

## **The Youth Code of Ethics and the *Yebe* Project**

Today's management education is often criticized for being overly content and teacher-focused as opposed to student-centered learning processes. Besides academic excellence and technical knowledge the development of the integral human personality with special regards to entrepreneurial and leadership skills as well as business ethics and the understanding of the role of business in society have to gain much more importance. In all this, management students and future business leaders more and more have to become subjects of their own education and formation and not mere objects. They should be encouraged to bring to bear their own experiences and aspirations in contributing to the development of innovative training concepts.

In this sense, the active involvement of young people is an overarching principle at all stages of the *Yebe* project. As a first step in that direction, the project partners initiated the "Youth Code of Ethics".

### **What is the Youth Code of Ethics?**

The Youth Code of Ethics is a key element of the *Yebe* project as it involves all the institutional partners as well as young students and professionals who participate in the project's activities. The main objective of the Code is that young people from different European countries jointly create a document which combines their own experience, convictions, and perspectives with official documents on business ethics of science and practice. In view of the financial and economic crisis of the past but also facing the massive challenges of the future, the young people reflect their respective religious and cultural traditions as resources which might help to come up with some of the best answers of which we are capable. This Youth Code should be written in a modern language of the young people in order to be better understandable in and adoptable to the surroundings and everyday live situations of the young people. In this sense, the Code is a blue print that can be adjusted by anyone to hers or his convictions so that it becomes a very personal commitment.



### **The Writing Process**

The core idea of how to generate the Youth Code is that the whole writing process was driven by the young participants themselves and that the project partners only work as process facilitators. In addition, this process was accompanied by experienced members of business associations and professors from the various universities which are part of the *Yebe* project.

In general, the writing process consisted of three phases. In the first phase, the participating students and young professionals, selected by the national project partners, met each other for the first time. This workshop titled “Rethinking Entrepreneurship and Business Ethics” took place in Florence from August 2016, 19<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> and was structured by discussions in various formats and interactive group collaborations as well as excursions and practitioners exchange. During these days, the participants commonly explored and discussed questions like: What constitutes valued-based leadership today? What are the main challenges which have to be faced by their generation? What can religious and spiritual traditions contribute to create a new vision for companies as well as society? This reflection, dialogue and exchange phase increased the awareness and sensibility of the students and brought to the surface the most pressing issues of their generation. In this way, the first phase laid the ground for the further development auf the Youth Code.

The second decentral and virtual phase was characterized by a “blended mobility” concept and was based on the use of information and communication technologies, mainly via a facebook group and Google Drive tools. Following the initial thoughts of the first phase, the students and young professionals deepened and further developed their ideas concerning the Youth Code. The second phase was mainly guided by three questions: (1) What is the biggest



challenge to act as an ethical leader? (2) What is your personal vision of ethical leadership? (3) What should we do to put it into practice?

The third phase finally reassembled the group of students and young professionals in a workshop in Rome from November 2016, 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>. During these days, the participants collected their ideas and thoughts of the previous phases and jointly drafted the first version of the Youth Code in a multistage process of discussing and re-editing.

### **Next steps?**

As a document created by young people from different European countries, the Youth Code is originally written in English. However, at the moment, we are in the act of translating it into the languages of the participating partners in order to facilitate the intended adaption and spreading process. Last but not least, the Youth Code is an open-ended, adaptable and changeable document. In this sense, we most cordially invite everyone to get in touch who wants to add, discuss or contribute something and we hope for fruitful and enriching discussion in the future.

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