

Specialization traineeship 2

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My second homework for the Specialization traineeship consists in a comparison between some centres of Europe Direct in Romania and those in Spain. The aim in this case is to analyse eventually the events that each centre has organised and find a pattern that each organization follows, or the themes that they seem to approve more than others. In this case the period considered for this analysis are the months January, February, March and April, by following the events and the posts that each organization has posted online, the objective is to illustrate and describe the most characteristic ones. When considering the Europe Direct centres in Romania, these play an important role in what means bringing together the European institutions and the responsive Europeans. They do so by organizing dialogues between the citizens, by discussing about important themes in the present and the possible future of the European Union. As regard the centres in Romania I've chosen 5 centres in an unbiased way. The following centres are the organizations that I've decided to study more closely: Arad, Bacău, Iași, Maramureș and Vaslui.

Europe Direct Arad will be the first centre analysed which describes its role as spreading information to the citizens about the rights that the citizens have, the legislation and the programs that the European Union offers financing for. In the first place it spreads important knowledge about the measures implemented by the EU. From the first posts for this year the centre is focused on informing the citizens about the new changes with the charger that might eventually decrease the pollution and the level of energy required to charge the devices. It also focuses on informing the citizens about the fact that Belgium is the country that will now oversee the presidential role of the European Commission for the next six months. It's important to point out the accuracy that the centre adopts when informing the citizens of the region Arad about interesting facts about Europe, Romania and possibly the latest news that may be of interest to its citizens. It also focuses on giving more attention to the projects that are applied in the region Arad, in this case we're talking about the project Climate Action which has been financed by an EU grant, with the aim to bring more responsibility when applied to the environment, to students aged 15-21 years. This is an example of project that wants to better inform the new generations and therefore better teach them how to participate more actively in the protection of the environment. Among the posts that the centre has, we may find different areas of interests, environment, community responsibility, key insights about what is happening at the European level, as well as changes in the Common Policy. As regard this aspect there's an article which informs the citizens about the investment that the company Microsoft has had in the OpenAI sector, and eventually it follows the changes that it may have in the competitive market. The following posts want to inform the younger generations about the opportunities that are offered by the project DiscoverEU which gives the possibility to some students to travel freely around the whole Europe. It also wants to inform the students about the European Forum of the Youth which wants to clarify some aspects linked to the responsibility that some young students have when going to vote at the European elections. Linked to this aspect the centre offers in different posts and perspectives the way the European Union and its institutions influences our everyday life as well as the perspective that the Europeans have of their life in the EU. Overall, the score is 7.1 out of 10, which is still high, and it reflects the fact that the European citizens are quite satisfied with the way things are managed by the EU institutions and the opportunities that it gives each person. There's an interesting article which

focuses on the European Youth Week, its aim which wants to attract more young people to participate more actively in the learning process of democratic values. In these past months an important event has taken place, which has reunited the representatives from different Europe Direct centres' representatives. The meeting wanted to reunite in Bucharest the representatives of the centres of the region, among which Romania, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia and Malta. The themes discussed were linked to the collaboration between the ED centres, as well as the development of a common project that may bring closer the ED centres and the European parliament elections that are going to take place in June. Among the important news that it spreads, it has also announced the launching of its own podcast which has discussed so far topics such as the balance of the ED Arad of the previous year, as well as the project that's going to implement in the 2024 year and the participation of the younger generations with disabilities in the local community. It's significant to see the important impact that it has on the local community as well as the level of acknowledgement of the changes within Europe. The centre has been implied in different encounters with students to inform as many classes as possible of the European Parliament elections as well as the values of being a responsible European citizen. The level of awareness and active participation of the younger generation shows also in the European Pub Quiz Night that has been organized by the Young Offensive and ED Arad. Another important event that has taken place in these past months is the encounter between the ED Arad and the representatives of the project Erasmus + iEUElect, which also implies the organizations Association Share Education from Romania, Dracon Rules Design Studio from Greece, and Senfineco from Poland. The aim of this project is to offer the possibility to the young from rural backgrounds and disabilities to express their vote and opinion in a more freely way, therefore the aim of the event was to raise awareness and increase information. Another aspect that ED Arad has focused on large part is to inform the citizens of its community about the fake news phenomenon as well as the ways it may present itself in and the possible approaches to adopt to fight it. Furthermore, it's important first to inform we and do some background research before spreading information. On this account there has been an important encounter which wants to inform better the students about the "Populism vs. Pragmatism and the future of the EU". And then the ED Arad has hosted another important episode about the projects that the Youth Offensive has, the active participation of the younger generations in the local community projects, the benefits of the European projects on the local community, and the effect of the fake news on every day's life.

