European Workshop
Perspectives of Web 2.0 for Citizenship Education in Europe

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Brno, Czech Republic

Report

Workshop I
Web 2.0 and Citizenship Education in Europe

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Inputs:
Tit Neubauer, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)
Zsuzsanna Szelény, Active Citizenship Foundation (Hungary)

Project Presentations
TRANSEUROPA Network
presented by Niccolo Milanese, European Alternatives (UK)

GlobalCitizen.net
presented by **Søren Winther Lundby,** GlobalCitizen.net (Denmark)

Moderation:
Jochum de Graaf, The House for Democracy and the Rule of Law (the Netherlands)

Guiding questions:
1) Are there any differences concerning the use of Web 2.0 and the reflections about the consequences for citizenship education in different European countries?
2) How can Web 2.0 increase European initiatives of citizenship education?
3) What are the most important challenges/ requirements concerning citizenship education?

The workshop got started with the introducing of the workshop aims, topics, presenters and participants by the moderator Jochum de Graaf.

Tit Neubauer from the University of Ljubljana gave the first contribution about *"Citizenship education and Web 2.0 – in search of the active citizen"*, followed by Zsuzsanna Szelény from the Active Citizenship Foundation in Hungary who focused in her contribution on "*Web tools' developments, potentials and limits in political engagement and citizenship education"*.

Niccolo Milanese introduced his project "TRANSEUROPA Network". A wider discussion and comparison opened later, however there were few points related to his project, which can be summarised as follows:

- Web 2.0 is more or less just a tool,
- in the field of citizenship education it can improve sharing information, promoting themes, spreading activities etc.,
- however, the strongest motivation for people getting somehow involved is still primarily meeting real people: therefore, Web 2.0 should be connected with activities in the *real* world.

The second project "GlobalCitizen.net" (GC) was introduced by Søren Winther Lundby from Denmark. His presentation was followed by a discussion right away. In the following a brief summary of the main points:

- *Relationship of GC and Wikipedia?* – GC focuses more on taxonomy, which is its main advantage. Wikipedia might be in some very up-to-date and general topics, but offers no system in categorising its various issues. GC considers the balance and complexity of themes to be very important for their usefulness in solving global issues.
- *GC supports to collect and structure information, but how does it support real problem solving?* – It is a matter of further development of the platform, to make it more oriented towards problem solving.
- *It's clear that for solving global issues it is necessary to connect business with NGOs etc. What is the way GC can approach companies?* – Through mobilising students who want to live in a better world in the future with financial incentive, it might be these young people who will then be hired by companies and bring the GC approach into their businesses.
- *Why should GC offer better solutions than for example think tanks?* – GC hopes to be more coherent a powerful due to the clear and unique taxonomy.
- *How does the platform communicate to all its contributors and other people?* – There is a need of developing its own platform... still in progress.

The workshop then followed by a short discussion dealing with a **comparison of the introduced projects**. Very soon the main interest went to funding and financing and later on following problems and possible solutions:

- *Provincialism and how to cope with it.* – There should be more money invested in this field.
- *Lack of money invested in improving participatory government.* – Necessity of public funding even within the budget of EU.

After the discussions mentioned above the focus moved to the **guiding questions**. The workshop more or less kept the form of a panel discussion, which didn't produce specific solutions. However, sharing experiences and exchanging different points of views was equally valuable.

1) Are there differences concerning the use of Web 2.0 and the reflections about the consequences for citizenship education in different European countries?

- In accordance with natural processes of different history development in different countries, there are naturally big differences. Participants shared their experiences and perspectives, which helped understanding different backgrounds in their countries.
- Ondrej Matejka (Civic Education Centre, Czech Republic) introduced the Czech environment and also the background of the Civic Education Centre: *Even twenty years after the revolution there are still very few democratic values. There are just political institutions but not real democrats. It is therefore necessary to change the society and develop the concept of civic education. We are also facing the question whether there is a need for citizenship education. In our environment we still can't use the term "political education," which is reminiscent of communism. But it gives us no excuse...*
- Tit Neubauer, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia): *Similar experiences as in Czech Republic. … and what we already understand is that we can't simply adopt Western Europe models of citizenship education. This also holds for Web 2.0. We have to adapt all tools to fit our shape of democracy.*
- Jochum de Graaf, The House for Democracy and the Rule of Law (the Netherlands): *Citizenship education you basically learn in schools - especially in Germany but not automatically in the rest of Europe.*
- Christian Mieß (Citizens for Europe e.V., Germany): *In Germany we had to fight for it, which is the reason of present state of awareness and high participation.*
- Zsuzsanna Szelény, Active Citizenship Foundation (Hungary): *We didn't have to fight for getting into EU. The change of regime wasn't result of deep social movement. So there is a completely different start than for example in Germany. Moreover we still feel the deficit of esteem in EU due to an institutional pressure from EU, which is partly caused by approach of our politics. This makes it very hard to defend the need of citizenship education with support of the EU. And even with state support – there is no trust by people in Hungary in state participation.*
- Jochum de Graaf: *Many differences might be seen here. We must take them into consideration when trying to use Web 2.0 tools in citizenship education as well as in political campaigns.*
- Ana Cinthya Uribe (Elecciones.es, Spain): *There are also differences between trust of people in every country. For example in Spain people wouldn't trust in citizenship education in general because it sounds like "Franco" for them.*
- Ondrej Matejka about Czech experiences with Web 2.0 and elections. *Those tools and initiatives are able to engage people but they only work for a short time and are only connected to elections. And there is also a weak structure because the core of active people is very small. The lack of interest of public is also proved by low number of people coming to this workshop in spite of invitation and offer to cover all the expenses.*

- Ana Cinthya Uribe: *Initiatives should not just be about elections moments – it is not enough. It's necessary to make people go to vote but later on much more.*

2) How can Web 2.0 increase European initiatives of citizenship education?

Because the lack of time, this part was more about sharing experiences and giving examples of good practice rather than discussion. There were no easy answers. We must try to read between the lines.

- Søren W. Lundby gave some examples of good informal education, although he didn't consider them to be *full Web 2.0 social and connecting webs*. A few links follow:
    - http://www.gapminder.org/
    - http://www.ted.com/
    - http://www.thersa.org/
    - http://www.khanacademy.org/
- Christian Mieß also added some links:
    - http://forums.e-democracy.org/
    - http://www.pep-net.org/

3) What are the most important challenges/requirements concerning citizenship education?

- Like in the second question, there was no clear statement or solution to this topic. We had another discussion on funding.
- Ana Cinthya Uribe: *There is also a need to think about differences in accessibility from region to region, and in rural areas, for example. Also, some new laws restricting web neutrality like the one in Spain ("Sinde law"), which might not guarantee equal access for everyone. It will be very important and interesting how the European community will deal with it.*
- Christian Mieß: *European identity does not necessarily mean losing diversity. It's also giving people inspiration. Important to keep telling and explaining this.*
- Summarising the debate, Søren W. Lundby recognised that a big problem in talking about Web 2.0 is that we don't have a clear definition.

Additionally, there was an **extra sharing by Maartje Nevejan** (couscous global/ www.nevejan.nl, the Netherlands) on her experiences with bloggers in war regions when making documentary movies.