



Współfinansowane przez  
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**Join the Debate!**

**Study visit**

**Green Youth Advocacy Academy**

**in Brussels from 05-08.06.2023**

**Join the Debate**

**Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union**

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In June 2023, 51 participants of the Green Youth Advocacy Academy project, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, took part in a study visit and debate in Brussels with European decision-makers. The visit was preceded by 2 national meetings and 5 international workshops with experts from NGOs, politics, academia. Partner organizations Green REV Institute (Poland) and Vihrea Sivistysliitto Ry (Finland) had the opportunity to co-organize a debate on the European Green Deal, the Farm 2 Fork Strategy and the actions of decision-makers on the sustainable, just food system transition in the European Parliament.

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

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The goal of the ongoing Green Youth Advocacy Academy project is to mobilize young activist individuals from Poland and Finland through education to actively promote the idea of a sustainable food system, take advocacy activities for a just food system transition, establish their own organizations and informal groups, and broadly participate in processes related to this area of green transition.

The project has identified parallel objectives at 3 levels: organizational level, beneficiary level, system level.

Within the organizational level, these are: building the capacity of partner NGOs, strengthening youth advocacy and engagement in activities that support food system transition, establishing international cooperation and participation in NGO projects; developing international relationships between smaller NGOs and their stakeholders to increase their participation in climate action and engagement in watchdog activities and initiatives at the international level, building the capacity of NGOs to undertake initiatives related to broader climate action and a just food system; supporting ambitious youth climate initiatives and advocacy efforts through their participation in public decision-making; and developing new and adapting existing tools in education and youth work to focus on green skills such as innovative thinking, sustainability thinking, civic education, advocacy, and engagement in watchdog activities.

Under level two ("beneficiary"), the following objectives have been set: involving diverse youth groups in the transition process, raising awareness of the importance of carrying out food system transition in dealing with the climate crisis, creating a platform for young people to increase their competence and advocacy skills and raise awareness of the importance of civic engagement, creating a platform for developing and sharing innovations on youth climate and civic initiatives, and involving youth in systemic activities.

Under level three ("systemic"), the goals are as follows: civic engagement of the public with a focus on the scope of food system transition, enabling the preparation and introduction of a new group of advocates to follow decision-making and food transition processes at both the



national and European levels, equipping activists with the competencies to undertake concrete actions, including lobbying addressed to decision-makers, and creating a platform to gather and disseminate knowledge on the most relevant and effective training practices for activists that can be transferred to other organizations in Europe.

Project target group: youth from Poland and Finland, aged 14-24, who want to work and engage in climate action with a particular focus on food system transition.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY VISIT TO BRUSSELS - JOIN THE DEBATE**

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The main purpose of the study visit was to allow those participating in the program to learn about the EP, environment and infrastructure related to the creation of EU legislation and the political debate related to the functioning and future of the European Union. The organizers of the program and the study visit recognized that one cannot effectively advocate for changes in the European Community policy without knowing how one of the key political, legislative and control bodies of the European Union functions. The objectives of the visit also included the opportunity to interact and talk with Members of the European Parliament in their working environment, as well as to provide basic knowledge about the organization of political groups, the organization of Members of the European Parliament and the areas of political and legislative activities within the mandate of a Member of the European Parliament, and to provide basic knowledge of the legislative process of the European Union.

Those participating in the Green Youth Advocacy Academy had the opportunity to co-organize and participate in a debate on the European Union's climate policies and strategies for a just climate transition with decision-makers.

## **3. STUDY VISIT AGENDA**

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The study visit was based on six modules. The first module was a tour of the Parliamentarium. The second, is a political module - the political context of the functioning of the European Parliament. The third, a general module - basic knowledge of the operation of the European Parliament and the legislative process of the European Union. The fourth, participation in

a debate with Members of the European Parliament and an Accredited Parliamentary Assistant to a Member of the European Parliament, combined with a Q&A session on the issue of the food system transition. The fifth module, was a tour of the gallery of the plenary chamber of the European Parliament supplemented by a lecture by the Member of the European Parliament on the technical organization of the EP plenary session. The sixth module is a meeting with a representative of the management of one of the largest international organizations dealing with green transformation, including in the area of the food system.

As part of module one, the participants visited the interactive Parliamentarium, where they were able to view a 360-degree panorama of Europe and the Parliament, learn how the European Parliament works, how laws are made and how European policies affect key decision-making processes in the European Union. The Parliamentarium also includes an interactive map with which visitors could embark on a virtual journey through Europe, learning more than 100 stories about Europe's diversity. The Parliamentarium is also one of the elements of the European Parliament's education policy in Brussels and an example of good practice in civic education for young people.

As part of the second module, those participating in the study visit listened to a lecture by Ph.D Marcin Anaszewicz, a lawyer and political scientist, experienced researcher and participant in political and public debate, CEO of the Green REV Institute. During this part of the visit, the attention of those attending was focused on political and non-legislative aspects. Those in attendance received information about the importance of political groups on the functioning of the European Parliament. The key objective of this part of the lecture was to explain how the European Parliament's political factions and European political parties influence European politics, as well as to explain how political dividing lines are formed in the EP. The lecture also addressed the importance of the European Parliament's intergroups and how they can be used in advocacy efforts.

