



The second trip for school pupils to Berlin and Brussels

In the period between 4 July, 2016 and 8 July, 2016, the Open Dialog Foundation and the 'European Exchange' organised the second phase of the study visit of Ukrainian students from Kharkov, Odessa and Dnieper to Brussels and Berlin. 15 children had a busy week, full of meetings and visits to German and European government agencies. The trip was a part of the 'Support for young people as a stimulus for the strengthening of democracy in Ukraine', funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The first meeting was held with Sophia Popoff, an employee of the Ukrainian Bureau of European External Action Service in Brussels, on 4 July, 2016. This department employs 7 people. This is the largest department of the EEAS. The main task of the Ukrainian Bureau is to assist in developing a common policy towards Ukraine, through a means of fact checking and conducting research. The EEAS collaborates with the European Commission and the European Council. The EU policy towards Ukraine is based on two pillars: the first priority is the financial and logistical support of the reforms, set out in the Association Agreement, concluded between the EU and Ukraine; the second objective is to support Ukraine's territorial integrity through the implementation of sanctions against Russia and other possible diplomatic measures. Although the EU doesn't directly carry out negotiations with the Russian Federation, the EEAS cooperates closely with Germany and France, the countries which take part in the Minsk talks. The participants of the visit inquired about the efficiency of travel sanctions, imposed against Russia, their results and their implementation in practice. Ms. Popoff stated that the sanctions are effective as, following their introduction, the intensity of hostilities in eastern Ukraine has decreased. In addition, the actual implementation of sanctions depends on the Member States, and not on Brussels, but if incidents of neglecting the sanctions are identified, the EEAS can exert pressure on the Member States. The children inquired whether the sanctions are also extended to Crimea, and whether they affect all businesses or solely those which are Russia-oriented? Ms. Popoff replied that these sanctions have not been planned comprehensively and they only apply to those companies that have benefited from the illegal annexation of Crimea, e.g. to Russian companies that have taken over the Ukrainian business. Questions were also asked about the issue of Ukraine's accession to the EU. Ms. Popoff explained that the EU membership had never been a subject of negotiations, but, after the reforms are implemented in Ukraine and the internal problems of the EU (such as Brexit) are solved, it may become possible.

More about the EEAS: <http://www.eeas.europa.eu/ukraine/>.

On 5 July, 2016, a trip to the European Parliament was held with Aleksander Siemaszko, assistant to MEP Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, deputy head of the European People's Party (EPP), member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament, and Benjamin Fayen, assistant to MEP Elmar Brok from the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament.

Aleksander Siemaszko told the students about the history and structure of the European Parliament as the only European institution that has a democratic mandate. 751 MEPs represent the interests of the regions which elected them, and belong to political groups, divided by ideological beliefs - social democrats, liberals, Christian democrats, 'green' and others. Legislative work in the European Parliament is very troublesome and technologically complex, as it has to take into account the interests of all 28 EU Member States. Therefore, the majority of the legislative work takes place in committees and factions, and not at the plenary sessions. The European Parliament is significantly different from the

national parliaments, as it hasn't got the coalition or the opposition. However, this doesn't mean that there is no political struggle; it exists; and often, it's very tense. The main directions of the work in the field of international relations of the EP with the states that are not members of the EU, is the support of democracy, human rights, neighbourhood policy etc. Many students' questions concerned the responsibilities of the EP and MEPs, pitfalls in decision-making, the so-called 'coalition' of factions which are ideologically close etc. The students were most interested in the characteristic features of the operation of the EP, the order of making decisions, ways of finding consensus on controversial issues, MEPs' functions and other issues.

Experts who deal with Ukraine, were invited in order to familiarise students with the work of other committees. The experts included, in particular, Ms. Marta Udina, who is responsible for relations with Ukraine, from the Secretariat of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Charles Minaire who is responsible for supporting democratisation and observation of elections in the countries which are not members of the EU, as well as for the cooperation with the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. They briefly spoke, among others, about the short-term election observation missions, the results of the missions and recommendations presented in the OSCE reports on the election observation in Ukraine after the Maidan.

Based on a detailed analysis of observers regarding the conditions of conducting the elections, the OSCE develops a general report and sends it to the Ukrainian authorities. Students became interested in this topic, and some expressed a desire to try their hand as observers during elections. In addition, participants asked various questions about the prospects of Ukraine's accession to the EU, starting with the issue of the things which Ukraine still needs to change before joining the EU and the economic situation which should be introduced in the country, and ending with the advantages and disadvantages that may arise after the accession.

