

SEE – SMART EVOLUTION and E[MOTION]

Young people are often told they cannot solve big problems or participate in important projects. However, a teenager with a critical mind can make a huge impact, despite one's age. As a fifteen-year old, I asked myself: "What if it is not about participation and direct approach, but also contribution?" With that being said, I decided to write this essay and share my opinions with the world, hoping they will make an impact.

Cooperation between different regions is vital for the subsistence of any country. SEE is already connected through organizations, projects and, of course, the EU.

Since we live in a world of globalism and globalisation, regional cooperation is a key to political development. That also means development on a level of a micro region.

It's the idea of the so called "bottom-up approach". Smaller regions on the state borders have common traditions and are generally more connected. Therefore, it's much easier to find common ground on the level of a region – for instance Istria (the Slovenian and Croatian part), the Danube region; plains in Vojvodina etc.

On the other hand, there's another way of working in a region – "top-down approach". This is practised as a greater project which is reduced to base elements. Particularly in this case, I'd form an economic and political union of the South-Eastern Europe countries. They would offer each other financial help. The EU countries in SEE would help the others with advice and political connections. Furthermore, the idea is about creating an international SEE market with the same taxes for members and non-members of the EU. This is the base for the economic development of the region.

As a fifteen-year old, I see a huge opportunity for the economic development in tourism, especially sustainable and eco-friendly tourism. Greece, Turkey, Montenegro and Croatia have a relatively developed sea tourism, but a place has carrying capacity that shouldn't be exceeded. We also shouldn't forget the beautiful nature and many historical monuments.

My idea is to create a network of tourist destinations and then an app (because that's what young people notice) that would connect every possible tourist destination in the region with the idea of being sustainable. Someone would mark a site worth seeing and then provide an accommodation for 20 to 50 people. The building would be energy-saving, self-sufficient and the collective fund would provide money for the eco-renovation. People in this housing would have the chance to enjoy the local heritage and eat only local and eco-products.

This would provide a good chance for cooperation in agriculture – make this region a self-sufficient one. This part of Europe has big potential in eco-farming. Good climate conditions, unpolluted soil and water, etc. make farming an important sector. The young farmers should take the farms and develop a new philosophy: "produce local, eat local and don't transport goods on long distances". Countries should organise meetings on which people would share their ideas.

These novelties result in knowledge, social development. Knowledge about the meaning of using resources naturally, buying local and about the meaning of cooperation.

A consequence of all these projects is economic prosperity. This term is connected with having enough jobs and there's a huge potential in projects supported by the EU. These

projects could be about sustainable transport – river transport on the Danube and other rivers, cycling trails and other green ways of transportation.

These projects would also employ highly educated working force and prevent the “brain drain”, escape of educated young people to more developed countries.

Economic prosperity directly results in more different jobs and consequently, finding the work one loves. That’s extremely important especially for young people, because they have will and the motive to achieve something and most of them are willing to work hard.

Moreover, younger people are HIGHLY motivated. A country should provide good chances for education because it would eventually raise the level of the education in the society. Educated people are proven more tolerant and open-minded and are also more likely to live healthier.

European Union provides many good chances for young people, for example, projects like Comenius, Erasmus+, Youthpass ... But all the SEE countries aren’t in the EU yet.

The most important thing for the EU’s accession process is spreading EU’s principles to SEE countries, like an open society, good education system ... I’m aiming for building partnership on common values – countries should sympathise with them and also upgrade them.

The operators of these processes should be young people because they are the most responsive to change. Therefore, young people are the ones that should actively participate in changing the world, beginning with small parts of it.

“Think global, work local” should be the life motto of an active citizen. It perfectly represents how one can help locally and simultaneously do things for greater good. An active citizen helps with involving through his profession, helping non-governmental organisations and what is more, he isn’t afraid to speak up because conflict might be essential to change things.

In the past, most of the SEE countries were communist. This resulted in the way people think, even now. I think my parents’ generation is still effected by our past political system. In the totalitarian regimes before, their freedom was limited, so they still don’t have the courage to use their freedom of speech actively.

Mass media should make people aware of the meaning of freedom of speech and particularly why we should maintain democracy. Democracy is quite weak and the cult of personality is still strong in some countries. The new generation is the one that has the confidence to speak up, but freedom of speech should be used with tolerance and respect.

SEE is a region of a diverse culture and many different, yet similar traditions with Greece as “the cradle of the European culture” because of its history.

Cultural diversity provides lots of opportunities for social development – getting to know cultures, encouraging tolerance towards different religions ... A way of performing such actions is through projects in schools, such as Erasmus +.. It would be a huge step in preventing discrimination, because the latter comes from not knowing something.

As a teenager, I think there could be more international sport events, not only the “professional ones”, but also the ones just for fun. This is an unobtrusive way of discovering other cultures.

The Balkan Peninsula is a place of three different religions – Catholic and Orthodox Church and Islamic religion. Relations between them haven't always been good, so we have to work on that intensively. Different religions and nationalities can and should cooperate with lack of prejudice, because being not only multi-cultural, but intercultural, makes us rich.

Despite our differences, various things make us connected and we should be aware of that. That is exactly why cooperation on all levels is so important. If we choose not to cooperate, we could stagnate and that will definitely not lead us to prosperity. The very title of this essay encouraged me to write down my ideas. Despite the fact that I am only fifteen years old, I think my opinions can contribute to the welfare of my Region.