



GenerationEurope

## Generation Europe Debate

'The role of family during studies and exams'

*Date: 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009*

*Place: Jazzve Coffee House, Yerevan, Armenia*

*Participants: 10 students*

*Organised by Gayane Sargsyan*

Ten young people – students and graduates of the Yerevan State University and Yerevan State Linguistic University after took part in the debate on the “Role of Family during Studies and Exams”.

In Armenia, traditionally, family plays a very important role in the life of any person, and students are not exception. Unlike what is common in many European countries, in Armenia, students rarely work during their studies, even during the holiday periods. Only one person out of ten present at the debate told that she worked during her studies to help her family and support herself. As to the other 9 young people, their families took care of all their needs and provided them with the necessary money so that they could concentrate exclusively on their studies and had not to think of anything else. All the young people confessed that their families have or have had a very crucial role during their studies, and especially during the exam periods, when they would become more caring and attentive to them, their mothers would cook their favourite dishes and tip-toe around them, and brothers, sisters and fathers would help with obtaining books or copying the necessary lectures/material and creating the necessary conditions for them in the house to study (keep down the level of noise, TV, music, etc). All the young people were unanimous in the view that their families plaid a very important and supportive role during their studies and especially during the exam period. Having admitted this, however, a few young people also criticized this tradition in the Armenian families claiming that the parents must give more independence and responsibility to their children when the latter become students. Anna, 24, a graduate of the YSU Psychology Department, noted that she would like her parents to give her more independence, and she would like to live on her own and experience the “real student life” as she put it, “with all the difficulties and challenges”, whereas in Armenia it is not common to let children move and live alone in the city where they study. Mostly the parents are overprotective on their children and they think they won't be able to live on their own at that age. The young people argued that living with family (parents) has both its advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages the participants of the debate noted no need to worry about money, about supporting oneself, cooking, cleaning, etc. as all this is being traditionally done by the caring parents. However, the disadvantages were the parent-dependency, lack of responsibility, lack of motivation to find a job and work alongside with studying, and less independence and life experience as a result. In the view of some attendants, it would be good if students lived in student halls (which are non-existent in Armenia at the moment) as they do it in Europe or the US, closer to the Universities and the University facilities, as in that case, they would completely feel the responsibility of being a student and it would help them to become more mature, independent and also more effective in their studies and focused on their future work. While appreciating the care and thoughtfulness of families, many young people joined the participants criticizing the parents for over-protectiveness which has its negative results over a longer period in the lives of the young people, and their message to the parents and families was

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“your support means a lot to us, but please, give us also some independence which will help us to become more responsible, self-reliant and mature”.

At the end of the discussion all the attendants admitted that they needed to promote the idea of working during studies and especially the holidays among their course mates and friends, as it would help change the mentality of the young Armenians and would help them to get more independence. Besides, it would also help them to gain experience, get more disciplined and learn time management.

At the end of the debate the participants also expressed their commitment to promote volunteer work among their peers and pass them the information on the GE they had received from the GE National Ambassador in Armenia.