

NECE Conference 2013

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

**14 - 16 November 2013
The Hague, the Netherlands**

www.nece.eu

Conference Venues:

Oude Tweede Kamerzaal, Binnenhof 1A &
ProDemos – House for Democracy and the Rule of Law, Hofweg 1-H

A conference organised by



In co-operation with



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Background and aims

The societal and political debate concerning the future shape of the EU is entering a crucial phase. In the recent hectic years of crisis management more and more decisions have been taken by fewer and fewer co-players in the democratic machine called Europe. According to recent surveys, many citizens now take a critical or even hostile stance towards the European Union, as it seems to have nothing to offer them but austerity and social sacrifices. National and populist feelings demonstrate the extent of a great collective uncertainty in European societies. We believe European Citizenship educators are facing at least two major challenges resulting from this state of the European Union.

Firstly, Europe's ongoing economic crisis has engendered a crisis of confidence in the European project and the costs and benefits of further European integration. Fewer and fewer citizens are prepared to transfer power and competences to 'Europe'. The democratic deficit of the European Union (once hidden by the 'implicit consensus' of European citizens in the early decades of the EU) has now become more and more visible and contributes to the backlash in support for the EU.

Secondly, the economic crisis is dividing Europe and may ultimately lead to the break up of the EU. Centrifugal forces are pulling European public opinion apart, separating the French from the Germans and the Germans from everyone else. The southern nations of Spain, Italy and Greece are becoming ever more estranged as evidenced by their frustration with Brussels, Berlin and the perceived unfairness of the economic system.

This is where the central questions begin that will be the focus of NECE 2013. 'Participation Now!' was the motto of NECE 2012 in Córdoba (Spain), which concentrated on dialogue with grassroots movements of the Arab Spring. With an eye to the elections to the European Parliament in May 2014, NECE 2013 will continue to explore the topics of participation and democratisation and focus on the EU's democratic deficit. However, deploring the democratic deficit in the EU is one thing. Citizenship education, on the other hand, must critically examine its European policy campaigns and projects in terms of their coverage and effectiveness. And it should concentrate more on the criticism and doubts of frustrated European citizens. The conference in The Hague will offer opportunities for a critical debate at four levels:

1. Scenarios and outlines for the future of the EU

We will discuss scenarios on the future of the EU with European experts. Key questions will be the following:

- What type of a Europe do we want?
- What do alternative future concepts for the EU look like?
- What economic and political problems need to be overcome?
- What will define a 'European citizen' of the 21st century?
- Do transnational spheres of life and experiences such as new mobility and migration patterns will create a 'European identity'? and
- What role can the EU play in a world that will be mainly defined by non-European states and societies, in the next 30 years?
- How can dialogues and co-operation with the neighbours in the Mediterranean region, in particular North Africa's transformation states, be organised?

2. European civil society and the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union

Key questions will be the following:

- How can citizenship initiatives and other civil society alliances bring their social and political interests into the political process at the European level?
- What options will arise as a result of the upcoming European Parliament elections in June 2014?
- What should be the next steps on the way to a democratisation of the EU?
- What recommendations and demands are of crucial importance?

3. Role of citizenship education during the European crisis

Key questions will be the following:

- How can citizenship education contribute to the repoliticization of the Europe debate and illustrate Europe's plurality?
- What are the prerequisites?
- Do we need a common understanding of European citizenship education?
- Can transnationally active citizenship education work together with civil society initiatives in order to restore confidence in democracy and help to overcome the democratic deficit?
- What role is attached to citizenship education by EU institutions and how are young people in particular prepared for their role as EU citizens?

4. Practical approaches and projects of citizenship education

Key questions will be the following:

- What practical approaches and instruments can be used to broaden the debate surrounding Europe and the crisis and to close the participation gap?
- How can citizenship education across Europe accompany the elections to the European Parliament?
- What role will approaches such as Vote Match as a transnational accompaniment to European election campaigns play?

Opportunities to actively take part will be provided in numerous workshops and forums. At the end of the conference, the participants will draw up a public 'Declaration' comprising recommendations on the topic of democratisation and participation in the EU.

Programme draft

Thursday, 14 November 2013

Venue: Oude Tweede Kamerzaal

3:00 pm Registration & Welcome coffee

Moderation: Marion von Haaren, ARD Studio Brussels*

5:00 pm **Welcome Addresses**

Kars Veling, Director of Pro Demos – The House for Democracy and the Rule of Law (the Netherlands)
Thomas Krüger, President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Germany)

5:15 pm **Opening speech**

Frans Timmermans, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs

6:00 pm **Key lectures**

Paul Scheffer, Publicist (the Netherlands)
N.N.

7:30 pm Discussion

8:30 pm Dinner

Friday, 15 November 2013

Venue: Oude Tweede Kamerzaal

9:30 am NECE Review and Perspectives

9:45 am Starting an open dialogue with all experts and participants on issues of citizenship education and scenarios for the future of the EU

In order to prepare for the conference, a scenario workshop took place in The Hague, in July 2013. The aim of the preparatory workshop was to develop scenarios on the future of the EU and on the role of citizenship education with an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders. At the conference the results of the scenario workshop will be presented and further developed with all participants based on the idea of developing a conference declaration. Experts from various fields will accompany this open and participative dialogue. At the end, participants get the opportunity to discuss in greater detail on issues with experts and stakeholders in small groups on various themes and work out inputs for the **conference resolution**.

1:00 pm Lunch

Venue: ProDemos

3:00 - 4:30 pm Parallel workshop session on current and future issues of citizenship education incl. presentation of European good practice examples

4:30 pm Coffee break

5:00 - 6.30 pm Rerun of the parallel workshop session

7:30 pm Dinner and cultural programme

Saturday, 16 November 2013

Venue: ProDemos

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| 9:30 am | Project Market & Consultation Panels |
| 10:30 am | Coffee break |
| 11:00 am | Presentation and discussion of the ' Conference Declaration ' |
| 12:00 pm | Final remarks of the conference and discussion |
| 1:00 pm | Farewell by the organisers |
| | Lunch Snack |
| 3:00 pm | Optional: Sight seeing tour |