

WORKSHOP WITH MEP MR. TRIANTAFILIDES

On Friday the 13th of March at the American Academy Limassol we had the honour of having **MEP Mr. Triantafilides** in attendance at our EU workshop during our politics lesson.

The Class 6-7 politics class has been for the entirety of term 3 working in on aspects of the syllabus involving the EU, the presence of an actual MEP in our class provided a great opportunity to the students to find out first hand information regarding their fields of study.

THE FORMAT:

The format followed by our workshop session involved:

1. 30 minute **presentation** by Mr. Triantafilides.
2. 20 minute general **Q & A session**.
3. 40 minute **workshop session** where students asked Mr. Triantafilides questions regarding their field of study.

THE PRESENTATION



Following a brief introduction by Politics teacher and Project Coordinator **Mr. Andreas Efstathiou**, Mr. Triantafilides addressed the students.

Mr. Triantafilides presentation included the following topics:

1. The historical background information regarding the creation of the EU.
2. The 3 policy pillars of EU.
3. The main institutions of the EU.
4. The Cypriot electoral process for MEPs.



THE WORKSHOP SESSION

The students were sitting in **four groups** based on their fields of research and their term project subject. During this session Mr. Triantafilides passed by each group and helped the students with their work and answered their direct questions. Below are of the **conclusions** and some of the **questions** asked by the students.

Group 1: Enlargement

Maria George

Amir Mirshamsi

Krystal Ioannou

Eliza Sofroniou

Thisbe Savva



Group 2: EU and the Cyprus Problem

Maria Kapari

Alexia Patouris

Mathew Kervyn

Koumis Antoniou



Group 3: European Parliament

Chris Ktorides

Athena Eleftheriou

Lazaros Josefides



Group 4: Economy & the Euro

Madushanie

Maria Borissova

Roman Antoci

Levi Pasis

Sergey Irodov



Group observations by Krystal Ioannou:

Seminar With Mr Triantafyllides

THE EU

The 2 world wars caused the people to form the EU not long after because many Europeans were killed. Their aim was to stop Europe from suffering more Wars. Their aim was peace. After the end of the Second World War, moves towards European integration were seen by many as an escape from the extreme forms of nationalism which had devastated the continent. One such attempt to unite Europeans was the European Coal and Steel Community which, while having the modest aim of centralized control of the previously national coal and steel industries of its member states, was declared to be "a first step in the federation of Europe". The founding members of the Community were Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany.

The EU is not concentrated in a single city. They are instead based in 3 cities (Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg) with agencies and offices elsewhere. However Brussels has become the primary seat, of each major institution and now the European Council as the important work is done there and involves public speaking.

Elections

Elections for the European Parliament take place every five years. The last European elections were in June 2004, and the next elections will be in June 2009.

There are 78 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) representing the UK; after the 2009 elections there will be 72 UK MEPs. The UK is divided into 12 regions, and each region has between three and ten MEPs.

MEPs are elected under a proportional representation system. In Britain, you have one vote to elect all of your MEPs. Each party puts forward a list of candidates, called a regional list, and you vote for one of these lists or for an independent candidate. The parties are then allocated a number of MEPs according to their share of the vote.

How to Vote For MEP:

EU parliament is the biggest in the world: 27 country members; 500million people; 785 MPs

India and the USA are high in the charts as well with 545 and 435 MPs.

In the past, it was up to the National government representatives but since 1976 the votes come directly from the people of the country.

The 27 members have their own rules. The treaty said all countries should have uniform laws to obey but some countries did not agree on this so instead they made some uniform and the rest of the decisions were up to the country.

As of 1 May 2004, Cyprus is a full member state of the European Union, hence it keeps close political, cultural and economic relations with the rest of the member states.

Cyprus has 6 members of the European parliament. The number of members is according to the size of the population of the country. Democratic policy of electing and therefore use voting (ballots). You can only be part of one Parliament; you cannot be involved in other positions at the same time. Cyprus is one of the most democratic countries because of the low parliamentary entry threshold. There is only one electoral area.

Who are able to vote: Most over 18

Who are allowed to be voted: This differs in each country; they have their own rules in this case. In most instances it is the ages 18, 23, 24. In Cyprus, it's from the age of 25 and over. The qualifications to running are that you must be a resident of 6 months or more. In Luxembourg, you must be a resident for 5 years before applying to run.

Election date: 4th-7th of June. This has been made uniform throughout the countries. In the UK, it is done on Thursdays and in Cyprus on Saturdays.

