

Result sheet basic

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (HELENA, 26)

Summary and description of the character:

- Helena is from Thessaloniki, Greece, and has been living in Lille, France since her Erasmus semester. This has inspired her to work for the EU Commission in Brussels, but one day she would like to return to Greece and use her knowledge to help rural areas to develop equally, which can be funded by the EU. In general, she believes in the EU's decisions and sees the benefits of an EU-wide health card or the abolition of roaming costs, but hopes for deeper integration.

Role of the EU:

- She works in the office of the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs -> she actively supports the Member States in the fight against unemployment during the Covid 19 crisis.
- Making it easier to live abroad within the EU: health insurance, roaming.
- Use funds for further integration and equal opportunities across the EU.

Impact on a person's life:

- Erasmus program (living abroad) + assets that make living abroad easier.
- Agricultural funds to support different rural areas in the EU to create equal opportunities.

VARAZDIN, CROATIA (DAMIR, 56)

Summary and description of the character:

- Damir founded his own NGO that focuses on sustainability and climate change and offers workshops for students. He is very fond of the European Solidarity Corps as it gives young people across Europe the opportunity to work together in workshops and find EU-wide solutions, e.g. to prevent the extinction of bees. It also promotes the experience of being an EU citizen.

Role of the EU:

- European Green Deal improves the promotion of the issue beyond borders.
- European Solidarity Corps.

Impact on a person's life:

- Students can participate in workshops, meet different people and cultures and implement strategies in their home town

Result sheet basic

CORK, IRLAND (EDWARD, 75)

Summary and description of the character:

- Edward ran a small business in Ireland, which has now expanded into Europe and sells its products not only in local stores but throughout Europe.
- He also appreciates that his grandchild was able to participate in a European volunteer program, meeting new people and moving to Latvia.

Role of the EU:

- Thanks to the single market, the free movement of goods and people is possible, so Edwards' company can export its goods without paying additional taxes, and his grandson Rian can easily live in another city in Europe.

Impact on a person's life:

- Rian can participate in a volunteer program and extend his stay in Latvia because the EU makes it easy to live abroad

BOLOGNA, ITALY (GIULIA, 18)

Summary and description of the character:

- Giulia wants to become a chef and has already gained experience with Erasmus students in her parents' restaurant. She is therefore very interested in participating in an Erasmus program and doing an internship in Portugal. She would like to create a varied European menu that combines different cultures in Europe and is funded by the EU.
- She emphasized her love for the open borders within the EU.

Role of the EU:

- ERDF funds to support projects like Giulia's idea.
- Erasmus+ program that enables internships abroad.

Impact on a person's life:

- Exchange program and outreach to young people.
- Opportunity to support project ideas like Giulia's.

BRESLAU, POLEN (KRZYSZTOF, 35)

Summary and description of the character:

- Krzysztof works for the Polish government, which works with European funds and focuses on interregional cooperation.
- He is positive about the ease of traveling as an EU member, despite the hurdles of exchanging into euros.
- On the other hand, he is concerned about the increasing EU criticism of the Polish government and its undemocratic measures and hopes that the EU will intervene. He also criticizes the EU's migration policy, particularly with regard to Belarus.

Result sheet basic

Role of the EU:

- EU must intervene when governments do not respect its laws and values.
- The EU's role in migration policy through the creation of a framework, rules and support for member states facing border problems, while respecting human rights.

Impact on a person's life:

- He was able to travel and work in Poland and Germany.
- Created his job.

MALMÖ, SWEDEN (FREYA, 18)

Summary and description of the character:

- Freya has just finished school and is thinking about what she wants to do in her future. During her Interrail in Europe, she met many students who inspired and encouraged her.
- She is particularly interested in the EU Youth Guarantee program.

Role of the EU:

- Interrail is a travel program that promotes the networking of young people within Europe, as this is possible without travel restrictions.

Impact on a person's life:

- Meeting young people from across Europe to gain inspiration and advice.

STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

HELENA, 26, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

Γεια σας[1] and salut! My name is Helena and I am 26 years old. I currently live in Brussels, but I grew up in Thessaloniki, Greece. Ever since I did an Erasmus semester[2] in Lille, France, during my Bachelor's degree, I wanted to live abroad again. But why Brussels? You might ask yourself. Well, ever since I was a child and witnessed the financial crisis in 2008[3] and the resulting austerity policies for my home country Greece, I wanted to learn more about the EU. My father was not enthusiastic about what was happening in the EU during the financial crisis. But I wanted to experience the EU for myself. That's why I decided to do an Erasmus semester in Lille, as I said. I studied French at school and being in France really helped me to improve my French.

