

Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE)

Report 2

Workshop: *Spot on Europe*

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1. Conference Report

Visual arts such as film have always been a medium crossing borders with less difficulty than other media or other artistic forms of expression. Film seems to best qualify for translating particular characteristics of a place and a time into a universal visual language.

The workshop “**Spot on: Europe**” in Slubice (Poland) took up this border-crossing potential of film and filmmaking to explore differences and common ground in Europe. The major goal of the workshop was to take a closer look at the contribution of films to the process of creating a vision of Europe and thereby fostering a sense of European citizenship. The workshop asked questions such as:

How can moving images contribute to shaping European identity? What is the educational role that film can play in that context? Talking about film(s) the organisers hoped, would offer an opportunity to exchange concepts of European identities that are already experienced on a daily basis by students and other participants.

In order to not only discuss these issues from a theoretical perspective and among experts, the *Federal Agency for Civic Education* (Germany) organised a workshop that brought together young Europeans from Poland and Germany¹ and filmmakers, directors, film-festival managers, as well as producers from both countries. The workshop was carried out in co-operation with the *Collegium Polonicum* (Slubice), the *Brandenburg State Office for Civic Education*, the *Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien Brandenburg*, *Vision Kino* and the *European Film Academy*. The workshop was documented by the young director Dietrich Brüggemann, who did a short film on the Slubice-workshop that was screened at conference EYCE: “National Experiences – European Challenges” (2- 4. 12.05, Berlin).

After the welcome address of *Dr. Krzysztof Wojciechowski* from the *Collegium Polonicum*, that hosted the meeting, the workshop was opened by Katrin Willman (*Federal Agency for Civic Education*) and Marion Döring (*European Film Academy*). In the introduction of the participants, students from both countries, Germany and Poland, stressed their wish to learn more about the culture and thinking of the respective other.

The first panel “**Film without Borders: The Medium of Film and its Intercultural Importance**” was composed of Hannes Stöhr (director of *One day in Europe*), Katrin Schlösser (producer) and Thomas Hailer (director of *Children’s Film Festival Berlin*). Marion Döring (director of the *European Film Academy*, Berlin) moderated the session. In the discussion

¹ Students aged between 16 and 18 from the *Regine-Hildebrand-Schule* in Birkenwerder and students (all female) from the *Highschool Slubice*.

the panellists emphasized the potential of film to explore and appropriate the other (the unknown). Film, according to the discussants, opens the door to unknown social and cultural environments; it allows to look at details. Film was characterized as a **journey to the other**. Hailer stressed that other worlds can be discovered. Thinking about the question of how European film comes about, Stöhr explained his motivation to examine the communication problem as a major theme of Europe, which builds the focal point of his film *One day in Europe*. He concluded that Europe needs a lingua franca.

Döring quoted **statistics on the consumption of films in Europe**. According to the statistics only between 15 to 20% of the films watched are national films, European films reach an amount of 7 to 11 %, American films 65%, and the films from the new EU-member States are under 1 %. European films on national television take the following proportion: In Germany 14% of the films showed on the national television are European, in France 16%, in Spain 12 % and in the UK only 4%.

The dominance of the American film industry in Europe was criticised. It was stressed that the European film could not compete with the enormous advertisement budgets of American films and the production of stars (Döring, Hailer) that attracted a mass audience. Stöhr, however, stated that European film should not define itself through rejecting American film. It must have the power to define itself. Döring added that Hollywood was invented by European immigrants who, not familiar with the English language, developed a powerful language of moving images, just as the young filmmakers with immigrant background today.

The students were asked what **role (European) film played in their schools**. Some students from Poland regretted that film played a very minor role in their schools. A few German students felt the same, whereas most of them seemed not to support the idea that film could enrich the school curriculum. The German teacher explained the new educational framework that allowed to integrate film into all subjects. Film, it was argued, is to be considered a cross-curricular subject rather than a subject of its own. Lauriac suggested a **revival of the cinema-clubs** that are widely spread in France and provided young people with the opportunity to watch European films.

