nece
magazine

networking
european
citizenship
education

Welcome to NECE

I am happy and proud to introduce our new NECE magazine, which reflects the diverse and complex work of the many actors, agencies and organisations who have been cooperating with us for more than ten years now. Our new logo is designed to illustrate that this diversity and openness is at the core of our mission.

NECE is entering a new phase as the demand for a new political culture in Europe – and beyond – is literally outstripping supply. As in America, where the presidential race is still undecided at the time of writing, Europe is confronted with a new type of politician: One who argues that the world is a dangerous place, that migrants threaten ethnic and cultural homogeneity, and that sealing your nation off from the outside world is the only way "to keep the barbarians out".

And indeed, we should be worried about the impact of the auto-destructive and paradoxical effects of globalisation on the mindset of the European public. Social and economic inequalities are growing in many societies. We face challenges from a broad backlash against globalisation caused by social issues and driven by fears about social justice and unemployment, worries about the non-democratic power structures in "Brussels", "Angst" about the undermining of national traditions, culture and identity.

Triggered by the unprecedented series of terrorist attacks since January 2015, a rising sense of insecurity may lead to more electoral victories across Europe for a new type of populist and authoritarian political party in the years to come.

The Brexit shock reminds us of the weakness of citizenship education when confronted with prejudice, propaganda, scapegoating, naked xenophobia and callous fear-mongering on a scale not witnessed in many years.

In times in which crises, populism, illiberalism and terrorist attacks feed and reinforce each other, citizenship education in many countries of the NECE "world" has become riskier and less rewarding than ever. Democracy in Europe is threatened on all levels, and cannot be taken for granted.

We therefore welcome the European Education ministers sharing this concern in their recent declarations on "The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism" (May 2015) and "Securing democracy through education" (April 2016). They remind us "that one of the fundamental goals of all education for democratic citizenship and human rights education is not just equipping learners with knowledge, understanding and skills but also empowering them with the readiness to take action in society in the defence and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law".

The efforts of NECE and other transnational citizenship networks in Europe to form a new political culture emerging from a vibrant and active civil society are therefore more valuable than ever.

This magazine is meant to serve as an incentive for educators both within and outside Europe to start reaching out towards each other, with the aim of making public and accessible the many good ideas and practices of a new kind of citizenship education.

Our deep-felt gratitude goes to our NECE partners in the Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Poland: Without them NECE would not have been able to grow and flourish as it does now.

And we thank the many participants of our focus groups, including the new "Networking Arab Civic Education" initiative (NACE) for contributing their expertise, ideas and energy generously in recent years.

Finally, we are indebted to the colleagues and authors who have contributed to the successful edition of this magazine.

● **Thomas Krüger** is *Director of the Federal Agency for Civic Education.*

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NECE – Networking in Times of Crises

**NECE is under construction.
Constantly – but in a positive way: It is a unique platform
and a think tank open for new ideas and new approaches
by practitioners and activists.**
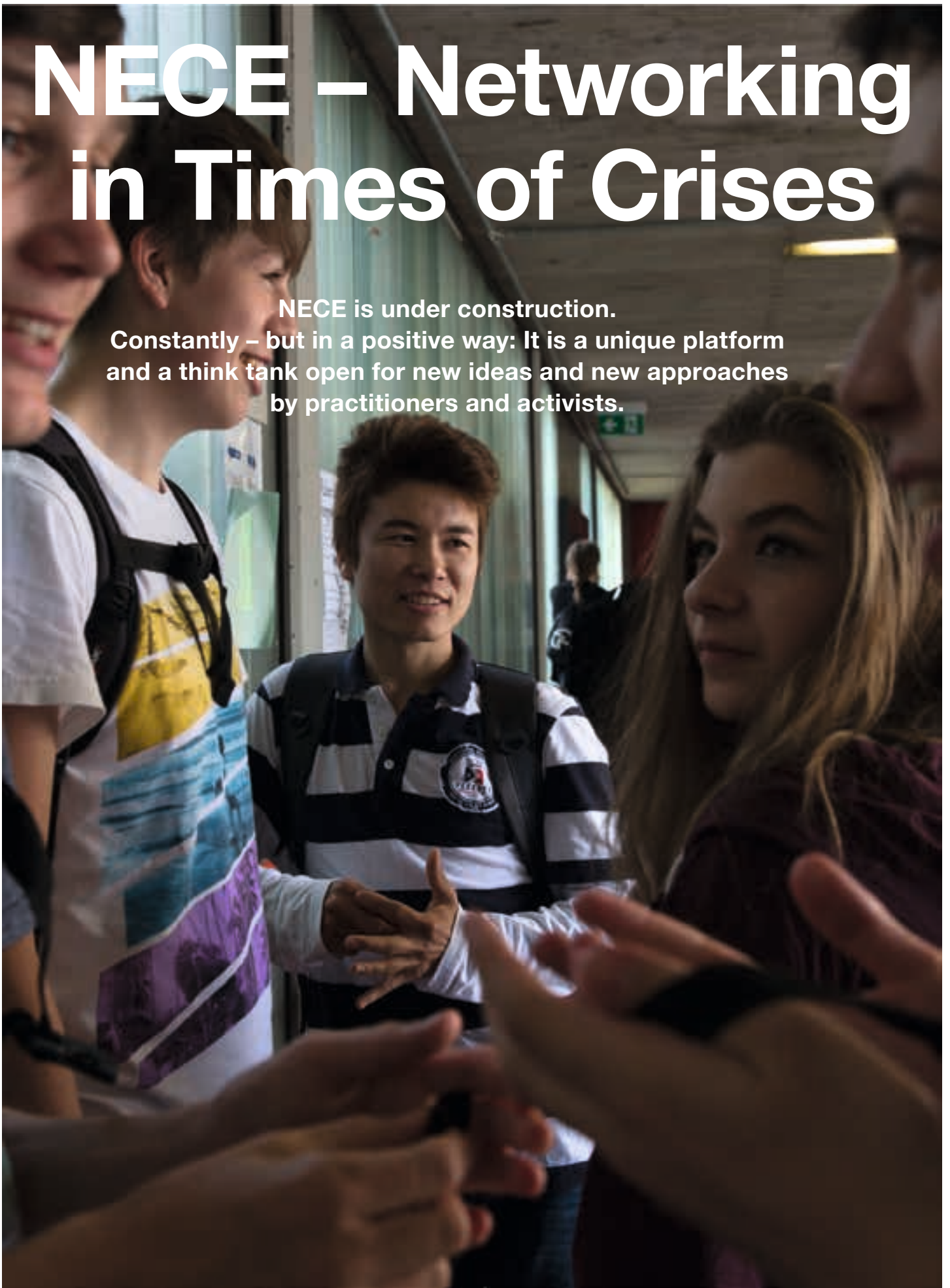
In 2004 the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, together with partners in the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia, started Networking European Citizenship Education (NECE): An international platform and laboratory to support transdisciplinary networking for educators in schools and civil society.

Academics and practitioners of citizenship education, scholars from different disciplines from political sciences to architecture, governmental and nongovernmental organisations, activists, teachers and artists meet for the annual NECE conferences. It started with a conference in Santiago de Compostela in 2004. Over the past decade NECE has convened in cities as diverse as Berlin, Strasbourg, Lisbon, Sofia, Vilnius, Trieste, Warsaw, The Hague, Cordoba, Vienna, Thessaloniki and Zagreb.

A forum for all

By choice, NECE is a forum rather than an institutionalized body. This allows it to be open to very different institutions and people from different backgrounds and with diverse political ideas.

NECE strives to act as an intellectual think tank addressing urgent issues of European and international politics relevant for citizenship education. It seeks to strengthen exchange and synergies on research, and aims to serve as a showcase and dissemination platform for good projects, new ideas and practical transnational cooperation across Europe, its eastern neighbours and countries of North Africa.

In its annual conferences, 300 participants from more than 40 countries come together to discuss challenges in society and citizenship education. With a rich variety of lectures, workshops and open formats, NECE invites participants to actively co-organise and invest in these events. NECE also serves as a marketplace and a bridge between academic concepts and practical solutions in the diverse field of citizenship education.

In addition, there are focus groups which work together over a couple of years on topics of common concern, or run joint projects. These include, for example, focus groups on hard to reach learners or on initiatives and ideas for citizenship and political education in the eastern neighbourhood of the European Union.

In short, NECE can be seen as a network *sui generis*, still under construction but expanding amidst crises and a world which is seemingly out of joint

Why NECE?

Citizenship education – defined as a constant, enduring and critical process of reflection and deliberation on the ideas, structures and practices of democracy – has to reflect the dynamics of a changing and increasingly interconnected world. Global challenges – be it climate change, migration, economic and social inequalities or war and terrorism – are beyond the reach of the nation state, and require new forms of thinking, exchange and cooperation.

But at the same time we face a worldwide backlash against globalisation by many citizens, sometimes called a "threatened majority", who fear and loathe a "world without borders". We can observe rising and exploited polarisation within societies and between countries and regions. We have a growing divide between those who see cosmopolitan values as a threat and those who are struggling to defend these as the core of a new European or cosmopolitan identity.

For many, globalisation has brought less prosperity and diminished social security. The repercussions of the economic and financial crises, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, civil wars in the Middle East and the rise of international terrorism have shaken up the European Union, and have widely contributed to a disconnection between elites and the people. These developments are compounded by a widespread pessimism about the future which is being exploited by populist and xenophobic movements.

What does NECE propose?

Bearing in mind that global changes and crises will continue to affect citizens in Europe and beyond, NECE can contribute to the development of new responses to these challenges for citizenship education:

- By embracing controversy and using dialogue and a change of perspectives as a basic tool.
- By reducing processes of "othering" through cooperation, exchange and exercising transnational positions.
- By supporting and encouraging those who work in adverse political environments and take risks in promoting the spread of democratic values and participation.
- By operating with a broad and inclusive understanding of citizenship education, driven by the diverse stakeholders, which can also encompass actions or artistic interventions which are subversive and willing and able to question power structures and to contribute to a recreation of democracy.

In conclusion, NECE aims to continue to expand and thrive – not only in order to tackle the many challenges citizens face in these troubled decades, but also to benefit from the atmosphere of solidarity and passion for the power of citizenship education.