The next Europe Direct centre that I decided to analyse is the ED Bacău, considering the same period January- April in order to see if there are any particular changes. When considering the posts and articles published by the centre ED Bacău we may find similarities with the other centre in Arad but also all the other ED centres. The aim of the organization is to offer its local citizens a as much as possible wide perspective on the happenings of the European Union. It wants to inform the people about some possible curiosities but also the facts and measures taken by the EU that may be of more practical use. Among these topics we may find the campaign of information about the Erasmus+ program to fill in the students about the opportunities that the EU puts directly at their disposal. The ED Bacău centre has participated also at the regional reunion in Bucharest to discuss further the projects in common with the other centres and the future collaborations. It spreads information about the EU institutions by also sharing important tools that may be used by the citizens in order to get better informed. One of which is Simona, which is the virtual assistant of the campaign "together in eu" which wants to educate about the European Parliament but not only. It's interesting to see the centre offer interactive and more active ways of learning and getting educated about the EU values.

It has also organized an academic debate in which to discuss why to choose Europe, and therefore getting to know more about the decision-making process and its foundations. An important topic that gives the citizens a new perspective is the information given by the centre about security online, which not only considers that of the adults but also takes into consideration how to protect kids in the virtual world. It presents historic and environmental issues in a colourful and entertaining way to captivate the attention of the interested citizens. Particular attention has also been given to the six priorities that the EU wants to concentrate on in the following year. These issues are linked to the EU Green Deal, the economic area, the digital transition, the European values as well as the way of living, better international relations, and a more transparent European democracy. It enlightened about the benefits coming from the Common European Cohesion Policy, it has strengthened the market to be more competitive as well as a more developed infrastructure. The ED centre focuses a lot on informing the citizens about topics that may interest them in a direct way, such as the Digital EU policy, which wants to inform the citizens of the local community about the measures that the EU has taken in order to protect them but also their security online, as well as their rights as consumers. The debate previously described about the discussion of the EU values has eventually taken place as a competition between two teams from high school. This is a curious way of motivating the students to do more, learn more and achieve more and eventually win the competition. This competition has been held locally indifferent schools as sort of semi-finals, which has then finished at the regional stage. On one hand the students get involved more actively in the learning process and on the other hand they get more familiarized with the process of working in team and expressing their opinions.

The Europe Direct Iași has as an objective the desire to involve more actively and directly the citizens of its community. For this analysis too, the period considered is January-April, by reading its posts and article in this period. From the beginning it emerges an interest in informing the citizens about also the differences between the different European cultures. Once again, we encounter a quite interactive way of teaching the readers the European values. The centre presents a curious Learning Corner which wants to educate the people in a fun way. The organisation involves in a more dynamic way the students from the university specialised in European Studies. This is a great opportunity for both counterparties to gain experience, knowledge and networking. These young students are implicated directly in encounters, learning activities, debates and so on. One way of educating is by informing the citizens of the local community the events also abroad that they might participate to directly. One example is the EU Sustainable Investment Summit which wants to inform about the opportunity to learn more about the green transition and the measures that'll be applied. The important thing about this summit was the opportunity to participate also on the platform online. The ED Iași centre also launched an initiative called EuroAȘI in which they want to better inform the citizens that're going to vote this year at the European Parliament elections. By presenting testimonials from different people implicated, the citizens may better understand their rights and it may raise better awareness among the interested ones. The general aim is to involve, educate and offer new key insights. It's valuable the addressing of topics such as the recovery and resilience plans, which are a central part of the NextGenerationEU program, aimed at overcoming eventually the period of crisis. It addressed the grants offered by the EU to Romania, within the REPowerEU program. The ED Iași centre as all the others from Romania has participated at the regional Training which has taken place in Bucharest, to discuss and develop further the challenges that the EU may be encountering as well as the future elections that are going to take place in June. The organization has been implicated and has organized other encounters with the students, such as the "InclusEU: European Policies to Support

Youth Volunteerism”, in which they have explained the opportunities that the students are offered, the programs that they may be interested such as ALMA and DiscoverEU. It has been an encounter in which representatives from different countries such as Spain, Italy, Hungary, Portugal, The Netherlands, Ireland have taken part. They have talked about the importance of inclusion, and the European values. Among the other topics listed, the ED Iași centre presents the citizens with possible new carrier paths and vacant jobs, or possible opportunities for those interested in internships at the EU institutions. In the past months the representatives of the ED Iași centre have organized different events and encounters in order to inform the students about what being a European citizen and the importance of expressing our opinion through voting. Among the articles published by the centre there has been another important event, the Model European Union Iasi, in this edition the students have presented the decision-making process and in what it consists of. The students have been given roles which represented the EU Council and the European Parliament. Overall, the ED Iași is very implicated in organizing encounters with the students, involving them actively and pushing them by presenting them with challenges when speaking in public that may help them growing up.

