

The official opening session

The Official Opening Session of Parliament started with a short speech from director Robert Bindels. This was followed with a speech from one of the presidents - Kyran Samy, who compared the EU to a house of cards that depends on every other card in order not to crumble and fall down. Continuing his speech president Samy said that the financial crisis can only be solved if Europe works together as an united organisation. MEP is a way to show exactly how the EU is working and how decisions are made. It is also a good way to help the delegates to get more confident in themselves and learn to express their own opinions.

President Samy then proceeded to introduce a member of the European Parliament and the EPP named Sabine Verheyen who was very pleased that once again so many students had taken the opportunity to come to Kerkrade this weekend. She said that here they will be able to learn new and interesting things about politics but they also encounter problems that require the need for a balanced solution. The many different interests and opinions of various members of the MEP might clash with their party ideas, so they may need to compromise in order to stay in line with their parties views!

In Ms Verheyen's opinion the MEP has evolved into a real institution over the years, that not only helps young people to understand the function of the EU better, but also raises general interest in the EU and brings school pupils together from all over the globe.

It is the tenth time that AFNORTH school is holding this simulation, showing once again how committed the school is to the idea of international cooperation amongst European countries.

Ms Verheyen said she would like more projects like the MEP to be established as she believes they are useful to young people. The EU is works very hard at political and economic integration but at times seems to forget just how important cultural integration is.

She continued by saying that the EU has come a long way, and that today all 27 member states are peacefully united. This is something that could not have been imagined forty years ago. For Ms Verheyen the integration of the EU is the only way that Europe can face future global issue, namely as an unified organization. This unity can not be dictated, instead it will have to be achieved with the cooperation between member states, and a cultural exchange between the individual countries. She feels this is something that has to be started as early as possible with the younger generation.

With the MEP young people can meet, get to know each other and forge friendships. In the recent times three quarters of all political decisions are influenced by the headquarters in Brussels.

An example of this influence is the Euro. It is very easy to travel to the majority of member states. Most of the time borders are nonexistent, and thanks to the euro being the common currency of the EU one can pay for things with the same currency in most member states. This alone shows how many changes the EU has already brought to Europe, even in this time of crisis.

At the end of Ms Verheyen's speech she wished the students a exciting weekend and asked them to always have an interest in politics, and to continue taking part in simulations such as the MEP.

After her speech she was open to some questions from the floor. The delegates responded very positively to this, and many questions were asked!

President Kelly thanked the delegates for their questions and gave flowers to Ms Verheyen to thank her for being a guest speaker.

President Kelly then requested the delegates stood up for anthem of EU.

"It is now my honour and privilege to declare the tenth session of MEP opened!" (President Kelly)