

## **Global Issues, National Interests and European Solutions**

The question the Model European Council was to debate on could not have been more current: Is Europe facing a nuclear phase-out after Fukushima?

The earthquake and tsunami in northern Japan in March 2011 and the consequential partial meltdown of a nuclear power plant in Fukushima, showed that even a highly developed nation like Japan could not prevent a nuclear accident on such a scale. One of the lessons Europe has to learn from these events is that we have to rethink our energy policy. And nothing less was to become the task for the participants of this summer semester's Model European Union Conference.

When Dr. Dr. h.c. Pernice, professor for European law at the Humboldt University of Berlin and head of the MEUC, welcomed the delegates, he said he was confident that participants could find a solution and would be able to negotiate a consensus because they were young and full of fresh ideas. Every single decision about whether to use nuclear energy that is taken now will have a strong impact on our lives for the following decades. We as law students will live to see what is going to happen to the world in 50 years, which is something we can't say about most politicians making decisions in the EU institutions at the moment.

Therefore, participants of the MEUC might have a greater awareness concerning the importance of sustainable management of resources. With so much at stake for the future of the European Union and the world, and with the consciousness for the weight of responsibility on their shoulders, participants of the MEUC forgot they were just students and perfectly adapted to the roles of the heads of the states and governments of the member states.

Each and every participant wanted negotiations to be successful. At first glimpse it seems to be an easy task to fulfill. Students, however, had to consider and pursue interests of the represented countries which were strongly confronted by other member states. Debates were held emotionally and intensely, but always remained polite and based on good and elaborate arguments. Students experienced the difficulty of defending national interests while working towards a common European solution. Especially those students were challenged that as delegates had to argue for a view that differed from their own personal view on the subject. However, this was an important lesson for the future of our practice as lawyers, since as a lawyer you not only have to defend the interests of your client regardless of your own views, but you also need to keep in mind all possible counter-arguments to be able to negotiate successfully for your cause.

Supporters of the use of nuclear energy were faced with the security issues of nuclear power plants illustrated by nuclear accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima, and the unresolved problem of nuclear waste management. Opponents of nuclear power had to explain how they wanted to ensure sufficient energy supply without

returning to coal that emits a lot of carbon dioxide and might jeopardize European climate targets.

Would they agree with what Michael Müller, the former state secretary at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety said in his statement prior to the begin of the MEUC negotiations that the future of energy belonged to the renewable energies and that investment and research in such technologies were the only option to keep the EU competitive on the world market? But how to finance such investments in renewable energies?

Who thought that the honorable delegates used coffee breaks and lunches to get some rest, underestimated the ambition and sense of responsibility of the students. Instead they were used to continue negotiations on a less formal level but equally informative and committed. In the end, it was such informal discussions that brought France, a strong supporter of the use of nuclear power, to agree on the terms of the draft of the Conclusions which had been compiled in two days of hard work.

Just to show you how much effort was made during these negotiations let us give you some numbers: during two days of intense work on the Draft overall 56 Amendments were submitted by all delegates aiming to improve the drafted version of the Conclusions and to consider opinions of all members states.

Indeed, it was not an easy task to come to an agreement on such a disputable issue! Nevertheless, the member states were willing to make compromises as well as setting priorities not only for the sake of their own countries but also for prosperity and development of the European Union. All these efforts enabled the final consensus to be reached which was welcomed by all member states.

In real life, however, the heads of the states and governments are far from finding a consensus concerning this issue. Therefore, Prof. Pernice might have been right with his assertion that reason and responsibility concerning the future of the European Union lie with the European youth.

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