Then there’s the Europe Direct Maramures centre, like all the other centres previously described, the span of time taken into consideration is once again the January-April period, the search has considered the posts published on their social media platforms. From the beginning of the year the organization has furnished the citizens with valuable information about the ongoing events in the EU. By meaningful events we may consider the changes in the measures adopted by the common policy, for example there has been a post which informed the readers about the WeVerify platform which has been put at disposition for the journalists in order to fight the spread of fake news and disinformation. Linked to this aspect another important tool which the readers have been informed of is the Géant Net which has the aim to connect the European researchers, students and professors. It has been a way to inform the citizens about the connectivity and efficiency of the infrastructure, but it also contributes to the increasing cooperation between analysers interested in topics alike. The centre overall is very implicated in spreading useful information about sustainability, the measures applied to the SME enterprises, digital security and many more. On this regard it has organized a contest to test the participants about their possible contributions to the Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Worlds. It also analysed an aspect related to the digital education, by informing the readers about the important role that the professors have when educating the students about the use of technologies and the continuous improvement of their capabilities. When reading the articles published on their blog, we may find interesting their interest in organizing events directly with the citizens, we’re not talking anymore about informing only the students and the younger generations. Here we refer also to the elder generations, among the students have also participated the workers from the administrative staff, managers, professors and other interested citizens which have been informed of more practical aspects about the EU: the EU’s Commission priorities for the period 2019-2024, the online platforms, the NextGenerationEU program, and many others. It offers in a practical and effective way information that the citizens may find interesting and eventually deepen their understanding of the topic. A lot of posts and articles are about sustainability, the protection of the environment, and digital literacy because various studies have shown that quite an important proportion of the fake news phenomena focuses on these issues. The centre has been implicated in different encounters with the students, in which they have informed them about the upcoming European Parliament elections, the importance of this event and why they should exercise their right of voting. The event has been organized in collaboration with the information point EuroDesk aimed at informing the young

students about the democratic EU values, as well as the EU institutions. The process of educating the younger generation does not limit itself at the EU elections, and fundamental values, it also wants to imply more actively the students in learning more about the EU green transition as well as the Green Deal Pact. In an organized event at a local school they have discussed in more details these two topics, by giving more practical examples in order for the students to have a better understanding of how important this topic should be for each of us. The sense of cooperation in a sustainable way also is reflected in the contest REGIOSTARS 2024 which has been organized to motivate the citizens to present regional and viable aimed projects that will eventually be financed by the EU. Another topic that I found interesting and quite new, if compared to the other centres, is their interest in educating the citizens about the stereotypes linked to genders, when applied to the everyday life and in a more effective way to the labour market. The campaign promoted is called EndGenderStereotypes which has the objective to underline once more the EU values, about not discrimination of genders, freedom of expression and gender equality. Among the other topics discussed, the ED Maramureş centre focuses also on the aspect which regards the measures applied by the EU concerning the improvement of the internships in the European Area, also the HorizonEU 2025-2027 which reflects the principles about research and development area and innovation in the EU when looking at the following years. In the previous months the EU has applied a lot of measures in the direction of safeguarding the citizens when it comes to their security online. Among these measures we may find: the Deepfake Guide, which wants to act against the spread of false information, the project “DNS4EU and the European DNS Shield”, a project financed by the EU and the HADEA agency. This centre as the previous ones, has contributed to raise awareness among the students by organizing encounters in the local schools to deal with the importance of the measures applied by the EU concerning the Green transition. On this regard the representatives of the centre have organized a contest and a competition among the students, to enhance their individual opinions and to strengthen their working in teams.

