



Workshop held in cooperation  
with the Diplomatic Academy  
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## **European Ideas Discussion Workshop**

**28 January 2013, Diplomatic Academy Vienna**

with participants from Greece, Switzerland, Russia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, the UK, the Netherlands, Bosnia, Armenia and Luxembourg

**Experts** invited: **Dr. Erhard Busek**, former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, former Minister of Science & Research and former Minister for Education & Cultural Affairs; **Prof. Dr. Andrew Lawrence**, Visiting Research Fellow at the Vienna School of International Studies, former Postgraduate Director at the School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh

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This document provides a summary of the ideas discussed at the European Ideas Discussion Workshop on 28 January 2013 at the Diplomatic Academy Vienna. It is not meant to be a conclusion and shall be used as a basis for further discussions.

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## General observations

Over the past century, the concept of democracy has become increasingly important in public discourse. In fact, democratic thinking has evolved from something to be forbidden to something to be achieved. When examining the current state of democracy, we should be aware of the prevalence of the discourse of democracy as well as the fact that democratic deficit is a universal inherent condition of this universal acceptance. When analyzing the democratic deficit in one region of the world, we need to acknowledge that every country has a democratic deficit as democracy is a process, not a state to be achieved.

What does democracy mean in terms of content? We tend to reduce democracy to the idea of the franchise, but democracy is a much broader phenomenon. It includes the preservation of civil liberties, civil rights, social rights and collective responsibilities, ways of articulating collective safety and protection in ways that are deemed to be fair and inclusive. A broader population can exercise this broader definition of rights. New methods of participation are thus needed. Nevertheless, free and fair elections are still better than un-free or irregular elections.

- ⇒ **We should reflect upon ways in which we can exercise democratic rights and values that do not necessarily have bearing on the exercise of franchise.**

## Legitimacy

What gives legitimacy to the European project? Does legitimacy of EU institutions only hold as far as they bring material benefits to EU populations? As soon as these benefits disappear, the legitimacy of the EU sometimes also seems to disappear. On the other hand, this view may appear a little bit short sighted when we take into account the development of the EU over the longer term. After World War II, there was no tangible Europe yet. Step by step, Austrians for example learned that they are part of Europe.

At the same time, the development of the European project was made difficult by the iron curtain. Yet, the existence of the European Communities offered an important perspective to former soviet countries after the breakup. According to history books, the downfall of big empires always involves wars. The downfall of the Soviet Empire, however, did not create a war because the countries emerging out of the Soviet Block had the perspective of participating in the process of the European Union. Contrasting to this event, the downfall of Yugoslavia created a war because a real perspective was missing.

- ⇒ **Hence, we have to observe the long term the development of the institutions and the European project as a whole.**

Furthermore, the generational difference is also a determining factor: people that have been born after the fall of the Berlin wall have no experience of a European continent in serious upheaval, until maybe recently. According to their experience, nationalism is not immediately discounted as something that will cause horrible wars. On the contrary, the historical experience of horrible wars may contribute to the idea of a contained nationalism.

Nationalism is also favoured by our systems of social welfare which are still administered mainly on the national level. Furthermore, the recent crises have led many people to ask whether further European integration would necessarily promote peace and security. They believe that if the costs become substantial, economically for the North and in terms of political sovereignty for Southern countries, a far reaching European economic integration may not be sustainable. We would therefore need to first examine whether Europe can get politically more unified before embarking on the journey of economic integration. On a

broader scale, however, the people of Europe may be well advised to speak with one voice if they want to have their say in the global economy.

Previous generations certainly have a much more conscious memory of the war than the new generation. For the European project, this also means that the people of Europe may have different motivations for favouring or declining European integration. In some respect, the new generation may be very much directed by the one-sided materialistic view of the European project while the generation after the II World War was looking for a vision. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that the new generation is not yet in power and is not yet taking most important decisions. In this respect, previous generations may also have given up their initial political vision and are more focussed on the economic wellbeing nowadays.

### **The nature of our national political systems**

The EU is sometimes criticized by countries for not addressing current problems while national governments might omit their own responsibility in the European project. The ambivalence of political positions is illustrated by the last Europe speech of David Cameron, in which he stated that the British are happy not to be in the Eurozone and at the same time, he said that they want to be involved in solving the Euro crisis. As the city of London is globally connected, Cameron also has an interest in being part of the Eurozone decision-making process.