In the context of intergroups, the expert person introduced the concept of umbrella organizations and European coalitions of NGOs, which play a key role in advocacy processes at the level of the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council (such as Eurogroup for Animals, TAPP Coalition, European Vegetarian Union).

As part of the third module, participants attended a lecture given by Mr Piotr Wolski, an employee of the unit in the European Parliament responsible for European visits and education.

The meeting was devoted to the work of MEPs, the organization of the parliament, the legislative process and the role of the EP in this procedure.

As part of the fourth module, a debate was held with Dr. Sylwia Spurek, former Deputy Ombudsperson, Member of the European Parliament and Vice Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), Francisco Guerreiro, MEP and member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI), and Zrinda Mozara - Accredited Parliamentary Assistant and political advisor to Manuela Ripa, MEP and member of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). The debate was organized under the title "The last 4 years of the food system transition in the eyes of the most progressive decision-makers, Members of the European Parliament ". During the meeting, the moderator of the debate - Morgan Janowicz, a member of the Board of the Green REV Institute posed a key question to the guests: what is your perspective on the last 4 years related to the food system transition? Has the time been used or wasted? Those in attendance were able to hear the interesting perspectives of people from Poland, Portugal and Germany, as well as those representing various EP committees (FEMM, AGRI and ITRE), and exchange experiences from Poland and Finland.

As part of the fifth module, the participants visited the gallery of the plenary chamber of the European Parliament in Brussels. This part of the visit was moderated by MEP Ph.D Sylwia Spurek, who presented key elements related to the organization of the plenary chamber and the rules of participation of MEPs in plenary sessions. Ms. Spurek also showed the differences in the functioning of the European Parliament - the time of the COVID-19 pandemic vs. current procedures and practice.

The module, the sixth, included a meeting at the headquarters of the European Climate Foundation (ECF), one of the largest philanthropic initiatives that aims to help combat the climate crisis by supporting the development of a net-zero-emission society at the national, European and global levels. ECF supports more than 700 partner organizations to drive urgent and ambitious policies that support the goals of the Paris Agreement, contribute to the public debate on climate action, and help lead a socially responsible transition to a net-zero economy and sustainable society in Europe and globally. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Quentin Genard (Director, EU Institutional Relations Program).



#### **4. RESULTS**

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- A. To learn about the environment, logistics, space of the European Parliament - basic knowledge.
- B. To learn about the functioning of the European Parliament from three perspectives: politological, political and the perspective of an EP official - basic knowledge.
- C. To learn about the importance of political parties, political factions in the process of organizing the EP and influencing European policies - basic knowledge.
- D. To learn about the organization of the EP and the legislative process - basic knowledge.
- E. Direct contact with decision-makers in their work environment (EP headquarters).
- F. To learn about the functioning of one of the world's largest independent organizations supporting green transformation (ECF).

#### **5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Each of the competencies acquired during the study visit needs to be deepened and practically applied in order to fully use and develop the knowledge gained. Recommendations address two areas. First, to continue the educational process. Second, to provide those participating with opportunities for practical action.

As part of the educational process, it would be best to organize workshops so that, based on the knowledge gained in Brussels, we can prepare those participating to critically analyze, solve problems, and communicate with key stakeholders in advocacy activities. On the other hand, in the context of practical action, it is recommended to enable interested persons to conduct advocacy activities at the EU level under the supervision of an experienced mentor.

As part of the complementary educational process, the following meeting topics can be identified:

1. Political and legal relations between the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council (EU) - competencies, processes in which they participate with the example of selected legislative and non-legislative processes;



2. Differences in positions on the green transformation between European political families - where political divisions run, where positions are the same, whether and how political rhetoric affects formal positions (voting in the EP);
3. Key bodies, actors, EP working positions involved in the legislative and non-legislative procedure;
4. EP rules on transparency - regulations, strengths, gaps in the system and recommended changes;
5. Advocacy case studies on the example of a selected campaign on food system transition - goals, target groups, communication channels, tools, results;
6. Advocacy campaign planning - diagnosis of the problem, identification of the process being campaigned, identification of stakeholders and allies, internal and external communication strategy, organization of the team, planning of implementation activities.

Morgan Janowicz (Partnership Coordinator, Green REV Institute) - "Through the active participation of participants in the debate organized with MEPs, we were able to effectively bring the topic of food system transition closer. It also opened up those participating to a broader understanding of today's climate challenges and showed that international cooperation is not only about sharing good practices, but also about developing solutions together and broadening the public debate."

Anja Presnukhina (Project Coordinator, Educational Center Visio) - "The study trip to Brussels gave the participants another dimension to everything that we have learned during the first, national part of the project. To make a change to the existing system, we have to understand how and where these systems function."