More detailed information about the activities of the European Parliament are here:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

Later, the students met with Nadia Vertebna and Ms Christina from the Ukraine Support Group of the European Commission. The group, designed to support Ukraine, was established in 2014 in order to assist Ukraine in implementing reforms. There are several teams, each of which focuses on their direction of the reforms, namely: transportation, judiciary, taxes, anti-corruption etc. These groups include experts from various fields who work on the improvement of legislation and support the implementation of reform. Ms. Nadia spoke about the special role of the European Commission - the EU government, which has the right of legislative initiative. The students also learned about the opportunities of cooperation with the countries of the European Neighbourhood: in the field of visa-free regime, the issue of trade agreements etc. Ms Christina spoke about the EU delegations to neighbouring countries which have the status of diplomatic missions, and about their main role. In addition, the students learned about the possibilities of support of young people which has been provided by the European Commission – they primarily include trainings, seminars, volunteer projects, grants and others. The most famous among them is, for example, the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and 'Erasmus +'. The students were interested in the possibilities of these programmes, current projects and the rules of participation in them.

More information on the activities of the USG can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/ukraine/sgua/index_en.htm.

In the afternoon, a meeting with Mykola Tochytskyi, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Kingdom of Belgium and the EU representative in the Embassy of Ukraine in Brussels, was held. The diplomat made a brief excursion through the history of diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Belgium, stating that one of the first diplomatic missions was established in Brussels. He spoke about the importance of Ukraine's heading towards Europe. In his opinion, Ukraine's future is in

the EU. Mr. Mykola stressed the importance of practical policy (Realpolitik), under which rights and duties for all are the same. He also spoke about the problems of business development and the inability to properly use resources. When the time for questions came, the students were most interested in the prospects of Ukraine's accession to the EU, no visa regime, which, according to the diplomat, will be adopted soon.

Equally important was the question about the attitude of the EU to Ukraine in view of recent developments, including the events on Maidan. The issues of the Association Agreement and Free Trade Area weren't left unattended; the students were interested in its main points, and how would Ukraine benefit from it. The meeting ended with a family photo and refreshments.

More information about the activities of the embassy can be found here: <http://belgium.mfa.gov.ua/en>.



With Mykola Tochytskyi, Ambassador of Ukraine to Brussels

At the end of the day in Brussels, the participants had a meeting with Alex Egger, the head of the 'Think Young' organisation, which is engaged in raising awareness and interest among young people with policy-making processes in the European institutions, and provides support to various youth projects, aimed at the development of education and research. The priority objective of 'Think Young' is to support the development of knowledge of IT and entrepreneurship among young people. The organisation has existed since 2007 and, annually, it implements approx. 20-30 different projects, some of which are focused on education, and others are professional research, on which basis, recommendations for the European Parliament and other European institutions are developed. Students wanted to know how funds for youth projects can be obtained, and if there are chances for long-term financing of activities. Although 'Think Young' doesn't bestow grants, it implements many projects that others can join as participants.

More information about the organisation can be found here: <http://www.thinkyoung.eu/#!/how-thinkyoung-works/cee5>.

Berlin welcomed the participants with nice weather and unique architecture. On 6 July, 2016, the first meeting in Berlin was held with Sergey Ilchuk, First Secretary of the Embassy of Ukraine in Germany. Mr. Ilchuk presented his line of operation of the embassy; he spoke about Ukraine's business relations with Germany in the field of foreign direct investment. The children asked about the prospects for visa liberalisation. According to him, visa liberalisation is inevitable and will be implemented soon, but more important is a stable legal framework that creates the basic conditions for business development. The participants also wondered what is required to become a diplomat. Mr. Ilchuk spoke about the development of his career and all the steps that he made in order to become an employee of the foreign service.

The website of the Embassy: <http://germany.mfa.gov.ua/ua>.

In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, we were met by Mr. Christopher Fuchs, the deputy head of the task force for cooperation with Ukraine at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany. The group was established in 2014 with the aim of supporting the development of cooperation with Ukraine. The priority objective is economic development of Ukraine and an increase in energy security. The children were interested in what Ukraine can do in order to speed up reform and when it would be possible to travel to the EU without visas. Mr. Fuchs replied that Ukraine is ready for visa-free regime, and this issue will be resolved soon. However, Ukraine should concentrate on its own development in order to stand firmly on its own two feet, and only then, it will become a strong state.

More information about the German Foreign Office can be found here: http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Startseite_node.html. Also, we invite you to visit the website of the German Embassy in Kyiv: <http://www.kiew.diplo.de>.



