

myEUROPE

Europe: Today and Tomorrow

myEUROPE Chat, 8 May 2002

Guest: **Maria Martens**, member of the European Parliament

Europe, Today and Tomorrow: There are so many advantages to be a member of the EU, like having stability and peace on a larger scale, one coin, exchange of students, people can have a job more easily in an other Member State, the countries cooperate, and also the co-operation will surely bring an economic advantage. (Maria Martens)



Maria Martens, Ulf Lundin, and Guus Wijngaards during the chat in the EUN Office



Maria Mertens



Icelandic students during the chat



Hungarian students during the chat



Romanian students during the chat



Martens1 (Ivo Schutte) during the chat

Participating Schools:

- Barnaskolinn a Eyrarabakka og Stokkseyri, teachers Rosa Marta Gudnadottir and Birgir Edwald, Iceland
- Batthyany Gimnazium, Nagykanizsa, teacher János Blasszauer, Hungary
- CEIP Beethoven, Santa Coloma de Gramenet, teacher Rafael Badia, Spain
- Colegiul National 'Gh. Sincai', teacher Vasile Pop, Baia Mare, Romania
- Colegiul National 'M. Eminescu', teacher Cornelia Anitas, Baia Mare, Romania
- Colegiul National 'V. Lucaciu', teacher Ramona Pop, Baia Mare, Romania
- Collège Général de Gaulle, Sierck, teacher Patrick.Pasquier, France
- Consiliul Local al Copiilor, coordonator Natalia Marc, Baia Mare, Romania
- Engure Secondary School, teachers Inara Zlaugotne and Juris Lagzdins, Latvia
- German Highschool, Sofia, teacher Violeta Tsoneva, Bulgaria
- Inspectoratul Scolar Baia Mare, Coordinator: Mariana Hudrea, Romania
- Osnovna sola Solkan, teacher Viljenka Savli, Slovenia
- Stjerneskolan, Torsby, teacher Bengt Larsson, Sweden
- Torsbergsgymnasiet, Bollnäs, teachers Ulla Dahlström and Jan Wickleus, Sweden
- Viesite Secondary School, teacher Ruta Aukspole, Latvia

Opening messages

[Solkan-kaja] Hello from Slovenia!

[Sierck-France] Hello everybody, everywhere in beautiful Europe! We are from Lorraine, near Germany and Luxembourg, in the north-east of France.

[BES-Birgir] Hello everyone, BES is from Iceland and we are in three groups

[Viesiite-reinis] Greetings from Latvia!

[Anne] Hello, I am from the EUN office in Brussels!

[Ulla] Spring is also coming in Sweden. Even the bears have understood that.

[Sierck] Hello, Iceland! Thanks for giving us Björk and Sigur Ros!

[Ulla] Hello, dear Latvians. We have a twin city in Ogre in Latvia, and we have been there many times. We like Latvia a lot!

[Hungary3] Greetings from Hungary!

[Ulla] Hello, Hungary. We have a partner school in Barcs in Hungary, and we like our friends there very much.

[Hungary2] Greetings from Hungary, we are looking forward to chatting with you.

[Barcelona-Rafael] Welcome, guests!

[EUN-Petru] Our guests arrived! Welcome everybody and please start questioning! Please try to focus on your own questions!

[Janos] Welcome Maria. We are sending our greetings from a sunny Hungary.

[Martens3] Hello friends in Europe, it is very nice to be able to have a chat with you. I am Maria Martens, member of the European parliament and I am open to all your questions. I studied theology, got involved in Christian NGO's in the Netherlands, and wanted to work for a more coherent society. That is why I got elected in the European Parliament - to promote issues that go behind an economic Union!

Demography

[Ulla] Welcome, Maria! We have a question from Sweden on future population problems. Western Europe is an aging part of the world. Too few children are born. What can be done about that?

[Martens2] Dear Ulla, this question about population is very interesting. However, it is not really a problem that we, from Brussels, can easily solve! Of course, we can join in the debate about attitudes towards life: life is more than working, and family-life is important. But luckily, it looks as if the younger generations in North-Western Europe have more children, and that gives us hope!

