



How big is your world?
EUROPE, YOUTH AND GLOBALISATION

"How Big Is Your World?"

Europe, youth and globalisation (EYG)

5-9 May 2004, Strasbourg

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I will start this report in a non-traditional way, I will start from the beginning, of course, but not the beginning of the event, but when I got involved with it.

It was December 2003, I was "surfing" CISV page, searching for news and friends when I found out that CISV had the possibility to nominate 5 participants for an event that would be hosted by the Council of Europe. I got so excited about the idea of having the opportunity to share and to learn, to be in a worldwide conference discussing youth and globalization.

I sent an e-mail, later one I was requested to add some personal information, about my studies and professional experience, and, we had to wait. Just before the end of December 2003 I received what would be the first part of the great news, I was going to be one of the 5 people nominated by CISV. Now, it was only a matter of waiting, a bit more, before we could know who the Council of Europe would choose.

No news came before April 2004, it was definitely hard to wait so much, (even if, when I think about it, here in Brazil we have to wait that much, or more, to know if we will be able to take part in a CISV programme, and where to).

OK, I realized it was worth waiting.

This report aims to tell you, CISVers, that there is so much we can do in CISV that goes a lot beyond CISV. And this event is a good example of that.

May the 5th finally arrived, we met in Strasbourg for the registration and opening of the large-scale event on the themes of Europe, Youth and Globalisation under the slogan "How Big Is Your World?".

The objectives listed in the event brochures were:

- Promote better understanding of the mechanisms of globalisation;
- Promote active participation in youth organisations or other civil society initiatives;
- Reaffirm the Council of Europe's commitment to peace, intercultural dialogue and social justice;

Provide the actors of the youth sector with:

- An opportunity to enter into a dialogue with each other, and the personalities present, on their experiences and perceptions of life in this context, as well as on Europe's position in the world;

- An occasion to establish a common platform for the formulation of political messages and to conceive effective actions to respond to the effects of globalisation, thereby encouraging good governance and the protection of human dignity worldwide.

We were 400 young people, representing youth and youth organisations from all over Europe, coming from the 48 member States of the European Cultural Convention of the Council of Europe, and also 100 young people from approximately 50 Countries in other continents. That information itself brings us a lot about what I have to say.

In CISV one of our main beliefs is that we can build lasting peace by gathering individuals and groups and making them learn to learn to live together as friends. Programmes we develop, offer young people opportunities to meet their peers from other countries and to form intercultural friendships. And this could be seen as the main principle in the EYG event. We were all there, to learn and share, to debate and listen, to learn to build public policies with people from all over the world.

Finn, another CISVer that was also there, once said: "it all feels like a huge Village Camp, we are here, sharing our opinions with people from a lot of countries, trying to make them see what we do in our countries, and why".

And so we were there, the event was organized in an interactive format, where participants were involved in the following activities: debates, thematic panels and smaller working groups, interactive workshops and cultural events. The programme covered six major topics: democratic governance and youth participation; human rights and responsibilities; culture and diversity (in particular, inter-religious dialogue); sustainable development; peace (in particular, reconciliation); education and employment.

Each one of us had to choose one cluster, and a working unit that this cluster contained. I was in the cluster number one, which was about democratic governance and youth participation. This cluster group was meant to provide space for open critical debate, especially concerning concepts of governance and youth involvement in governance.

The main issues to be dealt with, within the cluster, were described like that in the official programme folder:

- What is governance and the various approaches towards governance, good and bad practices?
- What is democratic / not democratic governance?
- How are democratic governance and the global economic and political order working for and against each other?
- What actors, processes and values and other individual elements does democratic governance consist of?
- How is the concept of governance replicable (or in fact is it replicable/ transferable at all) from local and national levels to the global level?
- What is the perception among youth of youth participation compared to measured participation?

- What is the perception vs. the reality of youth participation?
- In what ways can youth participate? What should be the balanced mix of youth involvement and participation?

Discussions were very passionate and intense. In my cluster group people really got involved with the debate. I don't mean here to transcript the debate or to arrive to all the conclusions we may have found, even because a complete written report will be produced and published within the next months, and will be made available to those who feel like going deeper on the subject.

So many times during the EYG event I asked myself how CISV could profit on my presence there, and I realised that I had so many ideas that they would not fit in a report. A report is intended to be short and focused. I may have already lost the short, but I will try to be somehow focused on how it was there!