Citizenship education needs a transnational discourse – as societies in Europe are more diverse than ever.

● ***Petra Grüne*** and ***Christoph Müller-Hofstede*** *coordinate NECE within the Federal Agency for Civic Education.*

"We are the people!

And who are you?"

Today's not-so-obvious threats to democracy – and what civic education can do about them: Jan-Werner Müller outlines the rise of populism across the globe.

Civic education never takes place in a vacuum. Its practitioners need to convey relatively abstract democratic principles; they also have to get across basic information about how political systems actually tend to work. But civic education is not exhausted by the study of norms or empirical regularities identified by social science – it is also about cultivating political judgment. And political judgment always requires an understanding of particular contexts. Practitioners of civic education today therefore need to have a sense of the environment in which debates on democracy unfold. More particularly, they should be aware of the complex new threats to democracy that have emerged over the past decade or so.

When it comes to the global status of democracy, we appear to be in a somewhat paradoxical situation. Some political scientists have argued that we might be experiencing a "democratic recession": For the first time since the end of the Cold War, there appears to be a trending decline in the overall number of democracies in the world. Nevertheless, being recognised as a democracy remains the ultimate prize for states around the world – that is why less-than-democratic regimes pay lobbyists exorbitant amounts to persuade international organisations that they are indeed proper democracies.

From rule taker to rule maker

China is the obvious exception. There has been some debate recently as to whether a "China Model" – ostensibly a system animated by the idea of meritocracy, as opposed to inefficient, messy democracy – could offer a serious alternative. More strikingly still, there have been some efforts by the regime itself to cast China as in fact the "world's largest democracy" (emphasizing multiple forms of participation for citizens, while denying the need for general elec-

tions that enable a turnover of government). It would however be a stretch to say that millions around the globe dream a "Chinese Dream" – the personal slogan of President Xi Jinping and his formula for the "great revival of the Chinese nation". China itself, unlike in the days of Maoism, is not interested in spreading a well-developed ideological model across borders. On the contrary: China wants everyone to observe the norms of national sovereignty, so that Beijing itself remains protected from outside interference. Yes, China deploys soft power (just think of the spread of Confucius institutes) and gradually wants to transform itself from a "rule taker" on the international scene into a "rule maker". But this situation is hardly comparable to the fierce global competition of ideologies familiar from the days of the Cold War.

Does this mean then that, on the whole, all is well with democracy? No, but the threats have become more difficult to discern. It is crucial to understand that most enemies of democracy today speak the language of democracy itself. Sometimes they even assert that they are best able to realise core ideals of democracy, such as popular sovereignty. It is therefore crucial that a capacity for political judgment be developed to assess such claims. The enemies of democracy these days are not doing us the favour of clearly identifying themselves.

The right kind of people

So what concrete threats are we talking about? The most important is populism. Populism is a term that has become ubiquitous in describing politics in many parts of the world, but it is also one that is being used with maddening imprecision. Not everybody who criticises elites is a populist. Populists always claim that they, and only they, represent the authentic, homogeneous and morally pure people.

As, for instance, Reccep Tayyip Erdoğan put it when addressing his critics in Turkey: "We are the people. Who are you?" Other political competitors are just part of the immoral, corrupt elite, or so populists say when running for office; and once in government, they will not recognise anything resembling a legitimate opposition. The populist logic also implies that the people who do not support populist parties might not be the right kind of people to begin with.

Populists in opposition obviously have to explain why, if their core claim to representation is correct, they are not in power already. This is where the virtually inevitable appeal to the "silent majority" comes into play: If the majority were not silent or somehow oppressed by currently powerful elites, populists would have long since won. When they lose elections, populists often question the existing political institutions which in their eyes are producing the wrong outcome, or even accuse the winners of fraud: Think of recent examples such as Donald Trump and the Austrian Freedom Party. At the very least, populists distinguish between the empirical and the moral outcome of a ballot. For instance, after losing the 2002 Hungarian elections, Viktor Orbán claimed that "the nation cannot be in opposition". And the left-wing candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced in the wake of his failed bid for the Mexican presidency in 2006 that "the victory of the right is morally impossible" (he also declared himself "the legitimate president of Mexico").

One way or another, populists always de-legitimate existing democratic institutions – while loudly speaking in the name of the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty. When in power, they tend to usurp the state and oppress civil society. However, they are not authoritarians like we used to know them: They claim that of course the people should take possession of their state, and they tend to dismiss criticism from civil society as the work of "foreign agents" (a strategy pioneered by Vladimir Putin, but eagerly picked up by the current regimes in Hungary, Turkey and Poland). Such strategies are not just a matter of power politics. It is also important for populists to symbolically de-legitimate dissent as not properly emanating from the people. Otherwise their claim to exclusive moral representation could be doubted.

Many populists have built what we might call fake or Potemkin democracies: There is still voting, but a real turnover of power has become exceedingly difficult, since elections are no longer truly free and fair. Civil society might still have some space, but is under constant political pressure. Genuine NGOs are crowded out by government-sponsored NGOs (or, put more bluntly, pro-government fake NGOs).

A properly self-critical civic education

Under such circumstances it is important to make the case for pluralism and for democracy as a device enabling genuine competition for power. Such arguments have to be spelled out very carefully and become the basis for actual, lived civic practices. Pluralism is not a good thing in and of itself, as some advocates of diversity sometimes pretend; rather, pluralism is shorthand for the idea that, in modern democracies, irreducibly different citizens have to recognise each other as free and equal and somehow find fair terms for living together in the same political space. It is this civic disposition that matters above all, not an abstract commitment along the lines of "the more diverse, the better". Similarly, competition is not a value in itself, but in the context of democracy, competition for power makes it less likely that parts of the population become permanently excluded or even oppressed.

Along these lines, civic education also has to be properly self-critical. Hard questions need to be asked about established democracies' actual ability to live up to ideals of inclusion. It is convenient but clearly wrong-headed to think that Turkey was a perfectly well-functioning liberal democracy until Erdoğan came along and destroyed it in the name of populism. Erdoğan, or Chávez for that matter, were initially very much justified in criticising existing elites; it remains a political achievement that they were able to bring parts of the citizenry into the political process who previously had not had much of a voice. The threat to democracy starts when the demand for inclusion ("We are also the people") is transformed into a statement of exclusion ("Only we represent the people"). Many parts of the population in the US and Europe – the less-well-off, the less educated – have become marginal in politics or have no voice at all. This renders democracies vulnerable to populist political entrepreneurs, as the Brexit campaign has clearly shown. Thus civic education should not just affirm democratic principles in the abstract. It also needs to spur citizens to confront the challenges of actually existing political and social exclusion. In particular, we need a debate which clarifies what constitutes legitimate concerns about losing out from profound changes in the global economy (and a general feeling of a loss of control), and that which constitutes illegitimate, populist calls for exclusion (or even outright xenophobia). A choice between more openness and more closure can – and should – be up for democratic discussion; but our conversations and curricula also need to show where such a discussion crosses the line into jingoism or even racism.

● **Jan-Werner Müller** *is a professor of Politics at Princeton University. His book "What is populism?" was published in 2016.*

The Strait of Dover at the narrowest part of the
English Channel. It marks the boundary between the
Channel and North Sea, separating Great Britain
from continental Europe.

All-Inclusive

Audrey Osler is a professor of education at the Norwegian Buskerud and Vestfold University College, and was founding director of the Centre for Citizenship and Human Rights Education (CCHRE). With Marinko Banjac and Tomaž Pušnik from Ljubljana University she talked about the need to understand and teach diversity, the Brexit momentum and how human rights could be a framework for inclusion.

Marinko Banjac: Today's world is one in which we can witness what well-known scholar Steven Vertovec calls a super-diversity: Population diversity is significantly higher and this affects where, how and with whom people live. How do you see this super-diverse world?

Audrey Osler: First of all, it is very important to emphasise that diversity has always been a part of our societies, related to gender, sexuality, economic status and social class. But today's European migration levels and, in particular, the migration of visible minorities has highlighted an increased awareness of existing diversity. Therefore Steven Vertovec's concept of super-diversity is very fitting for Europe today.

Banjac: Why is it necessary for us citizens to understand diversity?

Awareness of diversity and sensitivity to different perspectives is very important in order to get by in the world, to communicate and to work. But also, of course, we need diversity for democracy. Without diversity, why would we need democracies in the first place? Democracy is about managing different opinions and interests, resolving tensions and conflicts between people of different perspectives and identities.

Tomaž Pušnik: How then can we protect and balance local, national, regional and global identities in a time of crises and populist victories, like Brexit?

Brexit makes me very sad and also angry because my European citizenship seems to have been snatched away from me. But setting my feelings aside, we are facing far-right nationalist and populist discourses across Europe, and have probably underestimated their power. Many of our leaders in various governments have not responded in a clear-cut way to developments which are dangerous or antidemocratic. Also the media have often misunderstood how to handle the various ranges of opinion. And I think we've gotten to know the point at which there is a limit to freedom of expression. But how can we protect ourselves against xenophobia and racism? First of all, by naming it. By not being frightened of talking and writing about it. Racism is complex because it is constantly reshaping, so we have to recognise racism's power and its ability to change or disguise its appearance and form. But that doesn't mean that I think that racism is inevitable: We are educated into it and we can educate ourselves against it.

Pušnik: How can citizenship education protect diversity in the classrooms?

For me, education is a process of extending our identities. Any classroom should be about enabling each individual to develop and feel more confident in a wider range of identities than when they first came through the classroom door. One way to do this is to encourage children and students to tell their own narratives. In this way you get to encounter stories and narratives which provide alternatives to the stories in the textbooks, which still, in most countries, promote national (hi)stories. From those individual stories you can build new alternative collective narratives, and teach students that there are many different ways of remembering the past, for example.

Banjac: Is citizenship education then only a framework which responds to current situations?

Can citizenship education be preventative rather than reactive? It can't provide an absolute preventative, it can't cure society's ills, but it has to engage with societal issues. And it has to be relevant to peoples' lives, it has to engage with contemporary problems. Teachers are often reliant on textbooks and those textbooks cannot be up-to-date in that sense. Teachers need to be able to engage with the real and immediate concerns of young people.

Pušnik: When exclusivist and anti-immigrant voices are prevailing in society and also in classrooms, hasn't the project of citizenship education failed?