[Sierck-France] Ulla, in Luxembourg, the government is going to let people come from the east countries, in order to have young workers and families and to start the opening to the east-countries for building Europe.

[Martens3] Dear Sierk, concerning young people of other countries working in Luxembourg: I think international experience is very useful for countries when they need workers, and for workers to learn to know other countries, cultures, and languages. Which is important to understand each other, the first condition to keep peace and stability.

Languages in Europe

[BES-group2] Do you think that it is possible to have one language that everybody can understand?

[Martens3] Hello BES! Concerning languages: I do not think it will be realised very soon to have one language for everybody, but we are very lucky already to be able to communicate in a language we both know a little bit, like now we are using as common language, English.

[Viesiite-reinis] What languages will we have to use in Europe in the future?

[Ulla] Latin could be the language that connects all people in Europe. Languages like English, French, Spanish and German cannot be the one and only language, but Latin could be. That means that all documents within the European Union could be written in Latin as an official text and then translated into other languages by the countries themselves.

[Martens2] Latin? Latin is a dead language, beautiful to read, too difficult to speak... About the language in Europe in the future: for the moment we will all use our own language or languages, as a lot of you come from countries with various languages. Of course, sometimes it is difficult to communicate, but it is also such a richness, and we manage quite well in understanding each other, look at this chat!

[Bengt-Sweden] Latin could not be the language of Europe. Is too old and its grammar is too complicated. I don't remember any Latin at all from school.

[Ulla] Bengt, it's my colleagues suggestion to let Latin be the main EU-language.

[Barcelona-Rafael] I think that many languages can be used in Europe. The most important is not which language but that we can understand ones to others

[Solkan-Viljenka] I hope that Slovenian language will also be spoken in Brussels next to other languages. We believe that although we are a small country we can contribute some interesting elements of culture, language, habits.

[Bengt-Sweden] We should not even try to decide about a common language. This question will be solved by itself. Today is English the main language- this chat is in English. Perhaps will English become the language we all speak and use.

[Solkan-Viljenka] I don't think that we have to have one language. In future I believe languages will change a lot bit still they will remain as such. We will use technology to translate simultaneously.

[Romania] Will there be an official European language?

[Martens3] Until now there are 11 official European languages. That number will increase after the enlargement. You see that will give some difficulties, but is a great challenge to communicate in languages that can be understood by everybody, After all we are making LAWS, which should be understandable by everybody. The EU stimulates to learn at least two other European languages. So there will be a bigger chance people will have a second language in common.

[Viesiite-Reinis] As more nationalities come to my country as less chances for us to save our traditions and language. Don't you agree?

[Solkan-Viljenka] Yes, I agree there will always be more identities, but under the same 'roof', like in a family.

[CASro] Is it true that there is going to be one language for Europe, just one language?

[Martens3]: No, I don't think there is going to be one language for Europe. The European Parliament encourages the different cultures and languages, including there languages, the cultural diversity is considered as a richness. We do stimulate the knowledge of one or two common second languages. That could help already a lot.

[BES-group1] What can we do to keep our Icelandic language?

[Martens3]: Keep on speaking, writing and educating in your own language. EU stimulates respect for all national languages and even for minority languages within countries (like Frisian language in the Netherlands, Welsh in the UK etc.)

[Engure, Latvia] We questioned our schoolmates and teachers about the EU. What are the future chances for teachers of Russian? Do people in Europe want to study the Russian language?

[Martens3]: In Holland it is possible to study the Russian language and culture. There are some people that want to study the language, even more and more now the enlargement is closer.

Enlargement

[Viesite-Martins] We are not members of EU yet. Yesterday in Latvia's biggest business newspaper was an article that in the European Union we will have to pay a lot for EU, there are minuses than pros and EU will destroy our small and middle - sized enterprises. Your comments, please?

[Martens3] Viesite Martens: Yes, new member states will have to contribute to the EU, but they will receive also a lot. The support from the EU for the start is enormous.

[Viesite-Martins] Martens3: But maybe we should grow up, and when our economics will be "healthy", then it is time to join EU?