In my cluster and working unit we intensively discussed the role of youth in this "new" globalised world, and even if we arrived to a lot of conclusions, there is one thing I really wanted to share: CISV is a huge organisation, with a lot of members all around the world, its presence does not depend on the political party that is ruling, its activities are independent of any political will, and we, CISVers, have a very important role on promoting democracy, human rights, respect and freedom, so, if we cannot find one role of youth in the globalisation processes, we CAN find one very big role of CISV: spread the idea of peace and respect with no interference, with no filter or prejudice.

Being in such an event made me realise, once again, how much we CISVers, have been given the duty to promote a lot of principles, that go a lot far beyond peace. We have been assigned the construction of a better world. And for that, we must act further our camps!

By 2010 there will be 1.8 billion of young people in the world; 1.5 billion will be living in developing countries, without counting the expanding of new poverties in other countries.

Kumi Naidoo mentioned that the gap is widening, and I ask myself, what is CISV doing about that? How far have we gotten into the understanding that non-peaceful situations are also caused by poverty? How far have we acted in our global activities on promoting the understanding that poverty, violence, war, prejudice and so, are so much related that we cannot fight one single matter.

A lot of international organisations are now starting to foster mechanisms to associate young people in their programs and decision making processes. CISV has been built based on that, and it is about time we profit from the social capital we have developed, profit from all the trained and motivated people we have, to start making a real difference. I sometimes have the impression we make a difference, but just on ourselves, while we could reach much further.

In the panel I was, a lot was discussed about types of participation, and so many theories may have been raised, but none of them, as far as I am concerned, have shown to be as efficient as involving youth from the planning to the evaluation of a certain action. Isn't it what we have been doing for more than 50 years?

I was right now revising the main tendencies or ideas that emerged in the groups where I was, or even in the plenary, and I want to report on some of them,

specially considering that those are transversal tendencies that may appear in any type of discussion promoted by youth and for youth, concerning policies and globalisation.

Understanding the globalisation process is not a simple task, since it questions our collective imagination, especially our conceptions of democracy and human rights. And again I want to raise a question to my CISV friends: back in time, when globalisation was not such a common concept, wasn't CISV already trying to figure out how to deal with that? Isn't it all about human rights and democracy that we discuss? If we really think about it, the peace we are building is based on terms that are very much connected to globalisation, aren't them?

And if we try to talk about democracy... the idea of democracy appears more and more formalised and yet not real and concrete. Could it be a CISV role to foster democratic participation in countries where this is not a reality already?

Furthermore, the world of today promotes cultural diversity, but unfortunately it is still a place of racism, exclusion and of limitations to the freedom of people. That is pretty much what we fight against, in CISV, back there in Strasbourg, and, some of us, in our everyday lives. On this specific topic I believe that being a CISV member added a lot for me in the debates. We live with diversity, even if just for a couple of weeks, even if in proper atmospheres, created to foster this diversity. But I have grown up in CISV, and so, I have grown up understanding and enjoying diversity.

It is true that global civil society is an emerging reality, still under construction, not completely defined in its composition and functions. And this is a challenge to young people, who are having the opportunity to contribute to the definition and development of this "emerging global civil society".

In my cluster we also recognized that this global civil society has to be the voice of the people, where diversity is fostered, minorities are supported and heard; culture, peace and human rights are promoted, participation is encouraged, networks of citizens are created.

We want to have a global civil society where we can discuss global issues, analyzing social processes, raising awareness and proposing solutions.

One of the paragraphs in the report distributed on our last day at Strasbourg said: "Over the last 50 years the vision of human rights has been in constant evolution: from political rights through social rights to environmental rights. Today the question of economic equality and human dignity is at stake. The challenge is to invent a model of political democracy integrating human values such as tolerance, responsibility and solidarity, in which the recognition of rights as well as of obligations and of freedoms as well as responsibilities is inherent".

I copied that there because I believe it brings a lot of the spirit we developed in Strasbourg. And that kind of sums up what I had to say. I wish I got you interested in having a experience like mine, and in having the chance to take CISV to more and more people. Willing another kind of world is a personal commitment before anything else.

Youth commitment is an extraordinary opportunity to built concrete change.