With Mr. Christopher Fuchs from the target group for collaboration with Ukraine at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, photo: Hanna Zhovkivska

After the visit to the Foreign Ministry, we had a meeting with Artem Ivenko, the assistant of the German-Ukrainian project 'Meet up'. We spoke about project activities in the field of youth exchange programmes. The foundation 'Remembrance, Responsibility and Future' was established in 2000 with the aim of commemorating victims of National Socialism and paying compensation to surviving former forced workers. The project was completed in 2007, and the Foundation allocated the funds left on activities, aimed at supporting young people. In 2014, after the Maidan developments, the EVZ foundation decided to establish a programme 'Meet UP', which focuses on the deepening of German-Ukrainian cooperation through an intensive exchange of young people in order to promote understanding between the nations and enhance democratic values. Thus far, it has supported 110 projects and 250 partner organisations - the programme was attended by a total of approx. 3,000 young people. The students inquired about the criteria of selection of organisations which may apply for participation in the projects, etc. 'Meet Up' finances short-term projects on which Ukrainian and German youth work together. Topics and forms of the projects may vary - it can be a theater, a movie, or an artistic event, such as a bilingual blog. The participants of the trip were curious to know whether there is a possibility of funding the already existing projects that need financial support, for example, the costs of repair or room rental. Although 'Meet Up' doesn't directly fund long-term rent, but one can seek the EVZ's help in the implementation of youth initiatives.

More information can be found on the project page on Facebook and on the websites of the organisations at: <https://www.facebook.com/meetup.evz/> та <http://www.stiftung-evz.de/rus/onas/istorija-sozdaniya-fonda-evz.html>.



The participants with informational materials of the EVZ

In the afternoon, students met for coffee with Ruslana Vovk from the analytical centre 'Democracy Reporting International'. Ms. Ruslana spoke about their organisation, the history of its establishment, their goals and objectives. Among the main tasks of 'Democracy Reporting International', Ms Ruslana named the following:

1. a) monitoring of the legislative activities of the Ukrainian Parliament on the implementation of reforms and their compliance with international standards;
b) creating platforms for discussing these reforms, ways to improve them by inviting experts, MPs and ordinary people to establish a dialogue between these groups;
2. working with students across Ukraine, the debate on decentralisation in the Oxford style.
3. carrying out trainings for NGOs, assistance in conducting trainings, conferences etc.

The students spoke about NGOs which operate in their cities, and their activities. The children inquired how the organisation's trainings are carried out, and how experts and participants are invited. Also, the students were interested in how the projects are carried out now and how they are planned to be carried out in the future. Ms. Vovk told the participants in the meeting that the organisation is currently working on a new project that focuses on the analytical work which is interesting and understandable to average citizens, and not just experts. The project provides various trainings for students in 6 regions of Ukraine - Odessa, Kharkiv, Vinnytsya (covering Donetsk University), Lviv and Chernivtsi. In particular, the students shared their expectations from the trip.

More information on 'Democracy Reporting international' can be found here: http://democracy-reporting.org/?page_id=4

On 7 July, 2016, the students met with Mr. Wilfried Jilge, an expert of the German Society for Foreign Relations (DGAP). Mr. Jilge spoke about the main directions of Germany's foreign policy towards the EU, the USA, NATO, Russia and Central Asia. One of the important topics of research, conducted by the DGAP, is the analysis of the foreign policy of Ukraine, monitoring of reform in Ukraine, especially in the reform of the justice system. Mr. Jilge believes that currently, it is necessary to focus on personnel changes in the judiciary and to direct resources to combating corruption in these circles. It is equally important to involve the qualification commissions of experts from the EU, as increasing the presence of the EU in the reform process will have a positive impact on the transformation process. One of the current projects carried out by the DGAP is the analysis of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. It is designed to study the behaviour of local residents of the occupied territories (including Luhansk Province) during the conflict. Another aspect of the organisation's activity is to provide extensive information and

recommendations regarding the negotiation process in Minsk. Another equally important subject, which the DGAP deals with, is the economic situation during the war, and the existing opportunities to attract foreign investors. The organisation carries out numerous conferences and round tables with research institutes and other experts in the relevant fields. The analysis of how the Ukrainian crisis, which began with the annexation of Crimea, changed the European security system, is particularly interesting.

More information about the organisation can be found at: <https://dgap.org/de>.