[Martens3] To Martins, yes a stable economy is a condition to enter the EU, but it is not the only thing. There are also conditions on law, human rights, and democracy.

[Alexandra] What are our chances for Hungary to join to EU?

[Sierck] Alexandra, I think you have very good chances, because Hungary has always be active, even under communism and your catholic religion is near to the European ideas, am I right?

[BES-group3] Do you think Iceland should join EU?

[Martens2] Iceland in the EU? For us, it would be a great opportunity, but it have to be the Icelanders themselves who want it.

[Sierck-France] In France we do not really understand why Iceland isn't yet a member of the EU...

[Hungary] Do you think Hungary is on a right track to handle minority issues?

[Martens2] What does Hungary do exactly about minority issues?

[Solkan-viljenka] I have read about what people think about Slovenians joining EU and I am disappointed as we are almost the last on the scale. Why?

[Martens2] I think Slovenia is not a very well-known country, people can't really place it easily. Those who have been there love it of course, and acknowledge Slovenian's undeniable right on a quick membership.

[Romania29] What if I don't agree with EU? I think Romania will lose its cultural identity by joining the EU.

[Martens2] Romania, I think European integration, not just economical, but cultural, is a very important "weapon" in the battle against extremists like Mr. Le Pen. Solidarity, understanding, they start in knowing a lot about each other, just look how we chat all together!

[Romania29] What do you think about Romania? An honest opinion, please!

[Barcelona-Rafael] Romania? A very wonderful country

[Martens2] An honest opinion about Romania: a beautiful country, historically a very important player in Europe, culturally interesting with your roman language, a country I would like to get to know better...

[Sierck-France] Your language is near to French, this is the first thing we know here, in France.

[Martens3] EU accepts Romania as a candidate country, which means a lot for Romania. This can stimulate the economy, the culture, the standard of living etc.

[Romania25] Do you think that Eastern Europe has improved from an ecological point of view?

[Martens2] Ecologically, I think the countries of Eastern Europe have made an enormous effort over the past ten years - most important is maybe the attitude of the people.

[Engure] What will happen if we do not belong to EU?

[Martens3]: There are so many advantages to be a member of the EU, like having stability and peace on a larger scale, one coin, exchange of students, people can have a job more easily in an other Member State, de countries cooperate, and also the co-operation will surely bring an economic advantage. So if you don't belong to the EU, you don't have all that opportunities.

[Engure] What is your opinion about the future of Latvia fishermen? Will they be able to fish in the whole of the Baltic Sea?

[Martens3]: Territory becomes less important. But the Latvian fishermen will have to keep to the European quota-rules.

[Testtest] Does loosing your identity worth all this pain?

[Martens3]: Why should you lose your identity. That is not what Europe is about, nor what it is aiming at.

[ROMANIA-19] Can the EU help us improve our life standard so as to be able to compete with other more evolved countries?

[Martens3]: Since World War II, it has only become better in the EU member states. I think this process will continue.

[Engure] In what ways Latvia can be interesting for other European countries?

[Martens3]: It can be an economic and cultural partner for other European countries.

[Viesite-Martins] I have a very important question for all. In Latvia we have budget groups (paid by state) and cost-groups. Will there be a free higher education in EU?

[Martens3]: Every Member State decides what the education in that country costs, that is not regulated by the European Union.

[CASro] If our economy is not able to compete with the EU economy, what can we do and is EU trying do actually do something to improve life in Romania?

[Martens3]: Yes, the candidate countries will get from the EU for economic growth.

[CASro] Will students have more chances to study in the EU after the integration?

[Martens3]: There are EU programs to felicitate higher education in the Eastern-European countries (like Tempus).

[Viesiite-reinis] Will the Europe legislation affect the national legislation?

[Martens3]: Yes, European legislation will effect national legislation, European legislation is dominant so national legislation. But not in all areas is a EU-legislative competence. E.g. not on education.

Environment

[Ulla] We have a Comenius project in Sweden on Water Solidarity. There are countries in Europe, which don't accept the idea of solidarity. What is the best way of handling countries, which are not ready to take care of their water supply in a proper way?

