

Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture and How to Manage It

International congress in Pakhuis de Zwijger, Amsterdam, Friday, June 19, 2020

Europe is in need of a new story, so the budgetary period 2021-2027 could be characterized as Europe 2.0. Besides the call for inspired leaders able to formulate and communicate a new Schuman Declaration¹, there is a great need to scrutinize the European values anew. This aspect seems to be increasingly taking shape. The foundations of Europe 2.0 are culture, identity and education. It must be recognized that, according to the principle of subsidiarity (Treaty of Maastricht)², these are issues for each nation to tackle, but if you read the latest bulletins from the European Commission, it is evident that the panels are shifting: according to the European Commission, culture, identity and education are the cement of Europe and thus the basis for the redefinition of this continent.

A common market for goods, services and capital

Europe was constructed from the ashes of two World Wars. It is not illogical that all hopes for the reconstruction of Europe were placed in intensive economic cooperation. It was supposed that, if the economy grew, everything would turn out alright. For many years the development of Europe was seen in that light. Today's Europe originated in the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (Treaty of Paris, 1951)³. This was later transformed into the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome, 1957) and further into the European Union by the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). This process has been accompanied over the years by the growth in the number of member states from 7 to 28. The Treaty of Lisbon (2009) also emphasized the economic *raison d'être* of the EU, particularly with regard to increasing employment. And rightly so: Europe now has the second GDP in the world, higher than China, India, Japan, Russia or the United States.⁴ In terms of personal welfare, the EU is number 2. The internal free market has created 2.8 million new jobs. Social legislation is recognized reciprocally throughout the EU and the free movement of persons, goods and capital is guaranteed.

Focus on economy is not enough, strengthening the role of citizens and culture

All the same, the strong focus on economic development has turned out to be insufficient to give Europe's identity a content. Those modest supplementary measures that Europe did take, besides the policy of the member states in the field of culture, media and education,⁵ have been successful in themselves, but have so far proved inadequate as a contributory force when it comes to the creation of such a thing as a shared European identity.⁶

More emphasis on culture

The wait-and-see stance that Europe initially adopted with respect to a commitment to supporting the regional cultures of the member states and regions (Treaty of Lisbon, 2009) did not change until a European Agenda for Culture (2007) was actually

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- 1 The Schuman Declaration is the statement made by the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman on 9 May 1950.
 - 2 Art. 5, § 3, of the Treaty on the European Union. Official Journal of the European Union, 26-10-2012, C326.
 - 3 Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community.
 - 4 The EU in slides. https://europa.eu/european-union/documents-publications/statistics_nl.
 - 5 The Bologna process introduced the Ba(chelor)Ma(ster) structure, in which higher education courses in Europe are harmonized, but there is as yet no recognized/validated European higher education diploma. Its absence hinders the free movement of persons, goods and ideas – one of the objectives of the EU.
 - 6 The reception of many refugees brings us into direct and permanent contact with other cultures. This accounts for the need to (re) define European culture. National governments, and with them the European Commission, are no longer taken for granted and accepted by citizens. The latter are stirring and increasingly want to have a say and exert their influence in different ways. Grassroots organizations are mushrooming. Active citizenship and training in its exercise will have to contribute to giving citizens a louder voice.

implemented.⁷ By now this Agenda is in need of modification. A roadmap has been developed for that purpose.

That roadmap was established during the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg (2017).⁸ A wind of change was blowing there, and the ambition of the European Commission emerged plainly. With respect for the principle of subsidiarity, the European Commission has started a process in which culture, education and identity will form the foundations for Europe 2.0. In other words, European identity can only be strengthened (and feelings of nationalism and unrest can only be combatted) by placing education and culture within a European context. It is a question of European norms and values that we can communicate and develop further through education and culture.

In the light of the Gothenburg communiqué, cultural institutions, education in general and higher education in particular, prove to form part of the call to the entire sector for each to contribute in its own field to strengthening European identity. That priority goes hand in hand with the intention of the Commission to increase the budget for culture, heritage and education significantly. It is thus high time for cultural institutions to prepare to satisfy the ambitions of the EU by themselves taking action and reconsidering positions in which questions arise about how these sectors can contribute to strengthening European identity, what the ideas about it are, and which examples can be pinpointed in practice.

The role of cultural and heritage institutions

It is precisely institutions in the fields of art, culture and heritage that can join with education in exposing the danger of national identity politics and raising it for discussion. The attractiveness of the story about the nation state in crisis is hidden behind the clear-cut right/wrong framework that the narrative offers. It reduces elusive phenomena such as globalization and increase of scale to a question of the neglect of national identity, and places the cause of the alleged crisis there. Here too, complex issues cannot be resolved with simple answers. The success of the European project is an example of how different insights and opinions can tackle complexity as long as they are embedded in democratic rules of play and based on the system of the constitutional state. In turn, this achievement stimulates the citizens of Europe, the member states and the Commission to give European Citizenship as laid down in the Treaty of Lisbon a real content. The European Commission recently backed up its ambition when it presented the budgets for the period 2021-2027. The Erasmus programme (which is used by 400,000 young people every year) can count on a doubling of the budget and the Creative Europe programme has also been assigned a considerable budgetary increase.

A European MBA to manage these complex processes

In anticipation of these developments, an MBA in Culture, Heritage and Citizenship was launched in the Netherlands in 2016.⁹ This course has received European recognition through a contribution from the Erasmus+ 2014-2020 programme. It is an initiative of the Netherlands Business Academy (NLBA) and the Amsterdam-Maastricht Summer University (AMSU). Six European cultural institutions and universities are working together for three years on developing a joint curriculum for an English-language MBA in European Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (ECHC). Given the importance of the preceding considerations, the results of this joint project will be presented at an

7 Brussels, 10-5-2007, COM(2007) 242 final.

8 Strasbourg, 14-11-2017, COM(2017) 673 final.

9 Netherlands Business Academy.

international congress to be held in Pakhuis de Zwijger in June 2020. The presentation of the results of the ECHC project forms part of a large-scale inventory of the results and plans of other participating institutions in the face of the new developments in Europe. But the main focus will be on the question of how the role of education, culture and identity should be managed in the new European context.

The main goal of the international congress is thus the question of to what extent the ambition expressed by the European Commission in Gothenburg is relevant for cultural and heritage institutions and is reflected in the (re)positioning of individual and cultural organizations and their networks. It will also examine whether, and if so how, they have prepared themselves for the new 2021-2027 budgetary period and the New European Agenda for Culture. A good deal of attention will be paid to the question of how the cultural institutions deal with this ambition and to what extent it can be implemented practically in the local, regional and national context.

The congress will be held at a moment when more is known about the different ways in which the broad cultural sector has anticipated the new subsidy programs for the EU period 2021-2027 and the renewed Agenda for European Culture. It is a good moment to exchange ideas, practical proposals and expected developments.

The following partners have shown their commitment to join the congress (version January 2020):



Steve Austen
Amsterdam, January 2020