

FUTURITY



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- Growth vs. degrowth – is growth always a good thing?
- De-centring ELT and grassroots teacher empowerment
- How to promote safe and inclusive learning spaces
- AI and the future of the English language teaching ‘industry’



'United in Solidarity. The European Parliament's role in the defence of Human Rights' – a unique experience with the Euroscola programme

Cristina Oliveira

The Emídio Navarro Secondary School Portuguese Euroscola 2022 delegation describe their trip to Strasbourg...

What is the Euroscola?

Euroscola is a programme created in 1990, enabling students from all over Europe to experience, first-hand, a day in the European Parliament in Strasbourg like a real member. Together, 16 to 18-year-old secondary level students, from member states, applicant countries and former member states are given the chance to interact with MEPs, debate, negotiate, vote and even adopt resolutions on real European issues. It is a must-try!

Hundreds of thousands of students have already taken part in this programme both on-site, in the EP's hemicycle and online (with the live video for multilingual meetings software [Interactio](#) and [Slido](#), the latter facilitating written interaction, such as live polls, Q&A etc., for all participants). The Euroscola team does a titanic job encouraging students to make the most of the experience by adopting a proactive role during the day, and express their ideas on the issues discussed with the experts. The [choice of topics](#) is never random; they are all Conference on the Future of Europe-related, thus ensuring the young participants' concerns are heard. In the session we attended, on the 2nd December, students had the opportunity to discuss the topic in the title above.

How to participate?

Schools can either win a national competition organised by the [European Parliament Liaison Offices](#) and participate in-person (with funding) or online, in which case the Euroscola team must be contacted. Selection procedures may vary from country to country; in our case, four of our students, encouraged by their Portuguese teacher, wrote an award-winning text about technology and how it can endanger or promote democracy. Subsequently, our school was invited to the 2nd December session - to which we took 12 students. How did we select the others? A demanding task! Needless to say, many were interested, however we did not have the means to take all of them, so our Board had to come up with selection criteria, the contents of a letter of intent being paramount.

Before leaving you with the students' contributions, I'd like to express a word of deep appreciation to the organising team.

Cristina (17) - 12th grade

On 2 December, Emídio Navarro Secondary School represented Portugal in the hybrid session of Euroscola 2022, in Strasbourg. This opportunity was the prize of the 'Euroscola - IEP Democracy Summit', in which I had participated. The application to the contest consisted of a text regarding 'Democracy and Technology', which aimed to raise young people's awareness of their identity as European citizens and the importance of their intervention in the future of Europe. When it comes to the day - it was an unforgettable experience for me. This summit offered me the possibility to debate crucial topics such as climate change and human rights with MEPs and other young people from various countries with different cultural backgrounds. I had the chance to intervene as if I were a real MEP and share my point of view in front of hundreds of people. It was an astonishing achievement and a unique experience that I will not forget.

Mariana (17) - 12th grade

Where shall I start? The European Parliament, of course! We were able to see the inside of the Parliament, to be seated where the members of the European Parliament usually are, to engage in discussions with MEPs (Delara Burkhardt and Stefan Krauss), hearing their points of view on some questions and problems, to share opinions, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the European Parliament's role, to learn more about their work and duties, to interact with other cultures and people from all around Europe, to understand the process of voting, to participate in active conversations, and more...

To briefly explain the day schedule: in the morning, after a breakfast offered by the Parliament, we were directed to the hemicycle where we were able to interact with MEPs, getting to understand their opinions and having some of our questions answered. It was interesting as we could even learn

more about their careers in the Parliament and the reasons that had motivated them. Then, we had lunch, also provided by the Parliament, and we had the opportunity to exchange a few words with people from other countries. In the afternoon we had the most interactive part, where we were asked to mix among different countries, and had the opportunity to explain our views/opinions in a variety of themes. We also had the chance to vote through the voting methods and systems of the MEPs. It was an extremely fulfilling experience. I'm extremely grateful for being able to join this activity – the first time I had gone to a foreign country without a family member!

Tiago (17) - 12th grade

On the 1st of December 2022, a group of four students, who had previously won the 'Concurso Euroscola-Cimeira das Democracias IEP 2022', and eight more students selected according to their school criteria started their journey to the European Parliament, in Strasbourg.

The next day we went to the parliament, where we heard some speeches from MEPs (Members of the European Parliament). We were, afterwards, directed to a session of open debate with hundreds of students of 28 different nationalities, from the 27 countries from the EU plus the UK, and many more online. This was an activity I would definitely participate in again. It was amazing to ~~experience debates and interactions in~~ a European institution.



Cristina Oliveira has been a teacher of EFL for 26 years, having worked with a wide range of students in Portugal and, whenever possible, from abroad. Cristina has also taught Portuguese to native speakers and foreign learners. Deeply interested in global issues and technology, she is always keen on promoting projects which draw attention to them.

