

European Democratic Citizenship Awards

Category : Personality of the Year

Name of the Personality: Marsida Bandilli

Description of the Personality:

Marsida Bandilli mirrors the model of a young person who is fond of the idea that leadership starts with the ability to talk the language, and empower young people. Initially she was volunteering with children with disabilities and young people with few opportunities in Albania. Her main mission was to organize in-doors and out-doors activities that could make them more independent to explore the world around them. Not only she gave her dedication and support, but she was able to learn from this experience, and push herself towards what she would achieve in the future. Through becoming a mentor for international volunteers in Beyond Barriers organization, she was able to easily learn about cultural differences, and use these perceptions to inspire many young people for playing an active and vital role into society. She moreover strengthened her active approach through organizing different campaigns in Albania that were aiming to promote the 'volunteering spirit' among young people in the country. Through her initiative, we were able to organize several events, on December 5th each-year. Mobilizing young people on why and how to volunteer was difficult in the beginning, due to strong perceptions of viewing 'volunteering as an obligated job', because of the previous political and economic system. But due to her persistence, we were able to mobilize more than 300 young people for the campaign, and moreover get those people engaged with the work we do in our office. Through being a fond believer of the idea that positive change comes when people are empowered themselves, Marsida was able not only to change her life completely, but also to serve as a model for many other young people across Europe. She was born and raised in a small Albanian family. Although when she was little, she had big dreams, but little opportunities. However, she fought for her dreams: getting the best from the education system in the country, learning foreign languages, getting knowledge from books, travelling, networking and meeting many other 'bright minds' as hers in Europe, conveying them about her ideas. By the age of 25, Marsida moved to Belgium for pursuing her PhD studies, but also trying to reach a bigger audience. She keeps believing that young people should not only be heard, but moreover be included into decision-making processes. Because to her opinion: young people get better represented when they are represented by themselves, rather when politicians advocate for their issue. Through her work, she is invited as a speaker and inspirational leader in many conferences and international activities in Europe, where most of her work is focused.

Impact achieved by your involvement:

"In the past 2-years, Marsida has been making a contribution on local, national and European levels as well. She has a strong ability to draw on her experiences and observations to develop thoughtful opinions on a variety of issues. She has contributed to the media: written press, TV and radio through sharing her belief on young people and leadership. She believes that no matter where young people live they are at the end not that different from each-other: they are idealistic, smart, and moreover have a clear view about the perspective they want to see in the world. Through believing in: yes, together we can – she was able to make young people more aware about the fact: every individual can build bridges, break walls, connect people, communities and cultures.

she made a valuable contribution at the panel debate with Mrs. Lieve Fransen, Director of Europe2020 Policy at the European Commission: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qy_56v_px6E . During the European Funds for the Balkans, May 2014: <http://vimeo.com/98550139>. Talking about democracy at the Council of Europe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGNqrN4fh78>.

Let Democracy Take Off, during the World Forum for Democracy, Strasbourg, November 2014 - <https://vimeo.com/111406975>

Some of her last publications:

- Avoiding a "Lost Generation". What can the EU do better to tackle youth unemployment?, March 2015 <http://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/article/1621/avoiding-a-lost-generation>

- Why Imposing Gender Quotas on Corporate Boards is not Gender Equality, March 2015 <http://www.futurelabeurope.eu/blog/why-imposing-quotas-on-corporate-boards-is-not-gender-equality/>
<http://www.futurelabeurope.eu/blog/enlargement-fatigue-and-the-multiple-challenges-of-maintaining-momentum-during-the-accession-process/>

- The Schengen Effect - <http://www.kosovotwopointzero.com/en/article/1696/the-schengen-effect>

- The European Citizens' Initiative, one more illusion of giving voice to its citizens - <http://marsidabandilli.blogactiv.eu/2015/04/16/the-european-citizens-initiative-one-more-illusion-of-giving-voice-to-its-citizens/>

- Discover the strength inside yourself - <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/article/the-active-citizen-of-europe-award-holder-marsida-bandilli-to-young-people-discover-the-strength-inside-yourself.html>