The Swedish shortfilm “**SVITJOD**” directed by David Flamholc and Maren Nisson was screened. The film shows two filmmakers travelling through Sweden and asking fellow citizens whether Sweden would need more inhabitants as it was such a “big empty country”. Then Hailer introduced and showed the shortfilm “**How to make friends**” from Kara Miller.

The film shows an interaction between a young boy and two girls that become friends and dance together.

The panel was followed by the presentation “**European common ground in the European Year of Citizenship Education**” of Prof. Dr. Timm Beichelt (*University Viadrina, Frankfurt/O.*). Beichelt asked the following questions: What is the basis of European citizenship? Are common values the precondition for European citizenship? Are there shared values to build a common identity upon? He chose an empirical approach to deal with these questions of differing and common values in Europe.

He selected the following **statistic data² focusing on the items Europe, democracy, religion, moral, equality**. He, for example, illustrated the “attachment level” of Europeans distinguishing between country, region, city/town, village and Europe. 91% of Europeans feel attached to their country. 87% feel attached to their region. 87 % feel attached to their city, and 66% feel attached to Europe. He also stated that 66 % of the Germans identified themselves as Europeans, whereas 83% of Poles identified as Europeans. He also noted how EU citizens rank values. The first 4 ranks are: Democracy, Peace, Human rights, Rule of Law. 97% of all Germans thought that democracy was the best form of government. According to Beichelt 89% of the European citizens thought that democracy was the best form of government. Looking at religion, Beichelt said that 52% of all EU citizens believed in the existence of a God, 27% in a spiritual force and 18% were atheists. However the regional differences are enormous in this category: 80% of the Poles believe in God but only 47% of the Germans. 3% of Poles do not believe at all. In Germany 25 % identify as atheists.

To illustrate common moral attitudes Beichelt chose the question, whether marriage was an outmoded institution. 20% of the Swedish population thought so, 27% percent of the English population; 20% of the German population but only 9% of the Polish population. To show attitudes concerning equality, Beichelt used the item “A university education is more important for a boy than a girl.” 95% of the Danes disagreed, 91% of the French, 88% of the British, 79% in Germany. In total 81% of Europeans disagree with that statement.

Beichelt concluded that even though Europe consists of different cultures and “Lebenswelten” that also bring about different attitudes, there remains a lot of common ground in terms of shared values that are the pillars of a European identity.

Anja Ostermann (*Lab Concepts*) – asked the students, whether Europe was an issue in their school classes. The German teacher explained that Europe is an obligatory theme in the German school curriculum. A

² Mainly from the resource of the Eurobarometer: europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion

Polish student complained that there was too little information on Europe in school. The Polish teacher responded that the new subject in Polish schools called “information on society,” would include relevant issues on Europe. The teachers also stressed that Europe should be considered a cross curricular theme. A Polish student pointed out that Europe is not created in schools but through encounters, exchange and co-operation of Europeans. She therefore pleaded for more co-operation projects between European youngsters. Stöhr asked the Polish students about their identification with the region they live in – the Lebuser Land. Most of the students reacted by emphasising their regional identities and their specific relationship to the place they were born and raised. Stöhr concluded that regional identities are becoming more relevant than national identities in the process of Europeanisation and globalisation. Beichelt, responding to Stöhr, argued that regional and European identification and orientation could not substitute the nation state, that organises the political community. Ebert agreed and pointed at the rejection of the European constitution that would show, as he argued that Europe remained a “Europa der Vaterländer”.

The evening offered the possibility to get together informally and watch *One day in Europe* by Hannes Stöhr in the “Slubicer Kulturhaus.” The film tells five episodes: An English woman robbed in Moscow, a German man getting in trouble with the Turkish police in Istanbul, a Hungarian pilgrim that gets his camera stolen in Santiago de Compostela and two French artists that get stuck in Berlin and end up stealing a police car. All episodes are projected against the background of a football game between a Turkish and a Spanish football team. The film confronts the audience with a humorous analysis of communication problems, stereotypes, prejudice and cultural misunderstandings in Europe.

Students seemed to have enjoyed the film and appreciated the chance to ask the director – who was very open and accessible to the students – about how certain scenes of the film were made, actors were recruited and what specific motivation the director had for making the film.