[Martens3] Dear Ulla, your question is an excellent example of the need on European Policy on water. We have our water directive, which regulates a lot about the quality and quantity of water in the member-states.

[BES-group3] We are afraid of losing our fishing grounds in Iceland.

[Sierck-France] Don't be afraid to join us; see Portugal for example.

[Hungary2] What are the new environment-laws in the EU?

[Martens3] There are a lot new environment laws. For example: on water, on food safety, on agriculture, on emissions in the air, on old cars and old freezers.

[Romania-19] Who do you think should get involved in developing new recycling programmes in our country?

[Martens3]: Citizens and all political levels should be involved.

[Engure] Latvia uses manly water as supply of energy. Will it provide enough energy if industry develops? What are the variants in Europe?

[Martens3]: I would be optimistic. The water directive describes what Europe wants to do on the quality and quantity of water in the EU.

[Alexandra] Fat stocks are carried more than 1200 kms through Europe within feeding or giving them drink. I think it's a big problem. What do you think about it?

[Martens3]: Cattle transport on long distances is a real problem. The Parliament urged the Commission to come with proposals to drastically reduce the maximum authorised distance for cattle-transports.

[Engure, Latvia] Isn't there a possibility that countries away from center will be used for dumping dangerous waste?

[Martens3]: I hope the countries will have enough courage to allow that.

[Engure, Latvia] Recycling is very important for Latvia. This process is just beginning. There are enormous garbage dumps everywhere. How long does it take to change people's habits and start sorting garbage when disposing of it?

[Martens3]: We do not know how long it will take, but we need to do the maximum to stimulate recycling. Anyway it is a very important issue in the environment committee.

Europe, its countries and regions

[Barcelona-Rafael] I'd like to put a question: What is the future of the nations without state, like us, Catalonia, in the future Europe.

[Martens2] I think Europe is an excellent opportunity for nations like yours: Europe grants the variety, culturally and linguistically, and goes beyond the traditional state-national frontiers. Cross-border contacts between nations sharing the same culture are an important part of Europe's advantages

[Martens3] Europe of the regions: I think it is very good that we grow to one Europe, but with respect for the different cultures. I see that more and more things can be organised on an other than national level, something will be on regional level, others on European level.

[Solkan-Viljenka] I see EU as a new opportunity for a friendly peaceful union of countries that were in big wars in the distant past.

[Bengt-Sweden] Rafael, your question is just about regions in Europe. I am also interested to know more about this.

[Bengt-Sweden] I just want Maria to give her views on this important question about the regions and small nations in Europe.

[Martens2] Very small nations? We have to give you an example, given a lot of attention lately to a very small "nation" in the east of Germany: the Sorbians. They had their voice heard in the European Parliament.

[Viesiite-Reinis] Won't the small nations loose their traditions?

[Martens3] Small nations do not need to loose their traditions and cultural expressions. Cultural heritage is an important issue, like minority languages etc.

[Martens2] I do not think they will loose their traditions! I think that while working together in the European Union we keep our good, important traditions, staying at the same time open to other cultures, without hatred that occurs when you close your frontiers, as formerly in Yugoslavia.

[Solkan-Viljenka] What do you mean by Yugoslavia and frontiers?

[Solkan-Viljenka] We were in Yugoslavia but we didn't experience - at least in Slovenia that our frontiers were closed. We communicated and even worked or go to school to Italy, Austria etc.

[Martens2] That is exactly what I mean: as long as frontiers are open, this contributes to the understanding of the other as well as to the preserving of the good things in one own' culture.

[Sierck-France] Sometimes you better know far countries than your own neighbour - country, because of the past wars.

[Martens3] Dear Sierck, very true what you are writing. But it is important to know also your neighbours. In our country there is a say "better a good neighbour than a far friend".

[Bengt] Sierck, I completely agree. I know more about roads, buildings and sites in Los Angeles than in my neighbour city, because of movies. I would like to have more TV programmes from countries closer to mine, in order to learn and experience more.

[Sierck-France] In France, Slovenia is known as being a very nice country, opened to tourism and with great caves where you can find rare stones.

[solkan-viljenka] Yes, Sierck, thanks and we like your country too. We also have nice horses Lipizzaner and good food.