If someone leaves/resigns from Parliament: In Cyprus, the candidate with the second most votes in the elections will take his/ her place.

If someone resigns for any reason and would like to enter the National Parliament or any other position they must stand in elections.

Military issues:

Europe is part of NATO and use their facilities. To form a European army would need political unity. NATO has capabilities that the EU doesn't have; what NATO did in Afghanistan could not be done by an EU army, so the need for cooperation would still exist in the future. What the EU needs is a set of clear common policies to create a military union that exists alongside NATO without being a competitor. The EU needs to develop own forces to become truly independent from USA and keep the strength between EU and USA. Countries provide troops if there are any need of them for the European Union. Example in Kosovo. Troops were sent from the EU to help.

USA- Iraq war: USA asked EU to help even though they already were involved but some members did not accept.

The Euro:

The euro is the currency of the 329 million people who live in the 16 euro-area countries. It is also used, either formally as legal tender or for practical purposes, by a whole array of other countries such as close neighbours and former colonies.

It is therefore not surprising that the euro has rapidly become the second most important international currency after the dollar, and in some respects (e.g. the value of cash in circulation) has even overtaken it.

Apart from making travel easier, a single currency makes very good economic and political sense. Its a stable currency. A single currency is also a logical complement to the single market which makes it more efficient. The size and strength of the euro area also better protect it from external economic shocks. UK- due to tradition and its economy they did not want to join the euro zone. No one can say whether it was

a good idea or not. No one can judge how the UK would be (in the current crisis or not) if they were in the euro zone.

EU doesn't want to rely on one country for resources. Russia is an important country in this aspect. EU doesn't want energy to be monopolized.

Selected Questions from the Group Session:

Krystal: Why is there no effective European army?

Mr. Triantafilides: *He thought this was a very good question, and it was currently brought up in one of their meetings. They believe that if they ever had a problem and needed to intrude in a war they would collect troops from the member countries. Several EU brigades have been created in the past years, starting with the multinational force that consists of up to 60,000 soldiers drawn from the armies of Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain. Because the EU is the biggest union in the world, they want to keep peace.*

The European Union is aiming to create a common army within the next 50 years, an ambitious and controversial team. EU army will have greater efficiency for such a multinational force: The EU's member states have some 1.9 million soldiers -- 50 percent more than the United States -- and spend roughly \$250 billion a year on military means, yet the effectiveness of these armies is one-tenth of the U.S. military. A European army could save a significant amount of money, with smaller states focusing on individual military components, rather than having to build up a full military.

The 27-member body in the past has successfully launched numerous stability and peacekeeping missions, with the most media-heavy being in the former Yugoslavia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and most recently, in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the EU still has a long way to get to a joint army.



Thisbe: What effect will enlargement have on peoples jobs? Will there be an influx of workers for member countries of the European Union?

Mr. Triantafilides: *Enlargement of the EU has already boosted growth and created new jobs in the European Union. The EU is the main economic partner of all the applicant countries and has benefited liberalization. As new member states join, there is every reason to believe that the positive economic*

developments will continue. In the present EU, only about 4% of the population live and work in a country other than their home. People are reluctant to leave their home country family and friends unless they desperate circumstances forcing them.

Now with the current crisis employment is a great fear people have all over. Poland's situation when they joined the EU wasn't as bad as they thought it would be. It is a dangerous situation but not a total crisis at the moment.

Krystal: How far can the EU expand and how will enlargement affect the EU's relations with the rest of the world?

Mr. Triantafilides: *The European Union had not defined its limits in geographical terms but every applicant meet the basic conditions laid down by the European Council in Copenhagen: democratic laws, respect for*

human rights and protection of minorities, functioning market economy capacity to withstand competitive pressure in the EU and the ability to take on obligated membership.

The benefits the Union has on enlargement economically politically and cultural are:

1. Extension of the zone of peace, stability, and prosperity in Europe as well as security for its people.
2. More than 100 million people in rapidly growing economies to the EU's market of 370 million to create jobs in old and new states.
3. Better quality of life for citizens throughout Europe as new members adopt to EU policies for protection of the environment and the fight against crime, drugs and illegal immigrants.
4. Enrich EU through increased cultural diversity, interchange of ideas, and better understanding of other people.
5. Strengthen the Union's role in the world affairs- in foreign and security policy, trade policy and other fields of global governance.
6. Stable democracies which we already see all over.
7. High rates of economic growth and better employment prospects
8. Growing trade.

