

Welcoming 24 februari 2017

Good morning everyone

I have the honour to welcome you all here in Belgium – here in Eeklo.

My name is Filip Smet. I am the President of Youth for Europe Eeklo. And I was also helping to prepare and to coordinate our exchange meeting of this weekend.

I am very glad to welcome everyone – and with me all the members of our Committee and families.

It is always nice to see so many friends, but also to see some new faces.

Exchange meetings like ours are very good.

They give opportunities to get to know each other. To meet new friends beyond borders and all over Europe.

Understanding and friendship.

That is what we need in Europe. That is what we need in a world that becomes harder again and ever more individualistic.

It is a way to express that not only big politics in international relations are important.

But also small things.

Day to day contacts. Between citizens, between ordinary people so to say.

Understanding is key – only in this way we can come to a common vision – a common future in which we all live together!

Our topic of this weekend – migration and immigration – is such a topic, where we need to build understanding.

Where we need to share best practices. Where we need to learn from each other.

The Committee is very glad with our common project with the twin towns.

A project with the title ‘Are newcomers European citizens?’

Our programme in Eeklo fits in this general theme.

After several meetings within our committee we decided to focus on the integration aspect.

This we developed in all kind of activities.

This brings me to the programme of today.

First Mister Vincent Van Peteghem, Member of the Federal Parliament will address us.

Next we will have a paneldebate

Then we will have a lunch together

And in the afternoon we will visit some companies and organisations. But later on more about that.

So, as said, today we start with a presentation by Mister Vincent Van Peteghem.

I am glad that Mister Van Peteghem could make time for us today.

Mister Van Peteghem is a Member of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, which we most often call the Federal Parliament.

Mister Van Peteghem became member of the Parliament on the 10th of November of 2016. So very recently. But he has already a long history in politics. He has been very active within the political party Flemish Christian Democrats.

He is active in local politics. In a village De Pinte which is nearby to Eeklo. Also not so far away from Ghent.

It is always nice to have a presentation from someone of our own region.

From 2010 till 2013 he was also president of the young Christian Democrats of our province East-Flanders.

Today Mister Van Peteghem will address us with a presentation that gives an overview of the Belgian policy towards migration.

I would like to wish everyone an interesting day and I will now give the floor to Mr. Van Peteghem