I have to be an optimist. And I have to believe that the results of education are not seen in the short term; there have also to be long term ones. Brexit is a significant moment for us to think about how we actually engage young people and it is an opportunity to encourage them to take on an internationalist perspective, to think more deeply about the world in which we live. To teach, for example, that migration has always been part of human activity; that people have always been on the move. It is a critical moment for citizenship education and for us to stand up for our ideals. If we now just react by going along with the xenophobic policy agendas, which is a very big risk in many nations, then I think we will fail.

Banjac: What other strategies could citizenship education use to be more inclusive, up-to-date and more related to contemporary challenges that we face?

First, we really have to think about what we mean when we say "citizens" and who is included and who is excluded. In our schools, in the classrooms there are students who are not citizens of the country in which they are living. Some want or need citizenship status but there will be others who don't aspire to citizenship, they've already got a citizenship that works for them. We have to look at the status of all students and think about a framework that is inclusive of all.

Banjac: Which framework could that be?

Here I would turn to human rights, because we all share the same human rights, we all have that same status. We should learn about human rights principles that are shared between citizens and non-citizens. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't also look at human rights in a critical way. We may be able to start off well with very young children, telling them about their rights. But as they get older, we shouldn't teach human rights as if they were a religious dogma. We should help young people to see that human rights require active involvement, they are not fixed, they are a developing project, weren't written down in 1948 once and for all.

Banjac: Is cooperation and networking the key to improving human rights and civic education?

The strength of NECE and similar networks is bringing together different groups in civil society. Because citizenship education, human rights education or any education which is about society and the political, it cannot rely solely on governments, it must engage with other actors and sectors. A second strength is that NECE can respond much more quickly to immediate issues than other (international) organisations that we depend on. One of the major challenges that we are facing in citizenship education is to recognise schooling as a political project.

Banjac: How so?

When European teachers enter teaching they are usually very optimistic, and feel a strong moral commitment to their students. But that moral commitment must be matched with the recognition that they have a political responsibility to equip them for life in our democracies. That is something networks like NECE can develop and communicate much more effectively to teachers and educators. To be more specific: Citizenship education is built on agreed international values. Our governments have signed up to these values, they have ratified them in international treaties. And we can actually set those principles out for students and be open and explicit.

● *Marinko Banjac* and *Tomaž Pušnik* – both
from the Faculty of Social Sciences, University
of Ljubljana, Slovenia – met Audrey Osler for this
interview during the NECE workshop "Crossing
Borders. Migration and citizenship education in
Europe" in Ljubljana in July 2016.

*Way of Human Rights
by artist Dani Karavan
in Nuremberg, Germany*

W

"NECE's network and cooperation projects have been a fantastic opportunity for us as a young NGO. The 'Hard to reach learners' focus group helped us to exchange ideas with possible partners, build links and come up with new ideas on how to position our work in a European context. By being part of this network, we hope to help build an understanding of what being an active European citizen means, especially in times of a growing polarisation and social divisions in our societies."

Hassan Asfour and Siamak Ahmadi
Dialog macht Schule gGmbH, Berlin

"NECE is a powerful network of Europeans committed to making a difference. NECE does not shy away from asking the tough questions that we Europeans are facing. I strongly believe that as Europeans we need these kinds of forums in which we can listen to each other, embrace our differences, challenge each other, passionately disagree, and yet share the common vision of Europeans working together in a spirit of trust and confidence about our joint future. In my day job at a European think tank I mostly work with governments and parliaments. NECE is a fantastic opportunity to meet with colleagues closely in touch with citizens across Europe."

Almut Möller
European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR), Berlin

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"NECE does not just network citizen education: It networks democracy and thus builds a foundation for equality, participation and justice. It knows that democracy works bottom up: First education, then citizens, then civil society – and only then free government. Its leadership in Germany and around the world makes the vital link between education and democracy accessible to all. If Donald Trump makes you nervous, join NECE, the natural antidote to Trumpism!"

Dr. Benjamin R. Barber
Fordham University Urban Consortium, New York

"Citizenship education involves issues that cross borders and demand informed and responsible solutions. This can only be achieved through dialogue, mutual respect and cooperation. NECE is a network that stimulates and facilitates such dialogue and cooperation by bringing together people from Europe and beyond. NECE allows me to share ideas and developments with others while learning from best practice elsewhere. It's a perfect combination."

David Kerr
Citizenship Foundation, London

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"NECE represents one of the most outstanding efforts to create a network of truly committed scholars and professionals for turning the ideals of democracy into practice at a European level. These goals are realised by debating problems of civic education with a critical outlook, without shunning difficult or delicate questions and being always ready to learn from different European experiences. Making Europe through discussion!"

Fernando Vallespín
Autonomous University, Madrid

"Work done on democracy in the past decades has been mainly about institutions. Much of the backlash we experience today is not because democratic institutions are dysfunctional, but because of the collective failure to invest in political culture. Civic education aims to fill that gap and NECE is an important network, providing the backbone of what is still largely underdeveloped – a civic education framework in Europe and beyond to support what Vaclav Havel called civility of people."

Ivan Krastev
Centre for Liberal Strategies, Sofia

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"I had the opportunity to attend the NECE conference and participate in the focus group 'Exchange between Europe and North Africa' since 2012. Being a Tunisian civil society activist and living in a country which has been undergoing a democratic transition since the uprising of 2011, NECE was a great opportunity for me to meet citizenship education stakeholders and to be constantly informed of new experiences and projects. This allowed our NGO to more efficiently develop our citizenship education strategy and develop new partnerships – now active – with stakeholders from Europe or the MENA region."

Moez Ali
Union des Tunisiens Indépendants pour la Liberté (UTIL), Tunis

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"What I particularly like about the NECE team and the events they organise is a good balance in inviting participants from all types of educational institutions: Government officials, school teachers, educational NGO leaders and just bright individuals who can share their interactive teaching skills. Such a combination of participants – through several events I have participated in – allowed me to have a deeper look into 'formal' and 'informal' education practices and evaluate their advantages and disadvantages. I congratulate NECE on the wonderful network – both passionate and professional!"
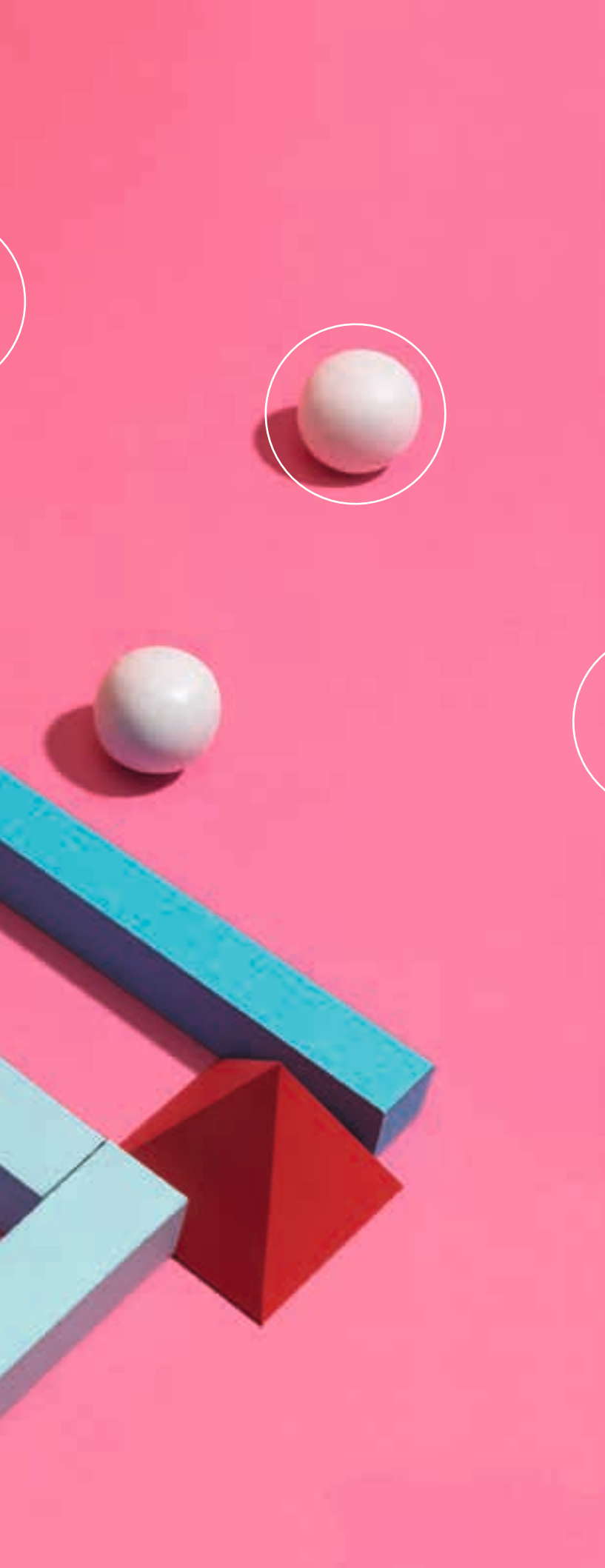
Nina Belyaeva
Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow

E

Introducing:
The Focus Groups

Focus groups play an important role in the networking process of NECE. They are open to everyone who is interested in continuous work on specific topics and issues in European citizenship education. The groups are multi-national and multi-professional think-and-do-tanks, and their objective is to advance our understanding of specific challenges we face in citizenship education. In these transnational laboratories, participants have the opportunity to develop projects, publish papers and contribute to the programme of the conferences. And – most important – to learn from each other.

On the following pages, four of NECE's focus groups are introduced with short insights into what makes them special.

Raising Sister NACE

Against the background of the political uprisings in the Arab world, participants from countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA region) have been working towards founding a new cooperation partner and a "sister" for NECE: Networking Arab Citizenship Education (NACE) is set to provide new impulses for citizenship education in a complicated region.

"By bringing together practitioners of citizenship education from both sides of the Mediterranean, we learn to think beyond our own scope", says Petra Grüne, programme coordinator of the NECE focus group "Exchange between Europe and North Africa" for the Federal Agency for Civic Education. She explains: "For example, when we discuss our approaches to prevent the radicalisation of the young, we don't only learn from each other about new methods and formats. We also change our patterns of perception about 'us' and 'them'. And that also may influence the basic assumptions of educational programmes."

