works in Brussels, made about the 2016 terrible terroristic attacks in the city, on how they phisically and emotionally survived it, and what consequences it brought to their everyday lives.

Stories, like the unexpected but lucky encounter with the European Commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni right at the European Commission, who kindly stopped and had a few words with us, and complimented about the initiative (a souvenir selfie kindly taken from his team members followed).

Stories, like the thrilling role-play game at the Parlamentarium Museum, where everybody frantically run from one meeting room to another, in order to understand and solve the political riddle. Or stories, like the one of Marco's surprise 19th birthday party (that's one of our students) in the most unlikely of places, a belgian cafeteria. Birthday cake included!

Nowadays we all can travel, study, work and live in any EU country. Studying abroad is at young students' reach, thanks to the Erasmus+ study project. Well, free movement of people too is possible thanks to the EU's single market. Did you know that? And did you know that more than 9M young european students profited from the Erasmus project since it first started

in 1987? Generally speaking, european citizens have a limited knowledge and understanding on how EU works, and what are the advantages they are benefiting thanks to European Union. Truth to be told, I, as first, did put myself in this category, until TGS 18+ Programme crossed my path... Sometimes we just take everything for granted. Even 70 years of lasting peace. Maybe because we belong to that generation grown with a peaceful and united Europe and saw and lived the steps of an unprecedented path, that led us to the awareness of being "European citizens". This imperfect but perfectible union is a lifeline that many thought was an impossibility, but it's here, and it's ours.

As I always like to remind our students, the meaning of this journey is not to indoctrinate them into a particular political ideology. What we ask them is to create their own mindset, and become active, responsible and open-minded members of the political and civil society. They have a lot to choose from. Young people represent the future and must have the opportunity to shape that future. We must build on the positive contribution they can make through active participation. I therefore think it is our duty help them know the EU, promote its goals and values, and help them understand that democracy is not a foregone conclusion, but that it depends on them too.



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