National politics are to a large part determined by populism and we have to ask the question whether our current political systems are possibly inviting for populism. The political spectrum is divided into parties that in some way create artificial boundaries in our societies. Can we still clearly define different groups in our societies that follow different sets of values? Even if this was the case, is it beneficial for our societies to reinforce these differences by dividing representatives into different groups? The real division of power nowadays may reflect that there is only a minority of people that is accumulating enormous power while the middle classes are vanishing.

There are new parties being created everywhere. This is a sign that the system is not really working anymore. There is a general disenchantment with the mainstream political parties. However, introducing a new party may not be sufficient. A more thorough reform of our political systems is needed. John Stuart Mill for example already proposed to give the electorates a vote for every representative. Would a political system of individuals serve the public better? Furthermore, can you trust people to have 100 votes? It may actually be possible.

Considering that our political leaders are those who manage to be successful in a political system that may not serve the interests of the general public anymore, changes in electoral systems are necessary. In Austria, there are movements which call for the creation of an electoral law according to which voters can propose candidates in their constituencies.

People from former Eastern bloc countries may think that their population is not yet aware of the importance of their own involvement. It is true that democracy is a learning process that develops only slowly, but nevertheless, people need the regular opportunity to make use of their rights. Furthermore, democratization is a general universal condition for everybody all over the world.

An American politician said about a century ago: the solution to the problem of democracy is more democracy. This idea could be embraced more lively. We could refer to

the new democrats in the US and local franchise given to non-citizens which conveys a sense of values, a sense of hope and a sense of stake in the country. Giving local franchise to non-citizens is an excellent measure for further engagement in the polity. Is this completely out of utopia? No, it isn't: the possibility already exists in the UK, in the Netherlands, in Sweden and in Switzerland. Can the idea of having non-citizens voting be extended to the national level? Considering that there are some issues which are completely disrespectful to borders, national borders should not be the determining factor. Considering the Schengen agreement, we have to acknowledge that we live in a time in which the challenge is to overcome borders.

At the same time, we may need broader citizenship. For example, it is quite absurd if the one who is providing care in a city is a non-citizen. Should we give European citizens the chance to run for elections in any European country? No party in Austria has yet taken up this possibility. In order to give people with a different nationality the chance to be successful in the elections of another country, political leadership is needed.

⇒ **Even though we have new possibilities of information and communication through social media, new structures for political interaction are not really taking off. Is that true? If yes, why is it so?**

### **Division of responsibilities and the quality of democracy**

Is it possible for the EU to implement more democracy or does this rather depend on the Member States? What are their individual and joint contributions to democracy? Ultimately, it depends on individuals. If there is a basic lack of democratic values, culture and beliefs within the population, then no intervention from the central government will make a difference in this regard. Participation in some countries might be low, but democracy can be exercised in a wider way. One example is given by the Palestinian parties. They did not attract a great deal of support at the national level among the Israeli Arab population but at the local level, the participation was very high. What explains this difference?

The fact that our welfare systems are still administered on a national basis perpetuates nationalism because it is an element that people want to protect. People may be against further European integration because they may fear that they would lose weight both in terms of democratic participation and material security. However, even though welfare and material benefits are still mainly entitled to national institutions, there is no reason why there couldn't be a European pension system, a transnational welfare provision or a European guaranteed based income. These are questions which should be debated. It is a collective action problem, it is not impossible. Furthermore, Austria managing its economy on the national level with the Schilling would not be able to finance the social security system it is now offering to its citizens. In the end, the framework of the European Union allows for the current welfare.

As long as we have political systems that function separately, the one who is closer to the citizen has more power. In this respect, the EU often finds itself in a scapegoat position. Democracy on the European level may not be wanted by the governments of the Member States for a primitive reason: governments looking towards European Democracy have the feeling that they are losing importance. Therefore, they are not interested in establishing more democracy on the European level. On the national level, they are even reluctant to discuss European problems: In the Austrian constitution, Members of the European Parliament of Austria can be asked to come to the Austrian Parliament. However, the Parliament has never made use of this possibility.