I also discovered so many different cultures and made many experiences. I met many people from all over Europe and realized that we are all European citizens. That was a powerful and beautiful experience for me. So I decided to become a part of the EU and applied for the EU Commission's Blue Book internship [4]. I am so happy that they took me on! And I even get to work in the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs[5], where I can not only learn about the EU and its economic and financial policies, but also contribute to the development of strategies that could help Member States fight unemployment after the Covid-19 crisis. Working at the European Commission is exhausting, but I am sure that the people of the EU will benefit from the decisions made in Brussels.

Apart from finding accommodation, it was super easy to get to Brussels without having to plan every detail. The insurance, for example, since there is the European Health Insurance Card, which gives you access to medically necessary, state healthcare during a temporary stay in one of the 27 EU countries. I was also able to keep my cell phone number because there are no roaming costs [6] in the EU. The EU does a lot to make life easy in its member states. Nevertheless, I hope that the EU succeeds in being more inclusive of the different regions in the EU so that EU citizens have equal opportunities, no matter where they grow up and live. For this reason, I plan to work for an NGO[7] that empowers rural areas in my home country Greece by implementing projects co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds, such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

[1] Greek for "hello"

[2] Erasmus is an EU funding program that enables students to spend a semester abroad at a university in one of the EU member states.

[3] refers to the global banking and financial crisis as part of the global economic crisis from 2007.

[4] Twice a year, the Commission offers 5-month paid internships.

[5] Directorates-General are departments with specific areas of responsibility that correspond to ministries at national level. Most are headed by an EU Commissioner who is responsible for the overall management of the Directorate-General and is responsible (i.e. politically accountable) for the relevant policy area.

[6] Data roaming means nothing more than surfing the internet on a foreign mobile network with your own SIM card. Since June 15, 2017, using a smartphone while traveling in another EU country costs the same as at home. This is referred to as "roaming at domestic prices".

[7] Non-governmental organizations, such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International.

STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

EDWARD, 75, CORK, IRLAND

On this cold and rainy June day, I'm sitting with my two grandchildren in my small but very cozy house near Cork. It's close to the coast and surrounded by nature. I have lived in this house for over 50 years.

I am 75 years old and ran a small family business with my wife. We made the best fudge in Ireland - I guarantee it. The business is now run by my daughter, but I'm still on site every day helping out where I can. Since my hard-working daughter joined, we've been supplying our products all over the EU, which makes me very proud.

I love to tell my two grandchildren about the challenges of the past decades over a cup of tea and talk about how proud I am of our family and the small business. We used to sell our caramel products only in the local area, but now we even have customers in France and can export duty-free. I am particularly pleased that we now even have an apprentice from Spain as a guest for a few days. I always enjoy meeting new people and learning about other cultures.

The storm is fierce and the rain is lashing against the windows. I'm glad that my two grandsons are here today. My youngest grandson, Liam, is now 15 years old and is sitting opposite me playing chess. Rian, the older one, turned 20 a few months ago and has been away from Ireland for the last few months. He had the opportunity to go to Latvia as a volunteer. He was very involved in a project that had to do with the environment and climate change. It's great to hear Rian's stories and to see how committed he is.

While Liam and I finish our game of chess, Rian is on the phone speaking to a girl he met on his trip to Latvia. A girl from Belgium who lives in Brussels and who he wants to visit after he's been here in Cork. He told me that they have talked about living together in Latvia for a longer period of time. It makes me happy to see my grandson so happy. While Rian was in Latvia, we communicated regularly online. Even when the boy didn't come to Ireland, he always told me what he was doing via video chat. In the beginning, my daughter had to help me, but now I can handle everything myself. It's great that I can reach my dear Rian anywhere in Europe!

WHAT DOES THE EU MEAN FOR OUR DAILY LIVES?



STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

[1] Duty-free means that no customs duties, value-added tax or excise tax are added to the price of the goods.

STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

GIULIA, 18, BOLOGNA, ITALY

Ciao, my name is Giulia, I am 18 years old and I live in Bologna, Italy. I've just finished school and I'm looking forward to starting my career as a chef. My passion for food and cooking is deeply rooted in my family. My grandfather and mother are both chefs. My family even owns a restaurant where they prepare traditional Ragù alla Bolognese. Our restaurant has even been awarded an EU certificate. The purpose of the certificate is to protect the geographical origin of our ragù. Only restaurants that can prove that they make traditional ragù alla Bolognese are allowed to carry the certificate. The restaurant is always full and very busy. Erasmus students [1] in particular visit us because we are known in Bologna for our ragù.

I really enjoy the contact with all the different people from all over Europe. As my parents don't speak English very well, it's my job to serve the international guests. That wasn't possible during the pandemic. No foreign students. No cultural exchange. I have never experienced borders in Europe before. This was my first time and it was a bit scary, but mostly sad. My mother told me that before the Schengen Agreement [2] it was quite normal to wait at the borders and that traveling to another country took much more time and was more difficult. I am so glad that borders within the EU are a thing of the past.

The opportunity to bring people together through my food has inspired me to want to open my own restaurant as soon as I become a chef. I will also be going to Portugal for an internship with the help of the Erasmus program. In Portugal, I will work as an intern in a restaurant in Braga and get to know some traditional Portuguese dishes.

It is my wish to summarize the diversity of Europe in my dishes and in this way make it tangible for other people by letting my dishes be inspired by the influences of different regions within the EU. Perhaps I could realize this project with the help of some EU funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund [3]. There are so many possibilities in the EU and I just dream about what could be possible. I'm still very young and I'm excited about what the future holds for me.

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STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

[1] Erasmus is an EU funding program that enables students to spend a semester abroad at a university in one of the EU member states.

[2] The Schengen Agreement is a treaty which led to the creation of Europe's Schengen Area, in which internal border checks have largely been abolished.

[3] The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) finances programs in shared responsibility between the European Commission and the national and regional authorities of the member states. The administrations of the Member States select the projects to be financed and assume responsibility for day-to-day management.

STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

DAMIR, 56, VARAŽDIN, CROATIA

Dobar dan [1], my name is Damir and I am 56 years old. My home town is Varaždin, near the Slovenian border. I am a politics teacher and I run workshops and project days at schools. In my work, I focus on sustainability and climate change. I remember running around in the fields as a child in the former Yugoslavia and everything was full of insects and bees flying around. Over the years, that became less and less. I am seriously worried and that's why I started an NGO [2] to educate people about climate change and bee mortality in particular. Now that we all know that climate change is not a regional but a global challenge, I was very happy that Croatia became the youngest member of the EU in 2013. I firmly believe that a common strategy in the EU can help combat climate change. The efforts around the European Green Deal [3] look promising and I hope that many European citizens and businesses will take advantage of the opportunities offered by the European Green Deal.

Since Croatia has been a member of the EU and thanks to the European Green Deal, it has also been much easier to spread our topic across borders. I now also give workshops in Slovenia. I also recently discovered the European Solidarity Corps. The European Solidarity Corps is an international volunteer program of the European Commission for young people who go individually or in teams to another country, usually from one European country to another, to work for a charitable cause. This program allowed me to run workshops during the school vacations around Easter and during the summer vacations. These workshops usually last two to four weeks. Students from all over Europe learn about climate change and in particular how to save bees from extinction by creating and planting new, bee-friendly and species-rich areas.

In the best case, the students take this knowledge with them and create such spaces in their backyard, in their hometown, etc. I really enjoy these long workshops. You really get to know the students, but more importantly, the students get to know each other and build a network of friends across the EU. Also, not only do they learn about Croatia, but I also learn from them and experience with them what it means to be an EU citizen.

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STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

[1] Hello in Croatian.

[2] NGO stands for non-governmental organization, e.g. Greenpeace or Amnesty International.

[3] The European Green Deal is a set of policy initiatives by the European Commission with the overarching goal of making the European Union (EU) climate neutral by 2050. The plan envisages reviewing every existing law for its climate relevance and also introducing new laws on the circular economy, building renovation, biodiversity, agriculture and innovation.

STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

KRZYSZTOF, 35, WROCŁAW, POLAND

Cześć to all [1], my name is Krzysztof. I am 35 years old and I live in Wrocław, Poland. I currently work for the Joint Secretariat of the Polish Ministry of European Funds and Regional Policy, which focuses on Interreg Europe [2] projects between Polish and German regions. Due to my work, I have the privilege of traveling regularly between Poland and Germany. Since Poland joined the EU in 2004, traveling across Europe has fortunately become much easier for me.