In this context, the focus group has been setting the groundwork for a sustainable and long-term forum of exchange between North African states in transition, like Tunisia or Egypt, and European countries. Members attended conferences since 2012 thanks to travel grants from the Transformation Fund of the German Federal Foreign Office and the Robert Bosch Foundation. Three core initiatives have been identified to further develop this conceptual framework: Stocktaking, a documentation effort and the creation of a platform for dialogue in addition to the existing NECE structure.

The first two initiatives have been implemented as an online database with brief country profiles in Arabic and English to outline country-specific priorities. In addition, a more in-depth mapping of Egyptian structures and approaches to citizenship education was jointly conducted by the Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI), the Egyptian Youth Federation, an NGO, and members of the focus group in a pilot project intended to be reproduced around the region.

"A real local network"

Two Civic Education Conferences (CEC) in Alexandria (2013) and Tunisia (2016) initiated by the Goethe Institute and the NGO Tahir Lounge in Cairo set the cornerstone for a dialogue platform that would draw upon existing NECE structures, and at the same time acknowledge the particular conditions in the MENA region. Elhossein Mahmood, human development trainer from Egypt, said: "I am very pleased by the work that we achieved together with stakeholders from different fields and countries. In less than three years, and through the collaboration of a small group of people, we have managed to create a real local and regional network that can make an actual contribution to transnational civic education (…)."

The Tunisian CEC in 2016 offered the opportunity for an extensive needs assessment. The overall goals of a network for the Arab region, presented to the participants at the conference, included creating a dynamic and flexible structure, developing a knowledge hub for civic education and bridging the knowledge gap between practitioners and academics.

An independent sister network

As a result of the focus group work and the CEC surveys, the NACE project was launched to eventually become an independent sister network to NECE for the Arab region. Seeking to tackle issues such as migration, civic and political participation, radicalisation and dialogue, NACE wants to serve as a platform for empowerment and the development of new practices in civic education.

Looking at the future prospects of NACE, the success and sustainability of this project is closely tied to a shared value system, as well as to a strong commitment from its members and participants. NACE can benefit from the experiences made with NECE and NECE can gain new impulses from NACE. This requires a process of mutual learning and exchange. First achievements are going to be presented during the next CEC conference in 2018. And the collaborative work initiated by NACE and NECE is already showing first results: Stakeholders were inspired to develop plans for a youth exchange programme on civic education, involving different partner organisations in the region.

● *Nina Molter works as a trainee for the Central Office of Public Relations at the Federal Agency for Civic Education. She studied Political Communications in Maastricht and London.*

Beyond Us versus Them

Today, the focus group "Hard to reach learners" looks back on three years of a unique undertaking in theoretical reflection and practical exchange. The ongoing debates in the group reflect the multiple crises affecting Europe and the "Western world".

There is broad agreement that decades of asymmetric globalisation have led to a significant and increasing growth in educational, employment and financial inequalities. Societal exclusion, manifested in these consequences of globalisation, is likely to lead to political exclusion (a de-politicization and dis-empowerment of socially excluded groups) or to various forms of political extremism. These trends are at the heart of the "hard to reach" problem.

A unique mix of expertise and experience

Given its multi-national and multi-professional composition, the focus group is neither an academic research group nor is it focused solely on practical exchange. From the beginning, the group developed a culture of "walking on two legs: While one leg was used to challenge the conceptual and political assumptions behind the term 'hard to reach', the other leg was used to establish a real exchange on practical issues, leading to cooperation between countries and across 'academic borders'".

What is a "hard to reach learner"? Challenging a deficit model

Defining the concept of hard to reach learners in broad terms seemed to be fairly easy at first:

"It basically includes educationally and socially disadvantaged people who are frequently failed by the mainstream of citizenship education or left behind in schools or other educational facilities. Young people, especially with an immigrant background, are particularly affected. In times of multiple crises and a growing social divide in Europe we feel it is important to focus on this specific group."

This sounds fair enough at first sight. But a closer look reveals that even such a broad mission statement raises some tricky issues. One problem is that the term HTR covers a myriad of interpretations, many of which suggest a singular view of social relationships: A powerful "we", possessing a particular insight and knowledge of reality, being confronted with an intractable group, hermetically isolated from the mainstream "us", impervious to or resisting the messages "we" seek to convey.

Pushing this analysis further, we discovered evidence of a deficit model embedded in some approaches to citizenship education. This implies that marginalized and disadvantaged groups are somehow failing to fulfil certain social or behavioural norms. This deficit model has three consequences:

Firstly, it deflects attention from inherent flaws in the systems and structures within which citizenship educators often operate. If we concentrate solely on the "dysfunctional" culture or characteristics preventing people from accessing the "system", we automatically exclude consideration of dysfunctional factors in the educational structures themselves.

Secondly, we may fail to recognise the constructs and political interests which shape the field in which we and our learners operate. Structural, social and political inequalities may make "us" (the institutions as well as individual citizenship educators) the ones who may be "hard to reach". We need to reflect on the significance of this in our work.

Thirdly, it raises ethical and political questions regarding the educator's authority to reject certain forms of political behaviour and promote others.

The book "Beyond Us versus Them" was published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education.

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A learning platform for transnational exchange

Accompanying these debates, the group has been using its other "leg" to facilitate exchanges involving practical approaches, resources and methods in our daily work with hard to reach groups. Networking has been fruitful, for example, between participants from the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and the UK in working on a tool kit for citizenship education practitioners. Citizenship work for Islamic schools, originated in the UK, has been provided for use in several other countries. Practical ideas and methodologies associated with the "Dialogue at School" project (Germany) have been shared with schools elsewhere. The needs and problems of marginalized kids seem to be similar in many European countries.

Beyond Us versus Them:
The book on HTR issues

The problems and approaches mentioned here are further explored and described in a volume edited by members of the focus group in 2016. The book (also available as an e–book) is out now: A visible result of the creativity and energy facilitated through this group.

The social and political divisions and associated threats to democracy are not likely to go away any time soon. There is a strong obligation to continue our work. A new partnership of NECE with the SDSA (The School Development and Support Agency), an NGO in Leicester (UK) and a backbone of the focus group, will facilitate the HTR network in the coming years. We look forward to welcoming new members and developing active partnerships with other organisations in the future.

● **Christoph Müller-Hofstede** *has been responsible for the focus group since its start in 2013. He is programme manager at the Federal Agency for Civic Education and deals with issues and problems in migration and European politics.*

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This European Feeling

Pamela Brandt and Alban Genty talk about VoteMatch Europe as a new tool for exchange and cooperation in Europe.
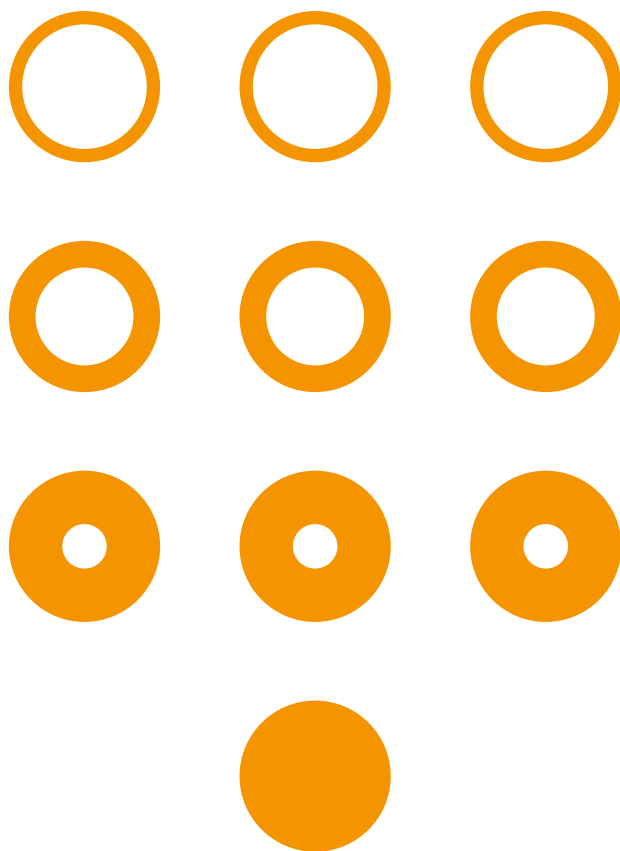
The Wahl-O-Mat in Germany and, as of recently, the Vote&Vous in France are just two examples: Voting advice applications are very popular with voters all across Europe. Since the European Parliament elections of 2014 there is a new addition, called VoteMatch Europe. It allows citizens to compare their national political choices with those in other European countries. Pamela Brandt works for the German Federal Agency for Civic Education and is responsible for the Wahl-O-Mat. Alban Genty is co-president and co-founder of Vote&Vous. Together with other members of the NECE focus group VoteMatch Europe they developed the new tool and the "20 European statements".

Lars Meierwisch: Vote&Vous was launched in 2014 in France. Alban, what role did NECE play in the beginning?

Alban Genty: NECE is not just a great forum for big players. It is especially important for young initiatives and smaller institutions to be part of a networking process. NECE provides great support for us because we benefit from the experiences of others, and are able to adopt well-functioning structures. That saves a lot of time.

France and Germany are not the only countries with voting advice applications for elections: Poland, Latvia, Austria and others also have them. Pamela, where did the idea for VoteMatch Europe come from?

Pamela Brandt: VoteMatch Europe is the result of intense networking in citizenship education in Europe. Fourteen countries are participating. Due to NECE we could share our ideas, organise meetings and build up a network. Originally we were aiming to simply learn from each other. In the past, we were all dealing with the same problems on our own – and now, for the first time, we were able to exchange our views and find common solutions. We then asked ourselves: What else could we do together? So we thought up VoteMatch Europe, but we were still in need of funding. At a NECE conference different funding programmes were presented, and we decided to apply to the Open Society Initiative per Europe and the Grundtvig Programme, which is initiated by the European Commission. Today, we are

still an active network and the direct communication is of great importance to us.

How was VoteMatch Europe developed?

Brandt: In 2013, we met every three months to prepare and coordinate the start of our European programme ahead of the elections in May 2014. We worked all day for several days in a row and had a fixed agenda. These meetings were of vital importance, because we worked productively. That is special about NECE: That you can meet face to face.

