

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

14-16 November 2013
The Hague, the Netherlands

Report

Workshop 1
**Creating a bottom-up Europe: Can citizenship education
interact or co-operate with civil society movements?**

by Christine Rose, Freelancer (Germany)

Inputs:

Lorenzo Marsili, European Alternatives (Italy) presented the 'Citizen's Pact'
Carsten Berg, The ECI Campaign (Germany) presented the European Citizens' Initiative
ECI

Moderator: Alicja Pacewicz, Center for Citizenship Education (Poland)

Number of participants in the workshop: 24 participants (brutto, incl. 2 contributors,
moderation, rapporteur)

Organizational information:

Links connected to the workshop:

<http://www.bpb.de/170477>

<http://www.bpb.de/veranstaltungen/netzwerke/nece/170477/workshop-1-creating-a-bottom-up-europe-can-citizenship-education-interact-or-co-operate-with-civil-society-movements>

Links announced by Carsten Berg: www.citizens-initiatives.eu

Summary (personal statement of the rapporteur):

The atmosphere of the workshop was in general vivid; the participants were active and open-minded. But it was a small room for the 24 persons and the long and narrow table didn't allow to get an overview over the big group, therefore many participants couldn't see each other during the discussions in the plenum. The moderator Alicja Pacewicz from the Center for Citizenship Education in Warsaw, Poland started the workshop with a very short introduction of herself. Afterwards she gave some space to the participants to introduce themselves to the other participants with their names, backgrounds and living places. Additionally, everybody was asked to write down a keyword referring to the question: **'When I think about citizenship education, I think about...'**. As she used many different methods within the workshop, people were able to involve themselves in different ways as e.g. in working groups.

The group was quite diverse with people from different backgrounds from all over Europe (East and West, North and South) and furthermore from Northern African countries. There were more people out of civil society movements than with a citizenship education background or from official governmental institutions. Also the two presentations focused on the impacts of civil society movements rather than educational aspects. So the group agreed in general, that civil society movements and citizenship education still have few connections, which should be changed to create synergy effects and use resources from all sides. Different European institutions and initiatives should work together on a national and transnational level, using unconventional tools to educate and activate the public. As the ether-pad didn't work because of Internet problems, the results of the discussions were secured on facilitation cards, flip charts and screen.

Carrying out and content of the workshop:

Here the collection of the impulsive keywords which were put on the board within the introduction:

- still hopeful/ - lobbying/ - multi stakeholder guardianship and ownership/ - participation/
 - participation and rights like Switzerland has/ - challenge/ - change/ - campaign/ - cross cultural understanding/ - cooperation/ - homogenous diversity/ - responsibility/ - exchange (not to keep inventing about water)/ - personal responsibility/ - community/ - democracy deficits/ - democratic European convention/ - media/ - people's power/ - civil/ - hope/ - direct democracy/ - enact citizenship/ - alternative Europe

Guiding questions of the workshop

Alicja Pacewicz summarized the targets and central guiding questions of the workshop:

1. How can civil society movements help to overcome the democratic deficits and contribute to a bottom-up Europe (it looks like it would be possible, but is it that way?)
2. What should be the next steps on the way to democratize?
3. Can citizenship education work together with civil society movements?
4. Are civil society movements the hotbed for critical citizenship education or should education and action be independent from each other?

The group agreed on those guiding questions and, at the moment, nobody wanted to add or change any further questions or ideas of the content. Therefore the two project presenters gave their introduction to the bottom-up movements and initiatives as a way to renew civil society in Europe.

First presentation

Lorenzo Marsili from the initiative '[European Alternatives](#)' from Italy started with a short, but concentrated presentation on the project 'Citizen's Pact' and the ideas of 'European Alternatives'. '[The Citizen's Pact](#)' is a three-year long process of empowering citizens of Europe to overcome democratic deficits and the loss of confidence for the European idea of democracy, solidarity and equality. As in 2014 there will be the European election of the European Parliament and the appointment of the new European Commission, the 'Citizen's Pact' pursues the goal to activate citizens, organizations and social movements for a participatory process of European reforms.

The participants of the workshop asked about the methods of the project and agreed, that the World-Café is a very interesting empowering instrument for targets like here. Within the very short discussion, Lorenzo Marsili pointed out it wouldn't be obvious, that citizens in Europe desire more civil society movements or citizenship education. Using media and new media was very helpful for them. For more details look at www.mediainitiative.eu and www.citizenspact.eu.

Second presentation

[The European Citizens' Initiative \(ECI\)](#) was presented by Carsten Berg from Germany as an innovative bottom-up example of civil society movement. ECI intends on increasing direct and participatory democracy in the European Union and is an NGO that is working for the successful implementation of the new democracy instrument. At the same time ECI is supporting organizations and groups of individuals to use the ECI tool. Carsten Berg mentioned, that online signatures are much easier to collect than paper signatures: Internet has a strong potential power for the collecting of voices. For further information have a look at www.citizens-initiative.eu.

