



Conference and debate on Solidarity in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, FR

Unemployment, Social insecurity

Immigration, Integration

What kind of local and European solidarity do we aim at?

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Implemented by: Maison de l'Europe des Yvelines

Introduction:

- René PRIOUX, Municipal Councillor of Saint-Germain-en-Laye for International Relations
- Regina LECOINTE, General Secretary of La Maison de l'Europe des Yvelines

Speakers:

- Marta de Cidrac, Deputy mayor responsible for solidarity and housing
- Pierre Grison, head of the association "Solidarité Logement dans la Boucle et Habitat et Humanisme"
- Estelle Poidevin, policy analyst of the Information Desk of the European Commission in Paris

The CitiPart project has the support of Saint-Germain-en-Laye and the local politicians bring to mind that due to the principal of subsidiarity solidarity is a matter that concerns everyone at the local level.

After a short reminder of the entire project's context, the activities that were suggested to illustrate the three European values solidarity, tolerance and peace, and the meetings of the partners in 5 different cities, the conference draw a conclusion of the actions that were led on the topic of solidarity, which are:

- interviews with members of associations linked to the topic, and the concerned elected officials
- creation and distribution of questionnaires in order to do street interviews in the partner cities and beyond.

The two cities involved in the project, Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Poissy, draw a conclusion in comparing their results.

This allows to reveal the following main trends:



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1. a moderate level of appreciation of the inhabitants regarding solidarity
2. the reason for a solidarity act: a collective initiative that's proposed by an association (followed by personal action or the reaction to a crisis)
3. meaning of the word solidarity (first of all the idea of sharing, then humanitarian gestures, as well as voluntary work and peace)
4. when one of its members is in trouble first of all the family shows solidarity

After this local approach to get to know the value of solidarity, we see that the action taken by the European Union in terms of solidarity is barely known.

The guests of the conference (elected officials, responsible associations, European Commission) then had the possibility to present the activities they led at the local level.

Regarding the topic of housing the city of Saint-Germain-en-Laye is responding to multiple requests (20% social housing, unemployment of about 9%, lasting impoverishment of parts of the population). The Communal centre of social action (CCAS) is taking action in all those matters, but they don't work alone. They surround themselves with a variety of associations in order to create a network that can cover all those demands.

The head of an association helping to provide housing for people in need stresses that most of the volunteers committed to it for several years continue to give their time. Unfortunately solidarity perpetuates with crisis.

The representative of the European Commission stresses that solidarity isn't something new because it is one of the European Union's values since 1950.

In order to deal with the refugee crisis the European Commission took measures and tries to handle more than one million migrants. This speech causes some reactions in the room because it appears that France is not very supportive compared to countries like Germany.

To complete her remarks, the speaker introduced some financial resources helping to deal with the migration crisis.

Following the various presentations of the speakers, an open discussion was held.

It helps to take a step back from the topic of Solidarity and see what our neighbours do. Thus, England is known for its education in favour of solidarity from an early age, and the English are volunteers in charity organizations.

In the matter of housing, France, facing the migration crisis, offers some possibilities of accommodation but the speakers stress that migrants do not wish to remain in France. For example, the Syrians do not feel welcomed because in France there is no tradition of a Syrian community and in addition, delays in obtaining the residence permits are extremely long, especially in the Paris region.



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