[Sierck] Martens3, I personally teach German to French pupils and they can study Luxemburgish too and English.

Education

[Martens3] May I ask you a question: what do you expect from the European cooperation? For example towards education, school systems, recognition of certificates?

[Martens2] So another question to you all: what do you think a Member of the European Parliament can concretely mean for your school?

[Solkan-Viljenka] Martens1, If he/ she visits us and helps us to fulfill our plans and dreams, to see what we do and give us advice where to get funding for certain projects...

[Solkan-kaja] Are there any funds with grants for students?

[Martens3] There are exchange programs for schools, students, and volunteers, like Socrates, Leonardo and see also Youth go Europe.

[Sierck-France] We participate in a Pericles project in order to discover our own neighbours first.

[Romania-19] What can the students do in order to study in a multinational school?
[Martens3]: There are many projects to study abroad, like the Erasmus-program.
Ask in your school for the different programs.

[Hungary2] I'd like to learn or work in England. What kind of chances do I have?
[Martens3]: Ask your teachers for the EU programs for exchange and mobility,
please.

[Romania25] Where do you think the educational system is the most developed
across Europe?

[Martens3]: See the publication Europe / Education at a glance, please.

[Engure, Latvia] What opportunities EU opens for students of today to find work in
other countries when they have become qualified workers?

[Martens3]: Especially the mobility programmes (Socrates, Leonardo etc.) and also
the system to recognise each others education-levels can be of any help.

Teaching Europe and European identity

[Martens1] I have a question to all of you. What do you think that is important in
Europe in your schools? I mean in what way is Europe a subject in your school and
what does it mean to you?

[Sierck-France] Martens1: I already teach Europe as a school-subject, two hours a
week.

[Ulla] I think it is most important to learn more about other parts of Europe besides
your own country. Our school works a lot together with partner schools in
Europe - most interesting and rewarding. We think that you have to accept other
ways of living, other traditions and that must be reciprocal. It is of course a problem
that we speak different languages but that is not a big obstacle.

[Viesite-Gatis] We learn about EU only in geography lessons.

[Bengt-Sweden] Maria, Europe has not become important yet in schools. In my
country we still teach about for example EU as if Sweden not is a member. Not many
people celebrate the Europe day. However very slow we increase our knowledge
about Europe. I don't think that there is a European identity among people. Then
next question is: How can we increase a European identity among people. I know
that this is a giant task, but we have to start somewhere.

[Martens3] European policy becomes more and more inner-policy as a lot of laws
have to be implemented in the national laws. Subsidiarity is an important point of
departure for European policy.

[Martens3] May be there is not just one European identity, but always more
identities. The most important thing to respect the different positions, views etc. It
will be very different from the American identity.

[Martens1] To Bengt: I think it is very important to increase a European identity
especially among young people, since they are the future of Europe. I think that we
should underline the fact that we have a same although various background.

[Bengt-Sweden] I have a suggestion how to increase European identity. Why not
create a subject for schools which is used in all schools in Europe. A common
European history- Integration- history and National identities.

[Martens1] to Bengt: A very good idea, the problem is that every member state is
responsible for his own education programme.

[Bengt-Sweden] Of course I know that every country is responsible for its own educational system. What is most important when you study Europe, is that you also start collaborating with other schools in other countries. This is perhaps the best way to get this European identity, by joining for example Comenius projects.

[Romania] Are there programmes that support national identity in the process of globalization?

[Martens3] Yes there are cultural programs to support national identities.

[Bengt-Sweden] Why not exclude some hours of mathematics and replace with some lessons about Europe and its institutions?

[Martens1] To Bengt: I do not think that this is a very good idea. Maybe schools can include in their history classes the subject Europe and their EU institutions

[Viesite-Martins] I have about 7 to 8 hours, starting from 8:00. Sometimes there is "empty" time, and I have to wait for the next lesson. I'm not only learning in Secondary school (class 12), but also working, so... I have to work at home and also to do my homework.