Enlargement will provide new opportunities for countries outside the Union and should not put lines within Europe. The EU is developing its relations with all its neighbouring countries to ensure continuity in cross border relations and neighbouring countries to benefit from enlargement.

Maria B.: Economics and politics are involved in the contemporary world. Should Europe follow America to punish Iran in the economic restriction?

Mr. Triantafilides: No, Europe in my personal opinion should decide what's best for itself. We are big enough to make our own decisions and form our own opinions. America is not always a good example to follow.



Sergei I: What are the benefits of the euro?

Mr. Triantafilides: When you go different countries you don't have to exchange money and you don't lose money on exchange rate, so you get the money as it is, and right now 12 countries have the euro. It is also easier to trade within countries.

Eliza: Is it true that the EU's interests and allies put their laws and rules on the side and want Turkey to be a member whether or not they obey rules?

Mr. Triantafilides: Each country has their own interests as it is, each member has their own opinion on the entry of Turkey in the EU but unless there are no negative aspects from the union, Turkey cannot join. The EU cannot make their own obligations. In order for Turkey to join they must be up to the criteria of Copenhagen and economic up to a certain level.

Maria G: Other than meeting the standards are there any other reasons for a country to not be accepted into the European Union?

Mr. Triantafilides: Well it is up to the other Euro members and meeting the criteria. For example, Morocco applied but their application did not succeed. They have to fill Copenhagen criteria. Turkey is not a Euro country but it is too late to decline them because negotiations have started already.

Krystal: But Cyprus is geographically in Asia, why have they been accepted into the union?

Mr. Triantafilides: Well back when Mr Triantafyllides went to school Cyprus was always considered to be European. It doesn't only matter about the geographical aspect but also about the countries tradition and

culture. Since Cyprus comes from the Greek culture, it is considered European because the Greeks were the ones that made up Europa (Europe).



Thisbe: How do you know how to make separate rules and regulations for each country in the European Union? What conditions are they based on and how do you go about it?

Mr. Triantafilides: *The different rules are basically based on evolution, it varies from time to time and how the society grows.*

It is also based on the background of different countries including the history and there is a great deal of equality trying to be made.

Koumis: How can EU help the Cyprus problem?

Mr. Triantafilides: *The Cyprus problem is one of the greatest debates raised for the past 30 years. After joining the EU there has been hope that the problem would be solved with the support of 26 other member states.*

The fact that the EU does not have the foundations of a powerful defence force does worry us as a country knowing that Turkey is a permanent threat to our country. However, as mentioned disputes on the formation of the use own military force, are signs of hope for better protection.

On the other hand, the EU protects its members and issues, such as economical ones. For instance, such as one of the world wide economic crisis we are confronted with. In case of need the EU central bank will fund its members.

The diversification of energy sources is also another beneficial consideration of all EU members.

The EU has proven to be efficient in winning many battles such as the one yesterday, regarding missing people. In conclusion, we are certain that with the support of our fellow EU member states, we will reach a satisfactory solution to our problem.

Maria B.: How will Europe continue the dialogue with Russia about the energy resources? Will it be the North stream, the Blue stream or the recently created project Nabuko?

Mr. Triantafilides: *The EU does not only want to include Russia in the distribution of energy resources but also wants to include Turkey. As Turkey is a very economically stable country at the moment. So the European union is continuing the dialogue with both.*

Sergei I: Why doesn't the UK want to adopt the euro, and why doesn't the EU kick them out?

Mr. Triantafilides: *Because the EU doesn't kick out anyone because if it did, then the EU would slowly fall apart, because there would be at least one reason that a country will not be able to comply with so there wouldn't be EU anymore, and EU doesn't pressure countries to do things, they give them extended deadlines, so when UK is ready and is willing to adopt the euro it will, because at this point it just thinks that UK pound is stronger than the Euro.*



Conclusions:

The European Union is the only area in the world with no borders. Boundaries of Croatia and Turkey will enlarge. The bigger the Union becomes the more power it will have and the relations will change for the better as the Union will be respected but envied in a way from outside countries in competition. Enlargement must be followed by economy and a defence policy. The EU will continue to grow will no borders because there is no say when or if another union in the world will form. If Croatia and Turkey are accepted the boundaries will of course grow.

A carefully manages enlargement is in the interest of the EU. The EU, which started with six members only has benefited enormously from enlarging over time. From a political point, enlargement will increase political stability throughout Europe enabling the EU to tackle international problems more effectively. From an economic point, enlargement will increase the size of the single market, member countries and administrative procedures. The enlarged EU will continue to be committed to the development of economy.