Genty: Yes, due to this connection we kept on working. When you do these kind of projects there is always the question of financing. Our partners are often individuals doing this work outside their actual job commitments. As a consequence, they have limited time resources and little financial capacities. Without NECE and these meetings there would be fewer participants. We all benefit and we are glad that the funding problems have been solved.

How did the users react once VoteMatch Europe was available?

Brandt: I think the users were surprised when they got to the comparison. There were various parties from very different countries which took position on 20 distinct statements. As a consequence, several unfamiliar party logos appeared. That challenged the users.

Genty: Yes, but it is important to separate usability from the actual idea. It is necessary to have a common European tool because the people finally get to understand something: In the context of elections, parties differ from country to country.

Brandt: We still have to work on the usability. But the fact that we identified 20 key issues is of great value. Should there be a minimum wage throughout the EU? Should we create Eurobonds? What about new member states? These issues seem to be some of the most important ones that citizens in all EU member countries are concerned about. And they have been debated all across Europe.

What else can VoteMatch Europe and the different national tools achieve?

Genty: They create an automatism prior to elections. When there is a vote, people use VoteMatch Europe. This enables people to receive summarised information and get easy access to the parties' election programmes. People realise that the agendas of parties are dynamic, they change.

Brandt: Absolutely. VoteMatch Europe motivates people to talk about politics. It serves as a trigger for political discussions between individuals at the workplace, in universities, schools, we even heard people in queues at cinemas chat about their experience with VoteMatch Europe. People often have the impression that their personal vote doesn't matter or that it is not decisive. Tools like VoteMatch Europe try to make the process more comprehensible. They provide a form of transparency.

That sounds like a powerful tool. Could VoteMatch Europe even promote the idea of European citizenship?

Genty: I do think it could. After all, European elections are the easiest way to convey the feeling of being a European citizen. We still need to address the problems concerning usability. But then, a tool like VoteMatch Europe can truly help in creating European citizenship. In the long-term perspective, it would also be great to have a European institution for civic education.

Brandt: European citizenship is an idea of community. I think that just by developing these 20 common statements we created a basis for this feeling. VoteMatch Europe is a tool that everyone has to use on their own. But afterwards people talk about their opinions. This spill-over effect can trigger discussions, enhance exchanges and contribute to a more active citizenship.

● ***Lars Meierwisch*** *studied Law and Political Science, and currently works at an international research institute in Bonn, focussing on the issues of demographic change and scientific communication.*

Go East

After NECE made its first steps to build a transnational network with participants from North African countries, there was an analogue approach to strengthen connections in civic education with countries in Eastern Europe. A young focus group made a start.
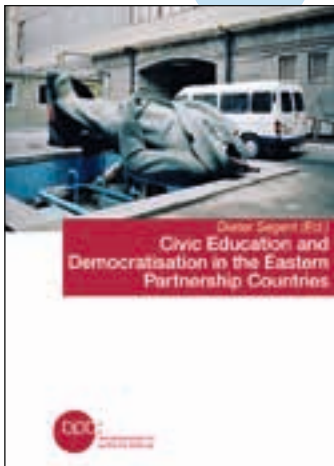
The book "Civic Education and Democratisation in the Eastern Partnership Countries" was published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education.

www.bpb.de/shop

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine – nearly 30 practitioners of civic education from these seven countries decided to work more closely together when it comes to "Citizenship Education in Eastern Europe". At their first meeting in Berlin in November 2015 they held a start-up workshop to discuss those problems and challenges they found most important in their respective home countries, and exchanged ideas and experiences on educating citizens. They then founded their own focus group.

Svetlana Alenitskaya, project manager from the Federal Agency for Civic Education, sees two characteristics in this focus group: "We communicate continuously in English and in Russian, which helps to reach citizenship educators from different working areas and with a wider range of experiences. Also, we are a colourful mix of non-governmental and governmental organisations, which leads to very interesting discussions about the educators' attitudes." For example, about how far political neutrality under the current political conditions in many countries can be maintained. Or about the actual meaning and impact of a balanced or controversial transfer of knowledge, skills and competences in times of crises.

Raising questions, finding answers – together

How can a theoretical approach be developed in Armenia to complement the practical, skills-oriented approach? How can more trust between government institutions and non-political organisations in Russia be established, and the meaning and significance of civic education be further broadcast here? How can the recent experiences of civic activism in Ukraine be transformed into sustainable civic participation?

These were just some challenges participants of the focus group identified as being important in their home countries. Now they want to find answers together: By exchanging good practices, by analysing local and regional factors of influence, and by starting real projects for citizens, like web academies, publications or workshops. All these initiatives have as their goal a more strategic development of civic education in the participating countries. The target groups of their project ideas are as diverse as the ideas themselves, including adolescents, disabled people, refugees, young politicians or entrepreneurs.

Web academies and sustainability trainings

And it didn't stop with just their project ideas. Some participants actually implemented them in 2016 already, like the founders of the web academy for local activists in Belarus. Initiatives and engaged citizens can now learn about civic participation online in four video tutorials: For example, about formulating enquiries to politicians or administration departments, or on how to organise advocacy campaigns. In Georgia, adolescent multipliers from schools in rural areas

were trained in sustainability and project management, so that they could then work as peer educators and founders of so-called "eco clubs" in their schools. These will also be accompanied by the project founders from the focus group.

Narine Teknejyan, a participant from the Armenian Youth is Power NGO, says: "Being a part of the focus group, I intend to widen my experience on civic education and civil society as well as learn good practices from other countries. The experience should be transferred to my local community, organisation and target group, since civic education and civic responsibility should be taught in elementary school and grow forever."

Her colleague Yaroslav Pylynskyi, Director of the Centre for Civic Education in Kyiv, Ukraine, is looking for new impulses for civic education in a culturally much more diverse environment: "Today, more and more people are changing their place of residence and becoming citizens of other countries. On these grounds, the experience of civic education from different countries concentrated in our focus group helps me to better understand our goals and objectives, and develop new methods of civic education which take into account the differences in cultures of the citizens whom we try to educate."

At the beginning of October 2016, the focus group members discussed their next steps during a gathering and workshop in Tbilisi, Georgia. The purpose of the workshop was to get an even deeper insight into the approaches and methods of citizenship education in the different countries, to develop principles for citizenship education for the participants' projects, and to figure out the direction of the focus group in general. Since it was financially supported by the German Federal Office of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and 2016, one important goal for the nearer future will be securing funding for the group meetings and their projects – so that they can all continue to meet and let civic responsibility "grow forever", as Narine Teknejyan phrased it.

● **Imke Emmerich** *is an editor working at the*
Federal Ministry for Family Affairs,
Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in Berlin.
She also coordinates projects in the
field of civic education and media.

Discussing, planning, shaping new ideas:
Focus groups in action.

Damascus

Berlin

Damascus – Berlin: Designing our Identities

Monis Bukhari is a 38-year old Syrian journalist who fled his home country in 2011 after the Assad regime accused him of treason. He came to Berlin in 2013, where he founded the *Syrisches Haus* (Syrian House), a network for Syrians in Germany. He talked with Imke Emmerich about his project and his understanding of integration.

Imke Emmerich: Monis, what is Berlin for you – home or exile?

Monis Bukhari: It is a mix of both. A home because I love to be here, and because Berlin is similar to me in its personality: Full of art and energy. However, at the same time I see the city as an exile, because I did not choose to stay here.

You said that you felt fear when you first came to Berlin in 2013.

Yes, I felt the fear of being ignorant. I had no idea of the German lifestyle and culture, I did not know what was right or wrong to say and to do. I felt the fear of making mistakes, of insulting my neighbours.

You feared to be impolite? Why didn't you fear for yourself, for an insecure future?

I lost this fear for the future when I lost Syria and my whole way of life. I lost my house in Damascus, then I lost my house and life in Jordan where I had lived for two years but was rejected later. I couldn't stay in Lebanon or Egypt either. Whenever I made a new plan, it was destroyed anyway. So why think about the future? I don't dream, hope or plan anymore. I got used to just going on.

You went on to found the Syrian House.

I started it as a group on Facebook. I wanted to find German Syrians who had lived here for a long time because I was in desperate need for information. When I came to Berlin, there were no refugees here yet. So I thought that the German Syrians could explain the differences between the Syrian and the German culture to me, tell me all those things I didn't know.

"Integration is an exchange of information"

What is the Syrian House, in your own words?

It now is a network of Syrians with over 150,000 members all over the country. Syrian people can ask questions and find other Syrians who can answer them with their expertise. Also, it has become a link between the Federal Government and the Syrian community. We communicate information and needs from the Syrian community to the Government, and the other way around. For example, we work together with the Federal Press Office and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees by sharing our knowledge. The German government learned from us what the Syrian community in Germany looks like, because we could see how many engineers, doctors, teachers, artists or other occupational groups came, for example.

Soon, you want to open what you call the "Integration Hub", an actual place for Syrians to meet.

The Syrian House – as the initiative – is for Syrians and the Syrian culture only. But the Integration Hub is supposed to be open for everyone. It aims to introduce cultures to each other. And at the same time, it wants to offer Syrian artists a place where they can exhibit their work, have concerts or theatre plays.

Introducing cultures to each other – is this your understanding of integration?

I think that integration is a process of exchange between locals and newcomers. Whereever they come from.

Which doesn't have anything to do with borders.

Exactly. Even someone who moves to Berlin from Brandenburg would need some integration, because it is very different in the city. So the newcomer should learn about the local culture. Maybe he will not understand it, but he should try to and he should at least respect it. And the locals should learn about the newcomer and his or her culture, too.

In Germany and Europe at the moment there are major discussions about immigration policies; the extreme right is gaining power by claiming that integration and mutual understanding are delusions. How does that feel for you?

It makes me feel sick. In Syria, we have war because of this. If we keep categorising and judging each other by our origins, languages or looks, there will always be wars. It is about how we talk and how we design our identities. In Syria, the Assad regime decided what a Syrian identity looks like: In short, you have to be Arabian, Muslim, Sunni and speak Arabic, although there are many ethnicities, religions and languages in Syria.

Can you also understand those who fear that new people with often very different backgrounds would change "their" countries?