[Sierck-France] Viesite-Martins, this is my experience in teaching Europe: It is not like normal school-subjects; pupils choose it, if they want to, there are no lessons to learn; we prepare travels and meetings, study geography, history of the EU since the Romans and so on. It's free of course, two hours a week, when they are 12-13.

[Martens1] To Sierck: The culture committee in the European Parliament is also dealing with different school systems. They also talk about the Barcelona-process with amongst others the bachelor and Master system. Maybe it will be easier in future to compare universities degrees but I am not sure. Quality differences will continue to exist.

[Romania] Why is there a big demand for American models of life if we want to be Europeans?

[Martens3] I also do not understand that big demand on American models. One can see that we are following the US in a way, but on the same time one can hear everywhere that we do not want to be like America. The big challenge for EU will be to look for our own approaches (cultural, economic co-operation models etc.)

Euro

[Romania] How do you explain that the UK hasn't joined the EURO project? Why do they keep their own currency?

[Martens3]: The UK always likes to be different.

[BES-group2] Do you think it is right for us Icelanders to take up euro?

[Sierck-France] To Iceland; it's up to you!

[Solkan-Viljenka] I like euro, because I travel a lot and I don't have to change currency all the time.

[Romania-mihai] Was the introduction of EURO a problem in the Western countries?

[Martens3] The euro will help a lot for European understanding and integration I think. It is very practical and facilitates trade, travelling etc. We are happy the introduction did not cause very big problems.

[Romania17] Is it true that the prices have risen in the European countries since the Euro began to be used?

[Martens2] Prices have risen a little bit, retailers "rounded" their prices. That is the same in the entire Euro-zone.

[Sierck-France] Euro! It's great to have more and more coins of other countries in your own pocket!

[Romania] What does America say about the Union of the Europe and the EURO, which is about to surpass the \$?

[Martens3]: The US should be content: the EU will grow into a real partner.

The European Union

[Romania29] What are the main future goals of EU?

[Martens3] Future goals of Europe are to be not only an economic market, but also a community of people, of cultures, of values; to be a real partner in policies, defences, knowledge etc towards the US; to work on elaboration of the Charter on fundamental European Rights.

[Solkan-Viljenka] What about the ICT and Internet in schools? Is there a plan about it?

[Martens1] To Solkan Viljenka: Europe promotes ICT and Internet in schools, every school and student should have access to this. It is one of the priorities since the top of Lisbon.

[Romania25] Will UE finally succeed to put an end to interethnic conflicts?

[Martens3]: I hope so.

[Engure] What is the main principle of the EU?

[Martens3]: The main principle of the EU is that by working together the countries will find better solutions to common problems. Above all, the EU has started as a peace process in order to make sure that the European countries would never again start a war against each other.

[Romania-Mihai] How will EU solve the original conflicts?

[Martens3]: By co-operation and dialogue.

[Romania25] Will UE finally succeed to put an end to interethnic conflicts?

[Martens3]: I hope so.

[Romania29] Can the European Parliament actually do something to change Europe (better)?

[Martens3] The EP has more and more influence on the EU regulations: democratic input and control is very important. The EP is the only elected body.

[Romania-Mihai] How will EU improve the trading relationships between countries?

[Martens3]: Since 1993 there is a free movement of goods, capital, services and people. Companies can buy, sell and invest in any EC country without having to go through checks, pay VAT in each country or go through long and expensive import/export formalities at the frontiers.

[Romania-Mihai] What do you think about nationalism in Western Europe?

[Martens3]: More and more you see in a lot of countries that nationalism comes up. I think we all should put a stop to nationalism, by providing people enough information about different cultures that live together. Respect for your own culture and history is important but not enough. Nowadays we need co-operation on an international level.

[Romania-29] Do the Americans influence the European Parliament?

[Martens3]: Of course Europe has to deal with America. Some important decisions that concern the whole world you cannot make without America, so in that way America has influence. But Europe has its own policy, culture, style and organisation.

[CASro] What is the problem with Russia? Do you think Russia is not trying to promote peace?

[Martens3]: I hope Russia also will promote and contribute to the peace process.

[Hungary2] How easy is it of me to get work in another European country when I will have learned a job?