The **second day** of the workshop started with a panel titled “**Europe in Film – Films about Europe – Where is Europe happening?**”

The panel was composed of Robert Glinski (director), Thomas Krüger (President of the *Federal Agency of Civic Education*), Marc Rothmund (director) and Roland Rust (Festival director of the *Cottbus Film Festival*). The panel was moderated by Stefan Laudyn (Festival director *Warsaw International Film Festival*) and Nikolaj Nikitin (Editor-in-chief and publisher of *Schnitt – Das Filmmagazin*).

The discussion was opened by Rothemund who reported on his experiences introducing his recent film *Sophie Scholl* in other European countries. He stressed his surprise that there was great interest in the story but very little knowledge on resistance in Nazi-Germany. Krüger emphasized that it is important to tell stories like the story of Sophie Scholl. He added that there was educational material developed by the *Federal Agency for Civic Education* to go with the film. The idea behind this was to reach schools and motivate school teachers to take their classes to see the film and work with it.

The present generation of students, as Krüger argued, is more than any previous generation **socialized in audio-visual terms**. Knowledge is no longer only acquired by reading books but also by watching films and dealing with different electronic media. This fact demands a strengthening of visual literacy that should be taught in schools.

Taking into consideration the European challenge, Krüger stated, that film with its “audio-visual universal language” could be seen as a chance to learn about the particular Europe. The language of film is international, Krüger argued. Film can achieve more than literature because film is capable to overcome language barriers. Film works with emotions and empathy which opens the minds and the hearts of people enabling them to take part in the stories of the “others”. Krüger also commented on the question, whether **film** should be **a subject in school**. He rejected the “subject-approach” and pleaded for a cross-curricular strategy as well as teacher training that addresses the educational potential of film.

Laudyn commented on the Polish situation that there was no systematic educational approach to **film in Polish schools**. He then turned to the students asking the Polish students, whether they had ever seen a German film, and the German students, whether they had ever seen a Polish film. Only two German students had seen a Polish film, but all the Polish students had seen at least one German film. Laudyn underlined that he wanted to demonstrate how difficult it was to see European films and argued that a European film culture can only be fostered by film festivals.

The Polish director Glinski appealed to European film makers to work together. He argued that co-productions are the future of European film. Nikitin strongly underlined that this is in particular true for East and Middle Europe, where there is little money for single productions.

Nikitin introduced the film *Lost and Found* that deals with intergenerational dialogue and was a co-operation of young filmmakers from Eastern Europe. Then the episode *The Wonderful Vera* was screened. The short film tells the story about a former stewardess who now sells tickets in a tram and suffers from the dull routine that is dominating her life.

In an act of despair, she takes the seat of the driver and drives the tram through town with high speed. She is stopped by a police man who admires her furious ride and they fall in love.

The following discussion did not deal with the content of the film, but rather the question of how to promote such films and how to support young filmmakers from these regions. Again the question of bringing films to schools and schools to films was taken up by the panellists. Whereas the panellists passionately argued that films are a key to get to know other societies and cultures, to develop an European understanding and to acquire knowledge and competencies, students from Germany responded with scepticism, and asked whether film was an adequate medium for the acquisition of knowledge. The Polish students took position against a new subject “film” because their curriculum, they argued, would be overloaded already. Nikitin concluded that the discussion showed that there was a missing appreciation of film as a form of art. He therefore took the position that “film” needs to become a proper school subject in order to be recognized. It was also stated that even if schools wanted to engage more in media education, often the equipment was either too old or completely missing (Ladenthin). Krüger responded, underlining that film should be projected and seen in a cinema rather than on video in the classroom. In addition – he made clear – that media pedagogy needs to be a compulsory part of teacher education and teacher training. The training of teachers in media literacy and the practice of media education in German classrooms – he stated – is not sufficient and needs to be strengthened.

