Fiery Apps: Hot Start-Ups for Europe's most burning issues

Three days full of fire and action: Europe's most creative social IT start-ups gathered from November 19-22 for the European Youth Award Festival in Graz. 14 highly motivated teams from 12 different countries showed how Internet and Mobiles can change Europe. GovFaces from Switzerland, a social network which connects politicians directly with citizens, is the overall winner of the European Youth Award 2014.

 Graz /Salzburg, November 25, 2014. State Secretary Sonja Stessl handed over the overall winners award to 25-years-old Tudor Mihailescu from Romania and Connor Sattely, born in America, who both moved to Switzerland to fight the politic frustration of millions of Europeans with the means of social media. *GovFaces* allows citizens, organizations, journalists, and other users to post questions or ideas directly to the profiles of politicians. A politician answers using text or video response, showing their face behind the screen.

Winning the European Youth Award means winning know-how and valuable contacts. The festivals interactive program under the title „Let's put Society on Fire!" ensured the development of sustainable co-working networks. Speed-Networking, Entrepreneur-Campfire and Global Huddles were just some of the highlights of the three-days-conference. Together with winning teams, student delegations from Austria, Finland, Denmark, Hungary, Spain and Germany joined the Festival.

The students applied their theoretical knowledge practically for the winning teams: they analyzed their projects and suggested further developments in the course of a public poster exhibition during the EYA Festival.

Tudor Mihailescu, member of GovFaces, ranged the comments of the students higher than of some international investors: *„There are two types of questions. The general ones everybody is asking who looked at your project superficially. And the others, who are going much beyond, which are inconvenient because they show you problems or something you have never thought of before. The latter are the ones which take you further. And these are exactly the ones the students have asked"*, he stated. He and all the other winning teams were impressed by the analysis of the students.

All festival participants were fascinated by the quality of the winning projects and the flaming presentations of the young teams. It was hard for the Grand Jury, consisting of 16 members coming from Indonesia, South Africa, Kuwait and all over Europe, to select the overall winner. Diversity, creativity and incredible engagement thrilled the audience.

„We cannot analyze the future, we have to design it", said „Ten Meters of Thinking"-Guru Paul Hughes. The EYA winning teams showed in Graz that they are ready and able to do that. In the end they agreed that they will do it together – because the EYA Festival did not only bring new knowledge but also friendships. Therefore, the festival theme was extended to "Let's put Society on Fire together!".

About the European Youth Award (EYA)
Called into life by Prof. Peter A. Bruck, honorary chairman of the International Center for New Media, in 2012, the European Youth Award (EYA) is a leading European competition honoring excellence in the use of Internet and mobile applications for social empowerment. As annual contest seeks to motivate young people under the age of thirty to produce socially-valuable digital projects that address the goals defined by the Council of Europe and Europe 2020. The winners event (EYA Festival) was held in Graz, City of Design and Human Rights, from November 19-22 under the patronage of the Council of Europe, European Parliament, UNESCO and UNIDO.

European Youth Award – Digital Creativity for Social Good