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Workshop 5
"From national narratives to shared memories:
Is a Pan-European memory possible?"

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As the situation in (some parts of) Europe (seen here much broader than only EU-rope) from my point of view is rather dramatic, my input tries to outline major challenges and conflicting trends/narratives/values in Europe, provide some illustration for them and discuss the possible role of citizenship education. The paper is not structured in a strict academic way, but it is rather an invitation to rethink some topics.

Authoritarian challenges to democracy

My starting assumption is that there is a risk that parts of Europe, thus the whole of Europe, will be drifting apart; having one part of Europe dedicated to liberalism, democracy and openness and another one embracing authoritarian values and illiberalism. Why do I put this argument forward?

The global economic crisis has revealed the fragility of the political and socio-economic systems and jeopardized a democratic consensus. As Jan Werner-Müller has recently put it in Foreign Affairs "democracy is struggling: nearly all the countries that joined the EU during the last decade are experiencing profound political crisis." 25 years after the end of the Cold War, initial euphoria about democratic change in many countries of the East and Southeast has given way to growing mistrust in political institutions and political representatives, and an increasing disaffection with democracy itself. This wide-ranging disaffection is due to the weak performance of political systems and a rather weak output of the regimes, be it in political, social or economic terms, be it in terms of more justice and equality. Politicians seem not (any more) able or willing to deliver tangible results to their voters. Harking back to Abraham Lincoln's famous quote that democracy was "government of the people, by the people, for the people", politics thus produces no or too little goods "for" the people.

Thus, the situation in (some parts of) Europe is rather dramatic, with some major challenges and conflicting trends portraying a picture of a rather divided than united continent in peace. There is even a risk of European parts drifting apart, having one part of Europe dedicated to liberalism, democracy and openness and another one embracing authoritarian values and illiberalism.

As Michael Ignatieff put it recently in New York Review: *"A new political competitor to liberal democracy began to take shape: authoritarian in political form, capitalist in economics, and nationalists in ideology."*

With the general crisis of democracy in the inner circle of democracies we face an emergence of grey-zones between democracy and authoritarianism and even new forms of authoritarianism in some parts of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Classical authoritarianism seeks for an absolute obedience, is directed against individual freedoms and liberties and always ready to use repression against opponents. New authoritarian regimes are chameleon-like – they are able to adjust to new circumstances, they have institutionalized representation of a variety of actors and they even incorporate some democratic procedures like elections and thus create a structure resistant to change.

Having the new challenges in mind there is a risk these rifts in Europe will make any kind of European citizenship education with a holistic approach impossible and leave the continent divided in terms of values and norms.

Looking at the peripheries of Europe

In order to understand more about direction Europe is heading to or about the challenges Europe is facing it is rather important to look at the peripheries of Europe than at the center. Looking at the peripheries of Europe might help us illustrate this assumption. The peripheries are zones of anger (as Sloterdijk has put it), where the perceptions of Europe and general values are in a constant flux with no finality in sight. It is precisely in the peripheries that we see competing and conflicting narratives of Europe and more generally conflicting narratives about the regimes best suited to rule. One is basically oriented towards liberal and democratic values and another one heading towards authoritarian values. In between lies an explosive mix of uncertainty. There are many examples to illustrate this rift, be it Ukraine, Hungary, countries of the Western Balkans or even Bulgaria. As we have seen in the Ukrainian case, the drifting apart of parts of the country in terms of narratives about Europe quickly translated into violent division of the country creating facts on the ground that are – probably – here to stay (see Crimea). Parts of the Western Balkans are also an interesting place to look at. Here we have fragile states with no solution for internal ethnic conflicts and disputes while at the same time regimes with strong (male) rule are emerging, pairing populism and nationalism with quite of the empty rhetoric of reforms and Europeanisation. Hungary that is, at least according to its Prime Minister Orbán, embracing "illiberal democracy" and limiting some fundamental freedoms, or Bulgaria with constant parallelism between protests, elections and new governments not able to deliver what the population seems to want, are further examples of fundamental changes going on in Europe nowadays. To make my point – in Eastern- und Southeastern part of Europe, not to speak about Russia or Turkey, in a region that went through more than two decades of democratization, we are witnessing new challenges to democracy and emergence of grey zone semi-authoritarian regimes, which – under the guise of democracy – limit individual freedom and reduce liberties.

Clashing narratives and values

Besides the dilemma between liberal democratic values and societies and authoritarian regimes and their values there is another one shaping Europe today. The second dilemma is related to the relationship between memories and narratives and thus also values inscribed in memories. The positive narrative about Europe based on liberal and democratic values

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(the core of European citizenship education as we know it today) has been successful in transcending the conflicts and deep divisions of the past and translating them into a positive narrative for the future. Such a narrative as an integral part of the European consciousness needs to be constantly reinvented in light of past events, needs a permanent revitalization.

On the other hand in wide parts of Europe and within various European societies conflicting, exclusive and aggressive memories and respective narratives do exist. Here is the place where the everyday and deeply rooted nationalisms come into play and contradict the positive narrative about Europe and European commonness. (Examples are numerous - Hungary, Rumania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Ukraine, Spain, Cyprus, Scotland, etc.)

Consequences for the citizenship education

Finally, the question is what consequences for European citizenship education do we face, keeping in mind that democracy needs a constant education underpinned with values of open society but also authoritarianism uses education intensively in order to fortify the fortress of uniform thinking and believing needed to keep the regime functional and alive.
Here is a set of questions for citizenship education as a consequence of the above-described challenges in Europe.

- Question of the role of citizenship education in the peripheral zones of Europe / what role for institutions? What role for networks like NECE? What role for public intellectuals?
- Permanent reflection on Europe as a fundamental emancipative and democratic project sounds good, but how to organize it?
- Question of widening and deepening the perspective on EUrope's citizenship education, as difficult as it might be to manage it
- Re-ideologisation of democratic citizenship education along controversial issues
- What might be the transcending and conflict-softening role of citizenship educations in situations and regions where competing narratives are clashing at each other?

Recommendations of the workshop (developed and shared by all active members of the workshop)

Citizenship education in Europe needs deep and urgent renewal; otherwise democratic fatigue, populist and authoritarian tendencies will grow even stronger. We are calling for all the actors - governments, EU institutions, NGO-s, teachers, academics, media and individual citizens, notably those having the most power, to get involved in working out a new, more effective and more passionate model of CE.

EU Member States have the competence and the responsibility to include in citizenship education the basic principles and values of the complex political system we live in Europe. CE needs both - a consensual common core of "constitutional" values, and an open debate about controversial issues, preventing indoctrination and connecting education to real life problems of students (the model of the Beutelsbacher consensus applied to EU citizenship education).

The conflicts - whether in school or local community, national, European or global - should be part of discourse. The teachers have to be prepared to debate without fear, stereotyping or simplifying. This makes value conflicts transparent and helps balancing them. Real stories,

case studies, role playing, authentic dialogue are especially recommended as they help to embrace the views and positions of others, and "otherness" in general.

Schools are co-responsible for teaching pupils and students to think for themselves, to discover and understand different perspectives, to be empathetic, to think out of the box...
Young people should be allowed - and empowered - to protest or to criticise politicians, governments and all figures of power who stand up for unacceptable values and commit unacceptable things. Reflecting on the limits of tolerance for unfair and unjust actions in students' environment and in public life will bring about more offensive and more engaged citizenship education. The teacher training to fulfil this need should be available.

Creating an EU Agency for citizenship education could be an important actor to make networking, training and documentation available. While doing this, we should also embrace the peripheries of the EU, which are in the risk of becoming zones of disappointment and anger.