Yes, of course. I occasionally talk to some people of Pegida to understand why they are fighting Islam. I cannot accept what they say, as most of it is fascism. But I understand what lies behind it, and it doesn't mean that all of these people are evil. They want to protect society as they like it to be. So at this point, it is my duty to understand this, but also to show them that I am no threat to them.

So it's about exchanging information, no matter with whom?

Yes, but from both sides. My first experience like this was during a Pegida demonstration. I was joining the opponent side. When both sides got closer together during the protest, I started to talk to some of them. We talked for two and a half hours, and it was just the five of them and me. Afterwards, they invited me to their village in the East of Germany, and I actually went there.

That sounds a bit scary!

(Laughs) It was at first, but sometimes I meet people like these because I believe this is the only way to push them away from fascism.

"I already was a Berliner before I came to Berlin"

To exchange information with others, you need to speak the same language.

Of course. People who come to a new country should definitely start to learn the language but – and I discuss this a lot with institutions or companies – you cannot expect them to know it already when they arrive. German, for example, is a very complicated language. Many of the refugees who came to Germany couldn't find information in their own languages, at least in Arabic, to have a smoother start. I understand those who got frustrated. I got frustrated, too, also because I couldn't find acceptance.

What do you mean by that?

I already was a Berliner before I came to Berlin. Because the lifestyle here also used to be my lifestyle in Damascus. But even if I learned German in a very local slang or pronunciation, I would never be accepted as German. People keep seeing us as foreigners. Some friends of mine, German journalists with a Turkish background, are so in love with the German language that they write poetry and books in German. At any conference or workshop, they are

being asked why they have this passion for the German language, why their German is so good. They are German.

How can that be changed?

I think that the key lies in the educational system and in the media. When people keep talking about "the Germans and the Muslims", for example, they indicate that Muslims cannot be Germans or that Germans cannot be Muslims. If we define the German identity and always connect it to bloodlines, religion or political views, then of course no one who comes from outside the German border would ever be accepted as a German.

Isn't it too early to give up? It takes time to change an educational system and the behaviour of society.

Let me make this clear: I am not tired of not being recognised as German, I don't think that will ever happen. But what I was seeking for and got tired of failing in was to be accepted as I am. As soon as I say "I am from Syria", I am being categorised and judged.

For example, I have always worked as a photographer, and was known for my work in Syria. In Germany, companies offered to exhibit my work because they wanted to show the work of "the refugee artist", and this is not fair. A few years of facing this is already very exhausting.

On the other hand, since you talk to people so much and exchange information, I don't think you have really given up yet.

(Laughs) You're right, I haven't. This is why I will open the Integration Hub. As I said, I don't dream, hope or plan anymore, but I keep on trying.

● **Imke Emmerich** is an editor working at the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in Berlin. She also coordinates projects in the field of civic education and media.

Damascus

Berlin

Trapped

Caught between Putin and Conchita Wurst: The Bulgarian philosopher Ivan Krastev and the Austrian historian Oliver Jens Schmitt on why so many Eastern Europeans no longer want to emulate the West – and the Austrian can even identify a German "moral arrogance" directed at Eastern Europeans. The two academics discuss these issues in an interview with Michael Martens from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. An excerpt.

Michael Martens: The federal government of Germany, supported by elements of the media, think that it is only fair that every EU state should take in Syrian refugees. Where's the moral arrogance in that?

Oliver Jens Schmitt: It begins with the assumption that there is a mutual framework of European values, even though these have never been the subject of a debate. Many German opinion-makers assume that in so-called Eastern Europe – I prefer to call them the new member states – certain values are shared, without question. Values which are also by no means uncontroversial in Western, Northern and Southern Europe.

Which values do you mean?

Schmitt: For example the so-called "marriage pour tous" in France. Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated against this in Paris in 2013. They weren't just from the extreme right. There were a lot of French middle-class citizens there who were participating in this kind of "public protest" for the very first time. There were similar protests in Italy. The construction of a European East in which the social values and cultural perspectives are backwards isn't correct. Certain values and perspectives are also not uncontroversial in the West.

For example?

Schmitt: There are pedestrian crossings in Vienna which display same-sex couples. The initiators present the decision to mount these signs as a consensus, but even in Austria that isn't the case. We are probably now coming to the end of a period of moralising politics in Europe, a period in which morality was utilised as the main instrument of political influence. This also applies to how we deal with migrants and refugees.

You contend that the Germans, with their criticism of the behaviour of the Eastern European states in the refugee issue, are practising a kind of self-exaltation, without being actually interested in Eastern Europe. Assuming for a moment that they are interested – what could they learn from Eastern Europe?

Schmitt: It's not about defining a certain number of cultural values, monuments or literary works which have to be adopted as some kind of pan-European pantheon. These cultures are part of our continent and they deserve, in a very fundamental way, our interest.

In 2015, if it hadn't been a million Muslims, but instead a million nominally Christian Orthodox Ukrainians who had come to Europe – would the Eastern Europeans still have reacted in such a hostile manner?

Schmitt: I'm positive that the reactions in Germany would have been very different, because we would have seen neither the enthusiastic welcoming scenes at the train stations nor such a remarkable wave of helpfulness. That has to do with the construction of the Other. This Other, as embodied by the Ukrainians, is too similar to ourselves to be idealised. It's not exotic enough, we can't project anything into it, and it can also be less easily controlled through discourse and paternalism. There's a construction in the German-speaking world of the South and the Mediterranean which has very positive associations. The Ukraine, on the other hand, only exists in the German imagination as a vast steppe. There's nothing there for the German imagination to grasp hold of.

Ivan Krastev: Of course it would be much easier to integrate a million Russians or Ukrainians in Germany, and many people would agree with the statement that it's better to take in a million Orthodox Christians than a million Muslims. But I also believe that kind of development would never have triggered such a wave of solidarity. We can show our sympathy for the Muslims precisely because they are so different from ourselves – and in doing so, we demonstrate moral superiority.

Moral arrogance?

Krastev: Yes. Of course it elevates your moral self-esteem when you can say: These people are different from us, but we're going to help them anyway. One important reason why this is perceived very differently in states like Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria or Romania has to do with the fact that the refugees, simply in their appearance, remind South-Eastern Europeans of the Roma – and then of course of their failed integration in their own societies. The Roma are the symbol of the Other in South-Eastern Europe, an Other which simply can't be integrated. If you want to understand why some Eastern European societies argue so brutally in the migrant crisis, then you have to take this into consideration. An external development is being associated with a long-term domestic problem. And then on top of this, we have the least recognised element in the analysis of Eastern European reactions to the refugee crisis: Demographic panic. In Bulgaria there is a vast demographic difference between Bulgarians and Roma. More than 40 per cent of the pupils in Bulgarian junior schools don't speak Bulgarian as their native tongue.

Migrants don't want to live in countries like Bulgaria anyway. So why the blunt rejection?

Schmitt: In discussions with Romanian intellectuals I got the impression that they fear a weakening of the European centre. These people define themselves as inhabitants of weak societies on the European periphery, and their primary goal is to connect to Western Europe. They know very well what it looks like in London and Paris now, but they still cultivate an idealised image of Western Europe as the core of European culture. They are very closely observing the difficulties Western European states are having with the integration of Muslim immigrants, and they're frightened by what they're seeing.

They're scared by what they see happening in Paris. These centres, from which they hope to receive both geopolitical support and social orientation, the most important reference points in their cultural coordination system – these centres are being completely revolutionised by this immigration on such a huge scale. They feel threatened by Russia and in reaction to that seek to define themselves more firmly as Europeans, but the criteria of this definition are exclusively Western, and their understanding of the nature of the West is no longer shared by the Western elites – and that confuses them.

Krastev: That's it. Poles don't like Putin, but many of them admire his rejection of homosexuality. On many issues their convictions and feelings are much more in sync with Russian conservatism. And now they're asking themselves whether they have to adopt a homosexual-friendly position in order to get the Germans on their side against Putin.

Schmitt: One symbol of this division is Conchita Wurst. I get asked about this a lot in South-Eastern Europe. When I was in Bulgaria with students in 2014, they were asked how on earth they could tolerate a phenomenon like Conchita Wurst.

So, Eastern Europeans feel trapped between Putin and Conchita Wurst?

Schmitt: Exactly. One problem here is that there's a tendency in the West to define a cultural and social norm in a very one-sided manner, and then to expect this to be adopted with no discussion. It would be important to conduct these social-political debates with a little less apodictic certainty.

Do you see Europe on the brink of a conservative revolution, inspired by Eastern Europe?

Schmitt: It's a change, a provocation – and a chance for open debate. It all depends now on what the reaction will be to this provocation. If it's exclusive, as it has been to date, if we are then not prepared to react to the provocation with arguments but instead stamp everyone who has certain views with a negative label, then that could endanger the existence of the EU. For this reason: We shouldn't just analyse the reasons for the reactions of Eastern European societies, we should also ask whether the consequences of these reactions would really only be negative, Europe-wide.

Is it not a positive intellectual and political provocation, if we learn as a result how to once again integrate such opinions in a democratic discourse – which would then of course be much sharper than the soft mainstream discourse we currently have? It seems to me that the reactions have already produced initial political compromises, as well as a new ability to deal with divergent opinions. And even those who – quite rightly – reject the governments in Poland and Hungary above all because of their domestic policies, should actually be grateful from a European, political perspective: Because in a time when everyone is behaving as if there is only one possible answer for a great crisis, they have shown that there are other options. It's also a matter of the quality of the public debate. How do we react to divergent opinions?

Hungary's Minister President Viktor Orbán says: "We don't want a multicultural society." If the response from

Berlin is that that isn't possible in Europe – is that moral arrogance?

Schmitt: We should get used to the fact that opinions like this are being expressed in Europe and should be taken seriously. Democratically elected politicians in the new member states who take conservative stances bring new positions into the debate, and that is extremely valuable for European politics.

For them there are no refugees, just migrants who should be stopped.

Krastev: When it's about migrants, then it's my right as a citizen to decide in which political society I want to live and whether I want to accept newcomers or not. There is no moral duty to improve the economic wellbeing of others. I can't take care of every single person whose life is not as good as my own. Refugees on the other hand, those who are fleeing wars, they saddle me with a moral responsibility. But when Viktor Orbán rejects non-Europeans – what does that mean, for example, for people with Afghan, Indian or Algerian roots, but who are German, French or British citizens? In the future, Germany is going to have a lot of citizens with Syrian origins. Is Orbán going to deny these Germans the right to settle wherever they want, assuming the unlikely scenario that they would choose to settle in Hungary? Is he prepared to accept that, according to this logic, Germans in return could say that human rights and basic freedoms are only valid for Western Europeans, and no longer for Hungarians?

