

'Lost generation' is EU's best chance

BANGKOK, MAR. 13: Too preoccupied with the day to day management (or, in many cases, mismanagement) of their continent debt crisis and the threat it poses to the euro currency, European leaders have so far failed to communicate with Europe's younger generation.

Of course, their ritual speeches in Brussels _ where the EU 27 heads of state or government will meet again for a summit tomorrow and on Friday _ always end with promises of growth, innovation and jobs.

But the dim social reality of Europe's economic meltdown shows that no words are able to fill the void created by the current recession affecting the whole southern periphery of the EU. A situation exacerbated by the decision made, last February, to downsize the EU budget, with the risk of leading to cuts in research, education and information technology infrastructures programmes.

The example of Spain is telling. After months of street protests against austerity measures, young Spaniards are slowly but surely giving up. The legitimate and passionate rage of those very many "Indignados" is being replaced by their day to day struggle for survival. In Barcelona, Madrid or Valencia, apartment sharing has exploded. Informal family networks are being revived, to help one's son or daughter to find a job in the still thriving Spanish informal sector (from fruit harvesting to undeclared restaurants, cafes or tourism linked businesses), or migrate to countries with a more solid growth rate, including in emerging Latin America.

The Asia and Europe Meeting (Asem) outlook report 2012, to be published this week under the auspices of the Asia- Europe Foundation and the United Nations University from Bruges, Belgium, highlights megatrends and mega-challenges that will affect both continents' interactions in the future. Its analysis fortified by impeccable and hitherto absent statistical data about the 49 Asem member countries, represents a fresh perspective and identifies opportunities and threats in Asia-Europe relations.

Read the full story at <http://tinyurl.com/a9488bl>

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