The only obstacle that has remained is something I always notice when I have lunch in Germany. As Poland is not part of the Eurozone, I have to change my money from zloty to euro either before traveling to Germany or here in Poland.

Another great aspect that has simplified my work visits to Germany is the fact that I can still use my cell phone in the same way as in Poland. Since June 15, 2017, EU citizens who are in another EU country for business or pleasure no longer have to worry about roaming costs [3]. Isn't that great?

But not everything is great. I am worried about my country. Most people I know really like the EU and many people in Poland benefit from the EU and its programs. That's why I don't understand why our government opposes the EU on some issues. Positions such as judges are filled by people who are sympathetic to the government and presumably decide in its interests. For me, that has nothing to do with independence! I can only hope that the EU will do everything in its power to help the people of Poland and protect the rule of law [4]. If it cannot do that, I see difficult times ahead. Even if we look at our border with Belarus: People are freezing to death at the EU's external border. How can that be? Well, I try to stay positive. I trust the EU and its institutions to protect the human rights and values they are committed to, but situations like this make it hard for me to believe in the EU.

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STORIES FROM EU-CITIZENS

[1] Cześć means "hello" in Polish.

[2] Interreg is a Community initiative of the European Regional Development Fund, which aims to promote cooperation between EU Member States and neighboring non-EU countries. The program supports cross-border cooperation measures such as infrastructure projects, cooperation between public utilities, joint actions by companies or cooperation in the field of environmental protection or education. Around 37.5% of European Union citizens are living in border areas along the 38 internal borders and the Interreg program helps to reduce the disadvantages of geographical and linguistic barriers and obstacles to development.

[3] Data roaming means nothing more than surfing the internet on a foreign mobile network with your own SIM card. Since June 15, 2017, using a smartphone while traveling in another EU country costs the same as at home. This is known as "roaming at domestic prices".

[4] The rule of law means that the government and administration may only act within the framework of existing laws. Citizens are thus protected from state arbitrariness, discrimination and human rights violations.

FREYA, 18, MALMÖ, SWEDEN

hej, hej! Hi, I'm Freya, 18 years old, and I'm from Malmö, a city in the south of Sweden. I've just finished school and now I have to figure out what direction I want to take in my life. At the moment I'm thinking a lot about what I want to do in the future. It's confusing to think about the future when the world seems to be falling apart at the seams. But I have to stay positive and focus on the good things that the future can bring. I hope to get to know as much of the world as possible. Well, I'm going to start in Europe as I don't want to fly so much because of the climate crisis. In any case, I want to see as many places and meet as many people as possible over the next few years.

My sister Lina and I are currently traveling with Interrail [1] and discovering Europe. It's the first time we've traveled together without our parents. Lina has just finished her master's degree in Copenhagen in Denmark and will start working in Dublin (Ireland) after our trip together. That's why we want to go to Dublin at the end of our trip. We've been traveling for a few weeks now and have already been to Denmark, Germany, Poland, Belgium and the Netherlands. Although my sister's orientation is incredibly bad, we manage to find the right way in the end. I'm really glad that we can use our cell phones everywhere - otherwise we would have gotten lost so often.

We are currently in Amsterdam. I really like the city. We can easily explore the city by bike and there is so much to discover along the canals. I wish all cities were as bike-friendly as Amsterdam.

Yesterday we met a group of students from different countries in a café. They had just completed an Erasmus semester [2] in Amsterdam. They told us that they wanted to go to Barcelona in the next 3 weeks. We decided to spend the next two days together and explore the city. But even after that, we will try to stay in touch and visit each other. Helena, one of the students, is from Greece and I have wanted to go to Greece ever since I saw the musical "Mamma Mia". The students told me about their experiences of studying abroad and Mia sent me an article about the EU Youth Guarantee Program [3]. The program is designed to help young people make the transition from school to training or a job. Even though I'm worried about the future, the students really helped me to take a closer look at the opportunities I have.

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[1] Interrail is an all-in-one pass that allows people living in Europe to explore 33 European countries by train.

[2] Erasmus+ is an EU funding program that enables students to study abroad at a university in one of the EU member states.

[3] The Youth Guarantee is an important European initiative to combat youth unemployment in the EU. Young people under the age of 30 who register with the Youth Guarantee should receive an offer of a job, apprenticeship or training within four months.