But the migrants from the Punjab who are now being sent back to Turkey, and from there back to Pakistan – aren't we telling them something similar?

Krastev: This is why the European rhetoric about the universal validity of human rights is so vulnerable to accusations of hypocrisy. The EU can obviously not satisfy this demand. Just look at our cooperation with Turkey: Do we really believe that, as a result of our cooperation in the migrant crisis, Turkey is going to become more democratic?

We believe that European values are for Europeans.

Krastev: Then in that case we should admit that we have strategic priorities and as a result relinquish certain values. Yes, we are legitimising Erdoğan, but for the time being that is quite simply more important for our societies than anything else. We shouldn't act as if we're going to grant the Turks unrestricted travel rights in order to improve Turkish democracy – because that is just not what is happening.

● *Michael Martens is the South-Eastern Europe correspondent for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ). Since 2015 he has been based in Athens, from where he has reported on the Greek crisis as well as on Turkey and the Balkans.*

Ivan Krastev is the Chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria, and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna.

Oliver Jens Schmitt is, since 2005, professor for the History of South-Eastern Europe at the University of Vienna.

Beyond Crisis: A European Journey

Girl playing in a park, Avignon, France, June 2011

Crippled man without legs is sunbathing on the seafront promenade, Zadar, Croatia, June 2011

"Crisis everywhere. But I still travel throughout Europe in search of a normal, everyday European life, beyond all the elegiac anxieties about these crises. I find my images on the street, in the markets, at tourist sites, on the beach." This is how Frank Schirrmeister describes his reportage "Beyond Crisis".

Schirrmeister looks for faces and relationships between people and locations, he looks for that which connects. Maybe that's why it's sometimes hard to tell when looking at his photographs exactly where we are in Europe.

Daily ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial commemorating the fallen British soldiers of World War I, Ypres, Belgium, June 2011

War veteran at Victory Day,
Ljubljana, Slovenia, May 2011

Air rifle shooting stand at the beach, Durrës, Albania, June 2011

Battleship in a shipyard, Riva Trigoso, Italy, June 2011

Young couple at the beach, Durrës, Albania, June 2011

Trailer home in front of a new factory building, Bucharest, Romania, June 2011

Gated community, near Stettin, Poland, June 2011

euro|topics

Europe's press comments

THE INDEPENDENT (UNITED KINGDOM)
"Britain should help, not seal itself off."

BERLINGSKE (DENMARK)
"It is legitimate to protect ourselves against the overwhelming flood of refugees."

ÖHTULEHT (ESTONIA)
"1,000 refugees is too many for Estonia."

LE SOIR (BELGIUM)
"Europe is losing its soul in the refugee crisis."

LIBERATION (FRANCE)
"Calais testifies to France's powerlessness."

PRAVDA (SLOVAKIA)
"You can't enforce solidarity."

E-VESTNIK (BULGARIA)
"Merkel has Europe on her conscience."

SALZBURGER NACHRICHTEN (AUSTRIA)
"Border controls are not the end for Europe."

PÚBLICO (PORTUGAL)
"The EU simply isn't up to the task in the refugee crisis."

TO VIMA (GREECE)
"Greece will turn into one big hotspot."

So Hard to Reach?

How do you teach controversial issues when your students live in completely different realities? Ivo Pertijs reports on his search for answers to this delicate question in the Netherlands.

What would you do if, after the Brussels bombings, a student said: "I don't feel sorry for the victims, because they (the Europeans) are bombing us every day in Syria." Or how would you react if another student came to the conclusion that the Atatürk airport attack has advantages as well: "At least they (the victims) won't come to our country anymore."

The problem of how to teach controversial topics, specifically those related to freedom of speech, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, right-wing extremism and the integration of ethnic minorities, was placed much higher on the political agenda after the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings in Paris in January 2015. Since the terror attack I had the opportunity to exchange thoughts on this topic with dozens of teachers. Generally, teachers feel well equipped to discuss controversial issues with their students, but it never takes long before a teacher refers to a moment during class when he or she felt uncomfortable, uncertain or even unsafe, especially after news about a terrorist attack dominated the headlines. Of course, plenty of students are open-minded, but many of their peers are not. Based on their own mental maps, they present a very simplistic "us versus them" version of society.

Hard to reach learners

Supported by a number of reports commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, two groups of hard to reach learners, who according to one of the reports live in "two different worlds" and "two different realities", can be identified in the Netherlands: On the one hand there are the predominantly young Muslim students with an immigrant family background, defining themselves as Muslims, who show sympathy for the ideology of radical Islam, and who have opinions that can be classified as anti-Semitic, anti-gay and anti-western. On the other hand there are the predominantly indigenous Dutch students with Islamophobic and xenophobic opinions, who believe that their lives are being threatened by (Islamic) migration to the Netherlands. Even pupils who are normally not categorized as being hard to reach are, in times of fear and terrorism, more vulnerable to the logic of "us versus them" as it presents a clear but distorted picture of the world we live in.

Social media puts the world in one's palm

These students frequently find the "evidence" for their truths on the internet, often colourfully illustrated by (manipulated) images or made attractive by exciting (and often misleading) conspiracy theories. The effects of the information flowing to students via social media should not be underestimated. Especially students belonging to the hard to reach groups described above believe that their evidence is stronger than the realities presented by mainstream mass media outlets. This information is then shared among people who hold the same beliefs, creating a circular and self-propagating confirmation that what they believe is true and what the other says is false. The impact of media coverage on students is especially

apparent when a media hype leads to an intense discussion in the classroom. At this precise point, society expects the teacher to be the person to make students aware of the fact that they shouldn't think in terms of "us versus them", and to create a safe environment in the classroom. This isn't an easy task, as many students – both mainstream and marginalised – are often afraid of "the other". It becomes even more complicated when students are convinced that the teacher is choosing the side of "the other" or is ill-informed about what is "really going on".

More training and support for teachers

According to another report commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Education, about 80 per cent of Dutch teachers felt well-equipped to discuss controversial issues in the class, but the need for support depended on a number of factors, e.g. the level of experience of a teacher, their gender and the type of school. Special trainings have been developed to support teachers in discussing controversial topics. A recurring element in these trainings is the need to keep communicating with the students, no matter how radical their points of views may be. Asking questions and trying to explore the reasons why certain opinions are voiced is clearly better than immediately silencing the student. Dialogue is believed to be a key method, because the teacher can listen carefully to what a student exactly says. The Socratic Method is another frequently mentioned instrument for use in discussing controversial issues, because it can make the student think about his or her own words and thoughts by repeatedly asking (philosophical) open questions. A teacher should be well prepared when starting a lesson on a controversial issue. Emotions might run high, and students refer to sources some teachers didn't even know existed. For this reason, some schools invite peer educators, young people with a relevant background, for example Jewish or Muslim, to discuss controversial issues in the context of their own experiences.

In the end, the individual teacher will be alone in front of up to 30 students. Some of the pupils are ignorant of what is going on in the world, others are angry or afraid. Even a moderate student who doesn't belong to one of the hard to reach groups can be troublesome for a teacher when a controversial issue is being discussed. Experienced teachers admitted at meetings that they are still not always sure if they did the right thing at the right moment. It is usually a matter of finding the right balance between taking the opinions of students seriously and establishing certain norms as an educator. Finding this balance is an ongoing process on the individual and school level, depending on the context, the class, the student and the contents of the remark that causes unpleasant or uncertain responses with the teacher. One thing all teachers know for sure: You should always expect the unexpected. That is part and parcel of their important and challenging job.

Hard to reach or not? Even moderate students can be troublesome for some teachers when controversial issues come up.

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Living with Controversy

Why we urgently need to train teachers to enable young people to discuss controversial issues in school, if we are to protect and strengthen democracy and human rights: David Kerr sets out the challenges facing educators in Europe.

"Learning how to engage in dialogue with and respect people whose values are different from one's own is central to the democratic process and essential for the protection and strengthening of democracy and fostering a culture of human rights", says the Crick Report on Education for Citizenship from 1998.

Yet in Europe young people are too often denied the opportunity to discuss controversial issues in school because they are seen as too challenging to teach, e. g., issues to do with religious extremism, sexual orientation, gender violence or child abuse. Unable to voice their concerns, unaware of how others feel and forced to rely on friends and social media for their information, young people are left confused and bewildered by some of the major issues which affect their communities and European society today. In the absence of help from school, they have no reliable means of making sense of or dealing with these issues, and no one to guide them.

If left unchecked this situation is dangerous for young people, for communities and for democratic society at large. What is urgently needed is more effective training for teachers in the teaching of controversial issues in the light of the challenges facing schools and education across Europe. Such training is vital in facilitating the creation of "safe spaces" in the classroom in which students can explore issues that concern them, freely and without fear, and in empowering teachers to use strategies and techniques which promote open and respectful dialogue.

Why now?

Public concern arising in the aftermath of a number of high-profile incidents of violence and social disorder in different European countries has combined with new thinking in education for democracy and human rights to make the handling of controversial issues in schools a matter of educational urgency.

Firstly, tragic incidents such as the London riots and Norwegian hate crimes in 2011, the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris in 2015 and the further attacks in Paris, Brussels and Nice in 2016, have prompted a wholesale review of the role played by schools in the moral and civic development of young people across Europe.

Secondly, European policy on education for democracy and human rights has shifted in recent years from reliance on the acquisition of theoretical knowledge to an emphasis on active and participatory learning and engagement with "real life" issues. There is a growing consensus that democratic citizenship, respect for human rights and intercultural understanding is learned more effectively through "doing" than "knowing".

What does "controversial" mean?

Controversial issues are: "Issues which arouse strong feelings and divide opinion in communities and society." They vary from the local to the global, e. g., from mosque-building to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Some are long-standing, such as the sectarian divisions between communities in a number of European countries, whereas others are very recent, e. g., Islamic radicalisa-

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tion of youth or the impact of Brexit. They also vary with place and time. Crucifixes in schools may be highly contentious in one country, but an accepted part of life in another – as are, for example, bilingual education or Islamic headscarves. Almost any topic can become controversial at any time, and new controversies are arising every day.