- What does Europe mean to Albanian people - <http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/what-does-europe-mean-to-albanian-people.html>

For newspapers, in Albanian:

- Interview, "I share the Active Citizens of Europe Award with young people, hoping to inspire them" – for Gazeta Dita, March 2015 <http://www.gazetadita.al/cmimin-e-ndaj-me-te-gjithe-te-rinjte-shqiptare-shpresoj-ti-frymezjoj/>

- How young people can revitalize democracy? – for the Telegraph (National Newspaper), December 2014 <http://gazetatelegraf.com/marsida-bandilli-ja-perse-te-rinjte-mund-te-rivitalizojne-demokracine/>

- Youth Albanians in Europe: promoting enthusiasm and leadership values", September 2014 <http://gazetatelegraf.com/te-rinjte-shqiptare-promovues-te-entuziazmit-dhe-lidershipit-ne-europe/>

- The European Parliament Elections, new candidates – old faces, May 2014 – the Albanian Telegraph (National Newspaper) <http://telegraf.al/bota-rajoni/marsida-bandillizgjedhjet-e-parlamentit-europian-2014-kandidatet-sa-te-rinj-aq-edhe-te-vjeter>

What makes the initiative innovative?

All in all Marsida is a multi-dimensional person. She is able to make herself stand out and speak up for her ideas. It is very inspiring the way she that she empowered herself. Not only was she able to demonstrate she can connect communities, but moreover if you ask her what language does she speak, she will most probably reply: European. She has Albanian origin, and some Italian-roots in her last name. Travelling and spreading her good work all around Europe, she gives ample support for her European feelings. Not anyone else more than her, could feel connected with the continent in multiple ways:

through inspiring and encouraging young people to make their voice heard in their societies, to be innovative and creative for taking risks and new initiatives that aim to bring positive change both at local, national and international levels. All in all, I am happy to recommend her for this award and I hope the jury will consider this nomination favorably. Not only for her active approach in inspiring young people, building bridges between people belonging to different social and cultural backgrounds, but on top of that due to her life path. She was able to change her life through becoming what she has always dreamt of. She is the rare model of a young person who has achieved everything through "plain hard work". Being a leader not only in theory but also in practice, she is able to continue working for inspiring and encouraging many other young people to take charge of their lives, to do the things they have always wanted, to be invincible, young and idealistic that they can bring the change they want to see in the world.

Contribution to European values:

"To Marsida's fond belief, it is important that anyone understands the power that lies in our hands. In one of her latest speeches in Brussels, she mentioned: "We are all born leaders; no matter where, no matter in what conditions, and how. The sooner we understand, the more we will be able to contribute for our communities and societies."

Her work is mostly the promotion of democracy and spreading of European values for building the European identity throughout the continent. Through her work, Marsida has been able to influence debates about the future of Europe, and participate in discussions about issues that concern young people: unemployment, education, research and development and entrepreneurship. She has spread her ideas in many innovative forms:

1. Through founding the World Merit Belgium - where she is giving her support for empowering young people at local, regional and national level
2. Through participating in international events concerned with the future of Europe: debates, discussions, conferences where she speaks and encourages young people
3. Through writing for the press (newspapers and online magazines) - where she shares how she got empowered, and what every individual of our society/ community could to bring a positive change
4. Through participating in the traditional and new media. She has had many appearances on radio and TV in Albania, Kosovo, Belgium and Germany where she has spread her work and ideas. Rather than that she uses Facebook and Twitter for promoting her work.
5. Through meeting with decision-makers of her country: i.e the president of Albania and Kosovo- while getting involved with discussions about young people in both countries. Also she has had the opportunity to meet some of the top-EU leaders and sometimes to challenge them with questions that are related to young people's participation in EU politics."

Website or promotional materials:

Interview for Ora 7, Klan Kosovo, February 2015 (In Albanian Language) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE2BdBCuroE> 10. Interview for Radio 1 – Belgium, December 2014 <http://www.radio1.be/node/382166> www.marsidabandilli.blogactiv.eu etc"