The next meeting was held at the European Academy (Europäische Akademie) with Weronika Priesmeyer-Tkocz and her assistant Inna Linke. They said that the organisation is not typical, as it deals with a kind of 'European professional development' - trainings for adults. Ms. Weronika Priesmeyer-Tkocz described the activities of the EA and its most successful projects. One of the projects is 'Europe in a suitcase'; as part of the project, experts travel from town to town and speak about European values. Inna Linke spoke about the EA's two major youth projects, which concern directly Ukraine. The first of them is 'AGREE', under which Ukrainian officials are invited to Germany for 5 weeks for a training on how to successfully fight with corruption and how the process of transformation is carried out. These are mainly officials from different regions of Ukraine. They visit various cities in Germany and learn how the local government operates. The main idea of the project is to apply in Ukraine, the practical knowledge and experience acquired during the project.

Another important project which we are going to start soon is #neuLand, a youth project for 24 participants who are at least 20 years old; the project will last four weeks. The main idea is to help implement qualitative ideas, using the experience and contacts that participants gain during the time spent in Germany. After discussing the main projects, the students asked, in particular, about the process of selecting participants for such projects; whether other projects, designed for participants from Ukraine are planned, and what's different about the system of education in Ukraine, compared with Europe.

More information about the activities of Europäische Akademie can be found here: <http://www.europaeische-akademie.de/>

On 8 July, 2016, participants visited the German Chancellery, where they held a meeting with Gabriel Deutscher, an advisor of the Federal Chancellery, which deals with Eastern, Central and Southern Europe and Central Asia. He presented the structure and operation of the Office, and elaborated on the issues of the Minsk agreements and Germany's role in the reconciliation of the armed conflict with the Russian Federation. Mr. Deutscher stressed that in 2014, Ukraine was unable to show full military resistance to the invaders, and had no choice but to conduct peace negotiations with Russia. It is also a priority of President Poroshenko.

More information about the work of the Federal Chancellery can be found here:

https://www.bundesregierung.de/Webs/Breg/DE/Bundesregierung/Bundeskanzleramt/_node.html.

The students' programme of stay in Berlin ended with a meeting with Marie-Luise Beck, MP from the Greens in the Bundestag. She spoke about her work in the environmental field, including support for Ukraine in liquidation of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. In addition, Ms. Beck shared her impressions from her numerous trips to Ukraine and her active participation in supporting Ukraine in the sphere of reform. The students inquired how to become MP, who one needs to become first and what education to obtain. Ms Beck stressed that Germany is a democratic country and everyone can try to build a political career. But it is already at the stage of the university that one has to be very active, as a politician is a profession for people who are very engaged and who have experience in implementing community projects.

We encourage you to visit Marie-Louise Beck's official website at: <http://marieluisebeck.de>.



With Marie-Louise Beck, MP from the faction of the Greens in the Bundestag

The children had a tour through the Bundestag, after which they flew back to Kyiv.

Below are the most striking quotes from the opinions on the trip:

*"This project has taught me to believe in my strength, and when you truly believe in something, even in the impossible, it begins to come true... During the trip we met many interesting and successful people; to me, they have become an example of how a person with a goal can achieve a high level of development, not only professional, but also spiritual. Most of all, I liked the meeting with Marie-Louise Beck, who is an MP from the Green Party. Once she entered the room, it has filled with an incredible energy that came from her. When Ms. Beck spoke about her party, it was obvious that she loves what she does. I realised that this is the secret of success". - **Daria Budaryeva, Dnieper.***

*"I believe that this project may even affect the political and social future of our country. It's because all those who took part in it, were teenagers, representatives of a new, modern generation. Having received this piece of knowledge and motivation, we are full of strength and energy to change our society for the better. After the tour, it came into my mind that the word 'stimulus' is used in the name of the project for a reason. It's a true stimulus, a push towards new thoughts, ideas, meetings and projects. In our local community, we don't have many projects for young people, and so, this project has given me the understanding that I can be a pioneer in something, I can bring to the world, new beliefs and I should not be afraid to do so". - **Teslenko Lilia, Kharkiv.***

*"I am sincerely grateful to the organisers of the project as they create an opportunity to become acquainted with European countries, change our own views on contemporary issues of young people; we feel that there are too few such meetings. I would like to express my gratitude to the leaders of the project: Agnieszka Piasecka, Hanna Zhovkivska and Lidia Hutnyk. Also, I would like to wish inspiration, perseverance and success to all those who worked in the project". - **Adamkevych Antuanella, Kharkiv.***

The next trip with students will be held in September.

Please visit our page on Facebook:

The project: 'Supporting young people as a stimulus for strengthening democracy in Ukraine' on FB:

<https://www.facebook.com/jugendprojektKDODF/>

The website of the Open Dialog Foundation: <https://www.facebook.com/ODFUKR/>

The website of the European Exchange organisation: https://www.facebook.com/Europ%C3%A4ischer-Austausch-European-Exchange-205531692842267/?ref=br_rs
