

The European Union and the Promise of Democracy: What can Citizenship Education and Civil Society contribute?

Conference . 14–16 November 2013 . The Hague, the Netherlands



Background and aims

The societal and political debate concerning the future shape of the EU is entering a crucial phase. In the recent hectic years of crisis management, more and more decisions have been taken by fewer and fewer co-players in the democratic machine called Europe. According to recent surveys, many citizens now take a critical or even hostile stance towards the European Union, as it seems to have nothing to offer them but austerity and social sacrifices. National and populist feelings demonstrate the extent of a great collective uncertainty in European societies. We believe European citizenship educators are

facing at least two major challenges resulting from this state of the European Union.

Firstly, Europe's ongoing economic crisis has engendered a crisis of confidence in the European project and the costs and benefits of further European integration. Fewer and fewer citizens are prepared to transfer power and competences to 'Europe'. The democratic deficit of the EU (once hidden by the 'implicit consensus' of European citizens in the early decades of the EU) has now become more and

more visible and contributes to the backlash in support for the EU.

Secondly, the economic crisis is dividing Europe and may ultimately lead to the break up of the EU. Centrifugal forces are pulling European public opinion apart, separating the French from the Germans and the Germans from everyone else. The southern nations of Spain, Italy and Greece are becoming ever more estranged as evidenced by their frustration with Brussels, Berlin and the perceived unfairness of the economic system.

This is where the central questions begin that will be the focus of NECE 2013. "Participation Now!" was the motto of NECE 2012 in Córdoba (Spain), which concentrated on dialogue with grassroots movements of the Arab Spring. With an eye to the elections of the European Parliament in May 2014, NECE 2013 will continue to explore the topics of participation and democratisation and focus on the EU's democratic deficit. However, deploring the democratic deficit in the EU is one thing. Citizenship education, on the other hand, must critically examine its European policy campaigns and projects in terms of their coverage and effectiveness. And it should concentrate more on the criticism and doubts of frustrated European citizens. The conference in The Hague will offer opportunities for a critical debate on four levels:

- 1. Scenarios and outlines for the future of the EU**
- 2. European civil society and the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union**
- 3. Role of citizenship education in the European crisis**
- 4. Practical approaches and projects of citizenship education**

Opportunities to actively take part will be provided in numerous workshops and forums. At the end of the conference, the participants will draw up a public 'Conference Paper' comprising recommendations on the topic of democratisation and participation in the EU.

PROGRAMME

Conference moderation:

Paul de Ruijter & Renate Kenter, de Ruijter Strategy (the Netherlands)*

Thursday, 14 November 2013

→ **Venue: Oude Zaal (Tweede Kamer)**

4:00 pm Registration & Welcome Coffee

5:00 pm **Welcome Addresses**

Kars Veling, Director of Pro Demos – The House for Democracy and the Rule of Law (the Netherlands)

Thomas Krüger, President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Germany)

5:15 pm **Opening Speech**

Frans Timmermans, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs

5:30 pm **Keynotes**

“The EU and the Promise of Democracy – Where do we stand a few months before the European Elections?”

Paul Scheffer, Publicist (the Netherlands)

Lorenzo Marsili, European Alternatives (Italy)

6:15 pm Discussion

07:00 pm Reception

* tbc

Friday, 15 November 2013

→ **Venue: Oude Zaal (Tweede Kamer)**

9:00 am Entrance at Oude Zaal
NECE Review and Perspectives

9:30 am Introduction of the World Café

→ **Venue: Statenpassage (Tweede Kamer)**

10:15 am **World Café: Starting an open dialogue with all participants on issues of citizenship education**

In order to prepare for the conference, a scenario workshop took place in The Hague in July 2013. The aim of the preparatory workshop was to develop scenarios on the future of the EU and on the role of citizenship education with an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders. The results of this scenario workshop will be presented in order to discuss the opportunities and challenges for citizenship education with all participants in smaller groups in three different rounds of the World Café. The discussed topics and aspects will be used to develop the “**Conference Paper**”.

→ **Venue: Oude Zaal (Tweede Kamer)**

12:45 pm Project-Pitch-Session: Preview

1:15 pm Summary of the World Café

1:30 pm Lunch

2:45 pm

→ **Change to the conference venue: ProDemos – House for Democracy and the Rule of Law**

Parallel to the conference programme, project market of European models and good practice projects on citizenship education is offered at ProDemos.

3:00–6:30 pm **Parallel workshop sessions on current and future issues of citizenship education**

WS 1 Creating a bottom-up Europe: Can citizenship education interact or cooperate with civil society movements?

WS 2 Voting for a European Democracy: How to increase voters' turnout in the European Parliament elections?

WS 3 Concepts of citizenship education in Europe: Is there a need for a common understanding?

WS 4 The EU as a topic of citizenship education: How should citizenship education deal with democracy deficits and the loss of trust in the European project?

WS 5 Citizenship education on the political agenda of the EU

WS 6–8 Topics and scenarios of citizenship education for the future of the EU

4:30 pm Coffee break

7:30 pm Evening at your free disposal

PROGRAMME

Saturday, 16 November 2013

→ **Venue: ProDemos – House for Democracy and the Rule of Law**

- 9:00 am Plenary Session
- 9:30 am Parallel workshop sessions: NECE Focus Groups & Open Forum
- 11:00 am Coffee break
- 11:30 am Presentation & Discussion of the '**Conference Paper**'
- 11:45 am Keynote
Ylva Tiveus, European Commission (Brussels)*
- 12:15 pm **Fish Bowl** format with conference remarks & discussion
A small group of people seated in a circle, having a conversation in full view of a larger group of listeners. One or more chairs are open to "visitors" (i. e., members of the audience) who want to ask questions or make comments.
amongst others with
Ylva Tiveus, European Commission (Brussels)*
Lorenzo Marsili, European Alternatives (Italy)
- 01:00 pm Farewell by the organisers
Petra Grüne, Federal Agency for Civic Education (Germany), **Tatjana Meijvogel-Volk**, ProDemos – House for Democracy and the Rule of Law (the Netherlands) & **Manfred Wirtitsch**, Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (Austria)
- 01:15 pm Lunch snack
- 02:30 pm Optional: Sight seeing tour

* tbc

Conference Venues:

- **Oude Zaal (Tweede Kamer), Binnenhof 1A**
The Tweede Kamer and the Oude Zaal are both located in the Binnenhof, which is a famous tourist attraction of The Hague. It is the centre of power in the Netherlands and it is the place where the House of Representatives meets, where the Prime Minister works and where the Ministers hold their weekly consultations.
- **ProDemos – House for Democracy and the Rule of Law, Hofweg 1-H**
ProDemos is an independent national organisation whose aim is to provide citizens with information on the democratic rule of law and encourage them to play an active part in the country's political and judicial system.

A conference organised by



In co-operation with



and the fellowship programme "Shaping Europe – Civic Education in Action" for young Europeans – a co-operation between the bpb and the Robert Bosch Stiftung

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