In the beginning of the discussion and during questions of the participants, Carsten Berg and the participants came to the conclusion, that the potentials of the ECI still remained unfolded. The awareness and knowledge of the possibility and existence of ECI in the general public still is very low. ECI organizers underestimate organizational efforts, institutions are yet to provide sufficient supporting infrastructure. European institutional convention is the most powerful media for change processes and medias are very important for the initiatives.

As a participant talked about examples of referendums in Switzerland that has 150 years of experience on this topic, the most countries in the EU are still in a learning process as well as the EU is. He referred to the website www.dhs.ch.

Scenario Report

Alicja Pacewicz referred to the Scenario Report 'Citizenship in Europe 2030'. Few people liked the idea of Great Europe, few were also voting for the network of nations, most participants (including persons from Egypt) supported the scenario of Union of Communities. Some stated that maybe European spring was necessary for new reality to be constructed. After a short discussion, one participant pointed out that none of those scenarios fit him and that he is writing an article about an alternative vision for Europe, a Europe for and from the people. He promised to share his visions with the participants when he finishes to work on the paper.

Feedback from the World-Café

Alicja Pacewicz distributed the collected moderation cards from the World-Café in the morning. She questioned if there are pointed out any new topics from the morning sessions on those facilitation cards, that still haven't been discussed. Only one group came out with a new topic of watchdogs and whistleblower-movements on European level. This term denotes civil initiatives for controlling transparency of politicians and parties activities. As there are just few watchdogs for European politics (e.g. transparency international), there is the visible need for implementing bottom-up control.

Debates of the guiding question

Can citizenship education work together with civil society movements?

In working groups the participants discussed three questions around this general guiding question. They were asked to report their conclusions briefly and discuss them together in the plenary.

1. What is the situation now?

The participants agreed that today there are, unfortunately very few links between citizenship education and civil society movements or grassroots movements. But there could be used a lot of synergetic effects to empower the civil society. People, who are active in civil society movements, yet aren't the focus groups of citizenship education although they are multipliers and could be integrated for didactical reasons. As the diverse worlds of social movements and social education are often clearly separated from each other in most countries, there's the need to find meeting and communication places. Different is the situation in many

Northern African countries, where citizenship education is kind of resulting of civil society movements, which can be seen in the usage of similar structures and names. Experiences within the group point out that the 'big government' state is shrinking giving more room to civil society.

2. What are the perspectives for the future?

European institutions and civil society movements should work frequently together using unconventional tools to educate and cooperate with the public in political activating graffiti, music or culture projects. Transnational meetings of different actors like here at the NECE conference enable new exchange processes. So different players can facilitate perspectives to imagine the exchange as a learning journey where both learn from each other, like informal processes, civic education processes by flash-mobs, not on institutional but personal and collective level. Educational institutions and initiatives should push the chance for learning more about and from social movements. There could be mutual internships, talking about new experiences and methods afterwards, so that all could benefit from resources, information and structures. Lobbying together for change processes could be part of a widespread awareness raising development, also by social media/ technology to promote forms of direct democracy and keep informed in a direct.

3. What is it about and who should be within this process?

Participants agreed that citizens have to be empowered to be part of effective change processes. Citizenship education by NGOs, advocacy groups or semi-governmental organizations is very needed additionally to formal education systems. Goal is a multidirectional and transnational action learning in bottom-up and horizontal proceedings. Promoting open critical thinking on citizenship and using action-learning methodology in a formal citizenship education invites civil society to involve them. This can create a multi-stakeholder guardianship/advocacy for bottom-up democracy (beyond institutionalization). Furthermore those activating methods could also push EU institutions to open up educational programs and make them less dependent from the market. Especially topics connected to European developments and problems should be offered in workshops either by NGOs or semi-governmental organizations. At the same time, civil society groups have to be protected and supported by watchdog initiatives for securing democracy and transparency.

Conclusion:

The participants were asked to write conclusions referring to the three questions mentioned above, but keeping in mind the topical problem of the workshop: **Is there an interconnection of citizenship education and civil society movements possible?** Ideas of the résumé had to be written as propositions to be included in the 'Conference Paper'.

How is the situation at the moment?

'European Citizenship Education can not be taught purely theoretically but it needs practical actions; unfortunately civil society movements and civic educators are still disconnected from each other, resulting in a lack of joint actions, practices and usage of potentials.'

What are the future perspectives?

'Learning by thinking critically, taking action on multiple levels and integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches is crucial.'

What has to be done by whom?

'Civil society movements and citizenship educators should exchange experiences through mutual learning and new technologies and social media. Both of these groups need protection to continue to exist even when contrary to government interests.'