The last Europe Direct centre from Romania that I've decided to study is the ED Vaslui, the choice once again was unbiased, also I was interested to analyse if there were differences between the ED centres regionally speaking. The span of time analysed are the months January, February, March and April, by studying their social media pages and news. When reading the first posts, a new element that attracts the attention of the reader is the electronic newsletter “Europe in Direct” that the ED Vaslui centre has promoted, which wants to spread the latest news and valuable information about the previous events and the active programs eligible for financing. It analysed another topic, which is the extension of the EU, by describing the possible new countries that are willing to adhere to the European Union Area, in particular Albania, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine, by giving helpful key insights about each country. In this period the representatives of the centre have taken part to the regional meeting together with the delegates of the other countries such as Italy, Bulgaria, Croatia, Malta, Slovenia and Greece. This year's edition had the theme “Last-minute preparations for the European elections”, which took place in Bucharest in the 30-31 January period, and it presented itself as a constructive dialogue between the respective ED centres. The ED Vaslui centre has been involved in the organization of different encounters with the local schools, to instruct the students through practical testimonials the experience of guests that have studied abroad. This could be a great approach to stimulate the attention and curiosity of the audience, the students in this way had the opportunity to learn more about the possibilities to study in another EU country offered by the EU. This discussion was followed by delving into the foundations of the EU, providing information and more knowledge about the

upcoming elections and the EU institutions and values. On this regard, when accessing their social media pages, the readers are provided with more data about some sensitive topics, such as the process of reconstructing the damaged and at-risk habitats, in order to improve the level of biodiversity and the overall ecosystems. Furthermore, the readers are informed about the laws that the EU has passed, to improve the overall biodiversity, environment and the food security. On this regard the centre has organized another significant contest “Young People in European Forests, which involved the participation of 17 teams coming from different schools of the region. Sidelong this event another important encounter has been organized by the ED Vaslui centre “The iVOCE 2024” competition. The objective of the contest was to guide the students and supporting them when it comes to expressing their opinion through public speaking. In conclusion the ED Vaslui centre presents like the other centres elements which characterize itself, and distinguishes it from the other organizations, but at the same time we may find similarities which indicate a general activity, coming from all the analysed centres, of informing and educating the citizens of the local community, by giving helpful and worthy information in different ways, which may be more active, effective and dynamic.

When talking about the Europe Direct Centres spread in Spain, they present overall the same characteristics as the ones previously described, from Romania. These centres are presented as information points, a bridge between the European institutions and the local communities. These are points of contact, which want to educate and furnish more knowledge about the latest news regarding the EU institutions, its values and the change in measures applied to the common Policies. These centres are composed by representatives which then organize different kinds of events and encounters in a direct way with schools and other organizations. Other public discussions with representatives of other organizations are established throughout the year depending on the topics of interest.

The first Spanish Europe Direct centre that I decided to describe is the centre of Coruña, the time period considered is January-April, based on their posts on their social media pages, I’m going to describe the activities that it mostly specializes in. When reading the first articles published on their pages one of the first important events that they wanted to inform the citizen about is the Recovery and Resilience plan which was going to be organized in March. On this regard the invitation was a public one, and it was addressed to all categories of readers and citizens, with the possibility to participate also online. And it offered the opportunity for citizens to learn more about the RRP applied to Spain in a more direct way. Among the other areas of interest, the centre provided more information about the digital economy topic, ‘Europe Data Act’. As a topic it defined the new rules and rights that characterize the use of the data generated by different enterprises, particularly industrial data, in order to ensure a safeguarded environment in the digital world, by specifying the responsible who can benefit from the creation of data and in what cases. Among the specific projects implemented by the ED Coruña centre we may find the INVolutarios, which presents itself in the category of European solidarity, in this area different events have been organized in order to give more opportunities to volunteers. The ED Coruña centre has organized a series of different encounters in schools with the aid of other representatives from other cities of the region, about the EU values, regarding the upcoming EU elections. The centre is also implied in the organization of different virtual tours and experiences which want to give a direct insight and a more interactive one about the European experience. On this regard another event which implied the presentation of the women involved in the EU institutions has been organized, with the aim to learn more about their roles. The centre has also informed in the following articles about the launch of the European Union’s new platform of

Citizen Participation which wants to involve in a more direct way the citizens to express their opinion and contribute to the EU policies of different areas. On this regard there was a post informing about the organization of the 10th European Summit of Regions and cities, a discussion about the challenges and possible solutions that may be given for the future of Europe. By the participation of mayors, regional ministers, and other decision-makers the debate has been a successful one, which has offered a more general image about the people's concerns such as democracy, sustainable development and so on. In general, the centre has organized other events to give more information about the opportunities offered to the youth by the European Parliament as well as the decision-making process. This aspect that can be seen when reading the articles of the centre is that they also have visited elementary schools by presenting overall the EU values and still give the kids the possibility to learn by drawing and do other interactive activities.

