

UEF - Greece & Europe Direct Western Macedonia - "Dialogue in the Regions of Europe – The Future and Political Developments in the European Union"

The Hellenic Union of European Federalists (EEnOE – UEF Greece) and the Association of Active Youths – Europe Direct Western Macedonia successfully organized the event entitled "Dialogue in the Regions of Europe – The Future and Political Developments in the European Union." The event took place on Friday, May 2, 2025, at the Youth Centre of OENEF, located at 7is Noemvriou 9, in Florina.

Florina, a city in the borders of the European Union situated in the Region of Western Macedonia, holds particular geostrategic importance, traditionally serving as a crossroad of cultures and trade flows at Greece's northwestern borders. The region is known for its significant lignite reserves, which have shaped its industrial identity and contributed to the country's energy self-sufficiency. Despite its natural and economic advantages, the region's remote geographical position, combined with limited access to infrastructure and markets, has resulted in reduced development opportunities, intensifying the challenges for sustainable economic and social progress.

In this context, the organization of the event "Dialogue in the Regions of Europe – The Future and Political Developments in the European Union" held special significance for the city of Florina. The discussion around European political developments, the Green and Just Transition, emerging challenges and opportunities, as well as policies aimed at supporting lignite affected regions, gave the local community a chance to be heard, to actively participate in the European dialogue, and to pursue a more balanced and sustainable future. Within this framework, particular emphasis was placed on the voice of young people, who are encouraged to play an active role in shaping Europe's future and to contribute with their ideas, concerns, and vision in a transition that directly impacts their lives.

The event featured the participation of: Ms. **Daphne Gogou**, President of UEF Greece; Dr. **Georgios Korkovelos**, Member of the Board of UEF Greece; Mr. **Dimitrios Papagelopoulos**, Member of the Board of UEF Greece; Mr. **Nikos Giannis**, Official of the European Commission; Mr. **Nasos Sofos**, Official of the European Commission; Dr. **Konstantinos Filippidis**, Member of the Board of UEF Greece; and Mr. **Stefanos Panakoulis**, Board Member of UEF. Interventions followed by Mr. **Vasilios Giannakis**, Mayor of Florina; Mr. **Iordanis Bantis**, President of the Municipal Council of Amyntaio and member of the EU Local Councillors group; and Mr. **Kostas Nikou**, Executive Director of the University of Western Macedonia. The discussion was moderated by Dr. **Konstantinos Stergiou**, Manager of Europe Direct Western Macedonia. The event was also attended by Ms. **Christina Vakalopoulou**, representative of the Deputy Regional Governor of Florina, Mr. Athanasios Taskas. A special highlight of the event was the meaningful participation of students from the 2nd High School of Florina, European Parliament Ambassador School, along with the presence of Ms. **Zafeirio Melisidou** and Ms. **Archontoula Nikolaou**, as well as students and the Principal Ms. **Christina Karagianni** from the 3rd Junior High School of Florina.

More specifically, as Ms. **Gogou** pointed out, the Union of European Federalists (UEF) was founded with the goal of promoting European integration and has been an active member of the global federalist movement since 2019. The President of UEF Greece emphasized the important role the UEF plays, particularly in the field of local governance, highlighting the efforts to bring young people closer to decision-making centers at the local level through initiatives aimed at informing and encouraging their participation. She also referred to the concept of Europe itself, stressing what it represents, its achievements, and how we can assess its impact on citizens' daily lives. Key dilemmas faced by the younger generation were also addressed, along with the challenges and aspirations shaping their future. Finally, Ms. Gogou highlighted the shared values and features that unite EU member states and strengthen the vision of European integration.

Mr. **Korkovelos** discussed the current dilemmas facing the European Union, pointing out the existing deficit in decision-making processes, which undermines efficiency and public trust in the EU institutions. He raised the vital question of what is truly worth promoting in terms of European unity, emphasizing the need for honest and meaningful dialogue. He also outlined both the positive aspects of the EU—such as peace, cooperation, and freedom of movement—and its weaknesses, including bureaucracy and disparities among member states. He concluded by stressing the importance of

adopting a unified and coherent policy in critical areas in order to reinforce cohesion and the prospects of European integration.

Mr. **Papagelopoulos** focused on the need to explore alternative solutions to the challenges currently faced by the European Union, posing the question of how the EU can become more effective, fairer, and provide greater opportunities for its citizens. He further stated that the path towards a federal Europe is central to the ongoing efforts for a transformative and meaningful citizens' engagement. In his point of view, the progress the EU has achieved over the decades is substantial and contributes to growing interest in the discussions and initiatives of its institutions. He concluded by underlining the importance of coordinated steps among member states as a key factor for a stronger and more cohesive Europe.

The strengthening of the European Union's role and the deepening of the political independence of the Union—towards a larger and federal democratic structure—were key points of discussion during the event. The participation of experienced professionals with long-standing involvement in European institutions offered a valuable opportunity to deepen knowledge and understanding.

More than 60 citizens of all ages attended the event and actively engaged in a constructive dialogue on the future of Europe, on cohesion policies and development prospects. The future of a small European region such as Western Macedonia, stands at the forefront of implementing the Just Transition policy within the framework of the European Green Deal and can be the core example of a successful and sustainable transformation. This event ensures the commitment of young people to lead and shape their future in a federal European Union.

SCAN 
ME 

Active Youths



Europe Direct