[Martens3]: It is possible to work in another country, but you have to prove that you have the right education and permissions. We work on a system of recognition of diplomas from the different countries. Then it will be very easy to work in another country.

Miscellaneous

[Hungary] I personally was very happy to see that no extremist party could get into the parliament in Hungary. And you?

[Martens3] I am very happy to hear that no extremist party entered in Hungary. Extremes will not serve democracy, which ask always compromises.

[BES-group1] How will the animal-life be in Europe after twenty years?

[Martens2] Animal-life will be better probably, as people grow more and more conscious of the life that preceded the meat they have on their plates...

[BES-group1] Is there a lot of pollution in Brussel?

[Martens2] Well, too much pollution! People use their car to come to work, instead of taking a tram, or walk. The transport system could be better though...

[Alexandra] Why can Europe not do more to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestine?

[Martens2] Alexandra, you have a good point. The problem is that Europe still has 15 different opinions that have to be considered, and that there is not a symbolic function (like the US president) that has enough esteem in the world to really play a leading role in major conflicts.

[Romania-17] How is the problem of smoking dealt with in the European countries?

[Martens3] There is just accepted last year a new tobacco directive, which chooses a high level of health protection and at the same time it tries to give equal opportunities to tobacco industries. Big warnings will be on the packages!

[Romania] What steps should we take in order to integrate the minorities and immigrants in our society?

[Martens2] Difficult question Romania! I think in the Netherlands we have an interesting, though far from ideal, integration-model. We respect each-other's cultural background, but ask immigrants to learn our language. Integration should not mean assimilation in a real democracy.

[BES-group1] How is the culture in Brussel?

[Martens1] To BES group 1 Culture is fine in Europe. There are lots of museums, exhibitions, cinemas, theatres, and there is also an opera.

[CASro] I am pro globalization and I would like to ask you why only some western positioned countries have more chances of joining EU then us?

[Martens3] It is not only Western positioned countries that can enter. Countries can join under certain condition, being part of Europe, and fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria (democracy, constitution, economic stability and human rights) and for sure they have to accept the 'acquis communautaire' (what is already accepted within the EU)

[Romania-Mihai] How can we improve the communication means in Europe?

[Martens3] Communication in Europe is very important, in several ways: to inform people on what is going on in Europe, Why the European Process started and is still important, to understand each other, to do businesses etc.

[Bengt-Sweden] I have a question about the murder in the Netherlands the other day. It has been a lot on TV about this in my country. Can you tell us a little about your feelings today?

[Martens3]: It is for everybody in Holland very difficult to understand that this could have taken place in our country. Mr. Fortuyn was a politician with controversial ideas, but of course that is no reason for killing him. Many Dutch people feel it like a murder on the democracy. We actually do not completely understand what is going on.

[Alexandra] Don't you think that easy border-crossing can stimulate drug-trafficking?

[Martens3]: Not necessarily.

[Testtest] In 10 years, how will the map of the world look like? Will we still exist or will be assimilated?

[Martens3]: It is good to work together and have one policy, but more important is it to deal with the differences, that they can exist next to each other. So no, I don't think we will be assimilated.

[Romania-29] What do you think about extremists like Le Pen? Are they a threat to Europe?

[Martens3]: I think we all should watch him and his trend. We should try to understand the feelings of the people who voted for him. His line is undemocratic so not good for Europe.

Ending Messages

[Hungary] Thanks for the chat. It was a pleasure to be in contact with you!

[Solkan-Viljenka] It was a nice chat and I hope we will meet again. I have a lot of questions for Brussels and maybe I will have the opportunity to ask them in live.

[Sierck] A bientôt, Petru, merci beaucoup! Au revoir, Good bye, Tschüss!

[Hungary2] Thank you for chatting with us. Have a nice day!

[Janos] Thanks a lot for the great opportunity to chat with you, Maria.

[Romania] Thank you for this opportunity to change ideas!

[Martens1] Thank you very much for your interest and goodbye!

[Martens2] Goodbye and thanks for the interesting questions!

[Martens3] Good bye and thanks!

[EUN-Petru] The script of the chat will be soon published so please stay close.

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All my best and thank you for joining us today! Happy Europe Day!