Refocusing on the issue “Europe in film” again Krüger identified two approaches: (1) Films about Europe do not necessarily have to explicitly deal with Europe. Stories from a certain national context can be told in way that is also understood elsewhere. The film “Sophie Scholl”, he said stands for transnational and universal issues such as civil courage and human rights. Many European countries have undergone experiences of political extremism, violation of human rights and experiences of dictatorships – so the theme can be understood by people in many countries, because they can connect their particular experiences to the story. (2) The second possibility to represent Europe in films, Krüger suggested, are case studies of European identity that are told. As an example he mentioned the film *Auberge Espagnol* von Cédric Klapisch.

Taking up the title of the panel as an impuls for the concluding remarks, “where is Europe happening”, Laudyn said, Europe is not a place, it is something in ourselves. Europe does not need a place to happen because it happens in us.

At the end of the session Nikitin showed the short film *Ten Minutes*. The film shows a young boy in Bosnia who has to get water and bread for his family. On his dangerous way through a desperate war landscape, he suddenly gets under fire and runs home. He finds his family shot. Parallel to this the film tells the story of a Japanese tourist in Rome that has a holiday film developed in only ten minutes.

The programme in the afternoon offered a city tour through Frankfurt/Oder that was organised by *Transcultura*. There were two separate tours. One for the Polish speaking participants, the other one for the German speaking participants. The tour ended in the Museum Viadrina where the groups listened to **a reading by Uwe Rada** from his new book called “The Oder, Resume of a River”.

The evening offered another panel that consisted of Klaus Dieter Felsmann (media education expert), Kornel Migius (director) and Andreas Voigt (director). The panel was titled “**Learning from experience – What the media can do to encourage European citizenship education.**” It was moderated by Jan Ebert (Brandenburg State Office for Civic Education). The short film “**Looking across the River**” was screened. The film, produced by students in a film-project, initiated by Migius, accompanies the generation of the grandchildren that (re)searches the stories of their grandparents who have been expelled to the other side of the Oder during the war times. The pupils in the workshop reacted only hesitantly. A German student stated that the experiences of being driven out of ones homeland seem very much alike, no matter on what side of the river. A Polish student remarked that she liked the intergenerational dialogue presented in the film. The filmmaker Migius who accompanied the young filmmakers reported about the benefit of combining the artistic joy of making a film and the coping of the past. The afternoon ended with the screening of the shortfilm **EUREKA** that brought up the issue of fears connected to the EU enlargement.

The evening programme offered students again the possibility to watch a film, namely “**Invisible in Europe**” and discuss it with the director Andreas Voigt. The film portrays five people who illegally live in Europe. For more than a year the film accompanies the five protagonists with all their hopes and fears in Germany, France, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands and Nigeria.

The last conference day gave room for a summary and outlook of participants.

2. Feedback of students

Feedback of participating German students

- Most students appreciated the opportunity to meet with directors and interesting individuals of the film business
- Most students regretted that there was no direct exchange with the Polish students due to a common language and the formal setting of the workshop
- Many students stressed the good organisation and accommodation
- Some students suggested staying with Polish families would have given them a chance to experience Poland more intensively
- Many students criticised that the discussion took only place in the big group and suggested more phases of group work and direct interaction
- Many students suggested that they would have liked to work practically on film in bi-national groups
- Many students criticized that the city-tour was split into a Polish and a German tour; they considered this a missed opportunity to learn about the perspectives of the other
- Most students had little concrete expectations on the workshop and felt little prepared for it
- Some students complained that the discussions on the panel were expert-exchanges of filmmakers; they felt that they could not contribute
- Many students said that they would have liked to discuss about Europe in general, rather than looking at Europe through the eyes of film
- Some students criticised the tight time schedule that left little time to get to know the Polish students

Feedback of participating Polish students

- Most students enjoyed the screenings
- Many students stressed that they had learned new things about Europe
- Many students appreciated to have met interesting new people
- Most students highlighted “One day in Europe” as a particular film experience
- One student criticised that the German students did not engage a lot in the discussions

- One student stated that she has learned that film is more than entertainment and that it can serve a transnational purpose
- Some students criticised that the films were shown in German or English only (without translation); They critically asked why in a German-Polish-film workshop there were no Polish films screened