Why are controversial issues challenging to teach?

Controversial issues embody major conflicts of value and interest, often coupled with disputed claims about underlying facts. They tend to be complex with no easy answers. They arouse strong feelings and have a tendency to create or reinforce divisions between people, thereby engendering suspicion and mistrust.

Opening up the school curriculum to issues of this kind raises difficult pedagogical questions, such as how to protect the sensitivities of students from different backgrounds and cultures, how to prevent friction in the classroom, and how to teach contentious material even-handedly, avoiding criticisms of bias. It also raises questions about academic freedom and the role of the teacher's own beliefs and values. It also raises questions for school leaders – such as how to support classroom teachers in their teaching of controversial issues, how to promote a supportive school ethos and how to address the anxieties of parents and others outside the school.

What sort of training is needed?

What is required is training which is open and collaborative and places a special emphasis on teacher self-reflection and thoughtful, informed action. Teachers need to be encouraged to develop professional competences for teaching controversial issues. These competences fall into three categories:

- Personal competences – including the ability to reflect on one's personal beliefs and values and their impact in the classroom, and to judge when it is and isn't appropriate to share them with students.
- Theoretical competences – including understanding the nature of controversy in a democracy and the role of dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution, and the corresponding value of controversial subject matter in democratic citizenship and human rights education.
- Practical competences – including the ability to adopt a range of teaching roles in the classroom, use a range of strategies to manage controversial issues sensitively, present issues fairly in the absence of the full facts, handle controversial off-the-cuff remarks from students and co-operate with other stakeholders.

Armed with such competences, teachers across Europe would be in a much stronger position to help young people to understand the issues in the world around them. In particular, they need guidance on how such issues can be addressed through dialogue and discussion with others, rather than resorting to anger and violence fuelled by ignorance and misinformation. Ultimately, there is no good reason why controversial issues should be avoided in schools and classrooms and every good reason, with the right kind of teacher training, why they should not.

Spotting NECE

Key:

 NECE conferences

 NECE workshops
& focus group meetings
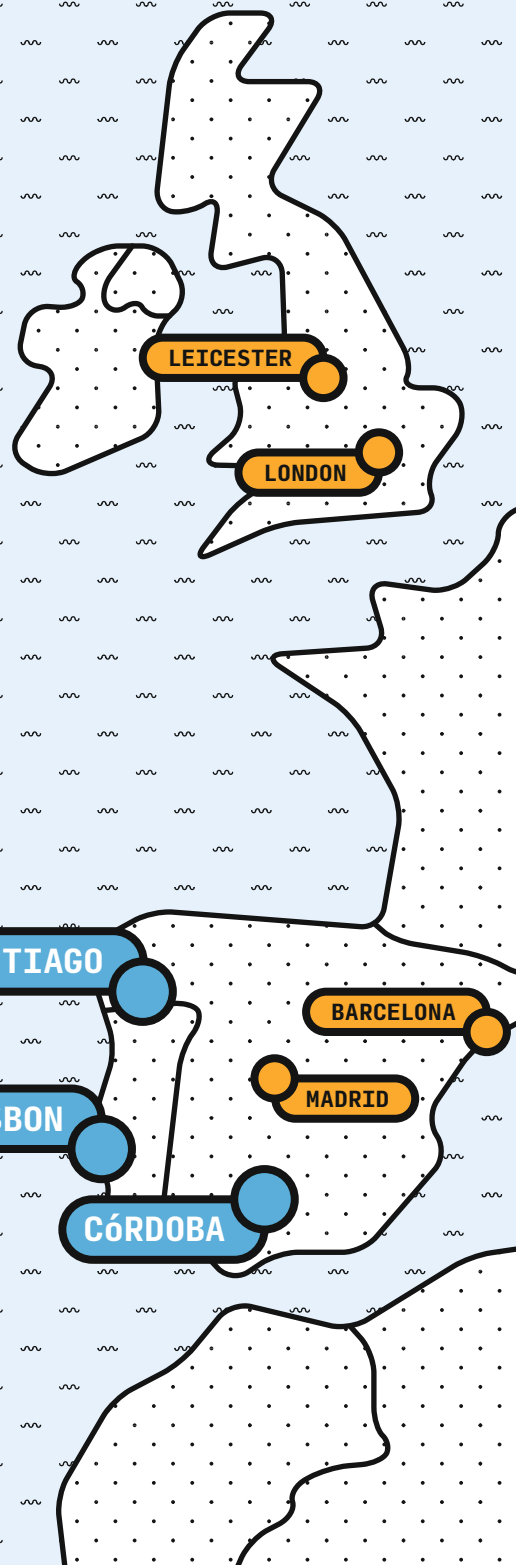
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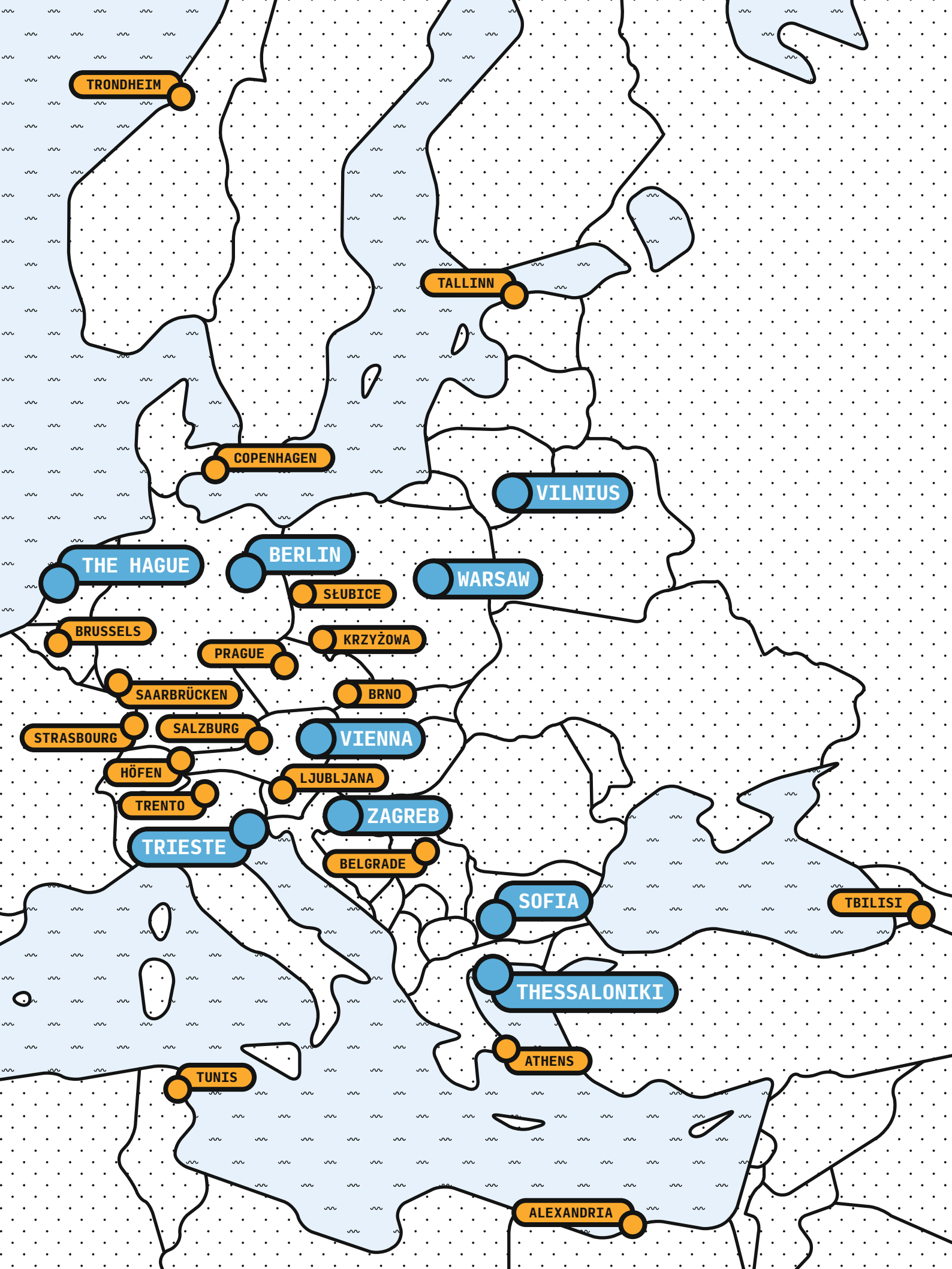## 3,500

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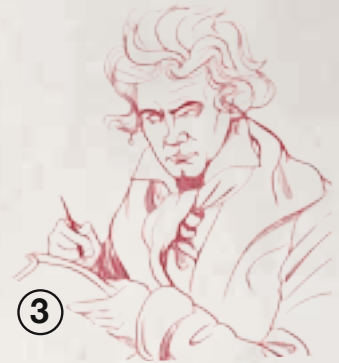
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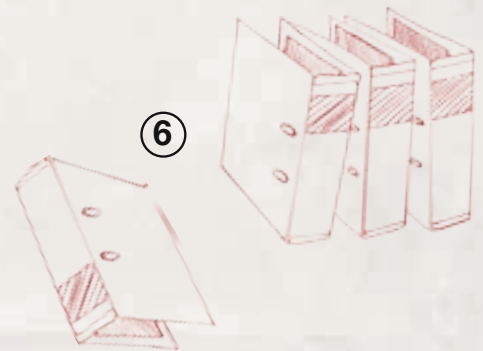

1) The first domestic dog: 14,500 years ago. 2) The Roman legionnaire Cassius: 3rd century A.D. 3) Ludwig van Beethoven: 1770. 4) University of Bonn: 1818. 5) Beueler Women's Carnival Day: 1824. 6) Soennecken folder: 1875. 7) Johannes Klais' organ: 1882. 8) HARIBO gummy bear: 1922. 9) Constitution: 1949. 10) Federal Agency for Civic Education: 1952. 11) Long Eugen: 1969. 12) Development of the first app: 2004.

Great ideas and people from Bonn – including since 1952:
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