The second Europe Direct Centre that I've decided to analyse is the centre of Cantabria, by considering the period January-February. From the start there's a focus on educating the public about the European values and institutions. It does so by participating in events organized with other partners as well as a direct implementation of projects on a regional basis. The ED Cantabria centre offers more knowledge about areas of interest such as digital security, an important topic for the citizens, it informs about the relevance that it has for our security in the digital world as well as the measures implemented by the EU to protect the rights and security of its citizens. During these months it also has organized different encounters in schools to inform the youth about the opportunities that voting in the next EU elections and expressing their opinion has on their lives as actively involved European citizens. Among these topics, the encounters have also focused on educating the students about the opportunities given to the youth such as the DiscoverEU program, the Erasmus mobilities and the European Body of Solidarity. It also has participated in events organized with other partnerships in areas such as sports, which implied local teams.

Another Europe Direct centre that I've decided to talk about is the ED Lleida centre, once again by considering its posts on their social media pages. From the first events an important one which implies the participation of the citizens with their ideas and creative thinking is the event called Creative Europe, which involved themes such as inclusion, diversity, gender equality. The centre offers more information about events that may interest the youth in order to improve the local community, such as the event EURES, which presented itself as a recruiting event offered to the young people, interested in working in areas of tourism, entertainment and hospitality abroad. The organization has launched in the previous months a platform 'Europe with a click' which wants to be an easy tool to use for the citizens, a quite immediate approach to spread more information about the latest EU news, as well as its institutions and the measures applied in the different sectors of interest. The centre as the previous ones has also informed through several post the importance of being digitally literate, which implies having an adequate knowledge about what navigating online means, the risk of having the personal data exposed, as well as the possible threats online. On this regard the citizens have been given more information about the Europe Digital Act, and how it can protect the EU citizens, their privacy and security online. Among other events, the centre has been implied in different episodes of encounter the students in different schools from the local region. They have been doing so by organizing interactive activities of inviting testimonials, as well as proposing interactive games in order for the students to learn more actively about the EU values, its institutions, focusing especially on the upcoming elections. At the same time another area of interest is the topic about sustainability,

linked to this matter, the centre has organized encounter in which they've discussed with the students about the importance of being involved actively in the protection of the environment, as well as the actions that they could actively implement such as recycling, and consuming in a more conscious way.

Another centre that I've chosen is the Europe Direct Maestrazgo centre, the time period considered is like the previous ones January-April, by analysing the main events which have been posted on their social media platforms. This centre like the others, is involved regionally in the process of educating the local community, by offering continuous information about the main events which may influence their everyday lives, as well as their rights as Europeans. A topic that has been discussed by the centre is the fake news phenomena, together with the spread of false information. Together with their partners from Punto Europeo de Ciudadanía they have presented a webinar, focused on learn more about how to fight the fake news and limit the spreading of disinformation. The organization has set up encounters with representative from other organizations alike to inform the students about their rights, the importance of knowing and sharing the EU values, as well as the meaning of being an active citizen. The students have been advised about the importance of voting, the responsibility that it involves, together with their right to express their opinions. For the young people, the centre has given throughout the months considered more information and important key insights about the internship opportunities that the EU institutions offer. More information about the measures applied in the Rural Policy has been provided, to help the citizens directly interested to better adapt to these changes and learn more about it. Other themes discussed have been the volunteer experiences obtained by the young students, and the importance for them to take part in projects that offer them the possibility to experience new cultures and live the European traditions in a more direct way, thanks to programs such as Erasmus+ and DiscoverEU. Meanwhile the other categories apart from the students, have been notified about different encounters organized in order to learn more about the NextGenerationEU program, its benefits and the measures presented in the plan.

After this comparison, between Europe Direct centres in Romania and Spain, we may say that both categories offer quite a wide range of services and tools to better educate the citizens about the importance of EU values, what being an actively involved citizen means, and how they can still improve in order to become one. They offer a wide range of sources in topics such as digital security, sustainability, European rights, consumer's rights, gender equality and many more. The representatives from both centres are involved directly in the organization of events in schools, in partnerships with other organization, to give a better understanding of the latest developments in the European Union and the opportunities that programs such as DiscoverEU and Erasmus+ may give. Considering the extension of the services provided and the information given, it may seem as the centres in Spain provide a quite larger network, when considering the other communities. At the same time there are no evident differences between the centre in the two countries, since organizations from both states are actively involved in promoting the European heritage, process of integrations and internship opportunities in the EU institutions.