We often hear that an outstanding expertise is needed to make decisions on the banking crisis. The question is whether this statement is not concealing some fundamental interests of the public at large. The solving of the banking crisis involves some fundamental underlying questions which have to do with the general direction in which our societies are developing. Our fundamental common human interests are being touched upon and thus everybody should have a say in the decision-making process. In fact, the real crisis in which we are is political. Intellectuals would need to lead the public and educate the people about how to preserve their fundamental human interests. The problem is that the so called elite do not assume this role anymore. The quality of TV discussions for example is very limited. In the end, everybody bears a responsibility: the media, individuals, civil society organizations and many more.

The field of education is not among the competences of the European Union. It is still mainly administered on the national level. Interestingly, today it is more difficult for students to move in Europe than it was at the time universities were created. In the Renaissance, we had a European university system with similar canons and Latin as the same language. Students could easily move from one place to another. Today, moving from Graz to Vienna is impossible with all the regulations and differences in the university programmes and the lack of flexibility.

The EU may have some flaws which make it look undemocratic in the eyes of citizens or national politicians. The most undemocratic EU institution is the European Council: its members are making their arrangements behind closed doors and there is neither report on the proceedings of negotiations nor is there transparency. The European Parliament in itself is very democratic as the voting is open and democratic. On the other hand, the appointment of European Commissioners may need to undergo a reform.

Furthermore, many voices say that the Commission has too much power as it unites legislation and administration. This was maybe necessary at the beginning, but now this is not up to date anymore. The question is whether we need 27 Commissioners and whether they have to be members of political parties. In the end, a Commissioner should be the right man or woman for the job and not the advocate of a country. There are countries saying that it is not necessary for them to have their own Commissioner. For example, instead of every country having its Commissioner, we could think of 5 positions in the European Commission to be elected by popular franchise. All citizens would have 5 votes.

Do we need democratic participation in the area of CFSP? The Common Foreign and Security Policy is a rather new phenomenon and we have not yet come to the right way of discussing it. Is democratic decision-making possible in our Common European External Action? Considering that national positions are very different, maybe a broader participation by the public could bring us closer to a consensus. The possibility to cooperate in our external action is included in the treaty, but it has only been partly put into practice. When it comes to police forces in the Balkans for example, countries do not wish to send their many people. On the other hand, it is important for them to determine who becomes Commander.

We may have values and principles inscribed into our treaties such as European dignity, freedom and democracy, equality, rule of law and human rights. The question is how they can be transferred into political decision-making. How can these values have a bearing on democratic decision-making? In our political systems, it is usually easier to gain public support by making propaganda against a proposition while the real challenge lies in leading by showing a positive example. In order to be able to govern according to humanistic values, we would also have to find way of making them appealing.

At the moment, Europe is moving towards a certain kind of secularism. The division between religion and state may be beneficial to the society as a whole, but secularism is also creating a lack of values. In fact, there is no real discussion about the values of Europe. Jacques Delors used to say: you cannot love a common market: it is necessary but not sexy. In this sense, we have to give Europe a soul. What are our values we want to stand in for? Our political leaders do not always seem to be aware of our humanistic values when it comes to their acting. Often, we compare European countries to other countries which have a totally different culture and are in a very different situation. However, this comparison does not give us the right to praise our own systems.

Creating solidarity and promoting values is not only the job of politicians: we need philosophers, public statements, churches and a bottom-up approach as well as leadership. By focussing on the values according to which we want to live, we could strengthen the position of Europe in the global context. We would really need an emancipation of Europe in our acting on the global scene. At the same time, we should still accept different sets of values and different views on human rights. In the end, it is the dialogue which is important which enhances mutual respect. Even if we cannot find consensus on values for example, talking to each other is always a necessary process which creates confidence.

It is not only important that we try to live according to values, but we also need to see which values we stand in for. Nowadays, we may also be driven by values, but we need to see whether the values we are cultivating are actually making us happy in the long term. Many people are concerned with their body, with money, with getting the best education, owning a nice car or getting the cheapest food in the market. By neglecting values such as solidarity and omitting to tackle global challenges such as climate change or security threats such as atomic reactors, we create problems in the future. The question is how far-sighted our values are. If we ask ourselves what makes us insecure about our future, this has to do with values, with missed values. The question of equality, how the laws are functioning, basic income, social security: all of these are value questions. However, at the moment, these issues do not seem to be on the priority lists of decision-makers.

The gatherings at the Plaza Mayor, in Athens and in other cities are symptoms that our societies are not well functioning, but these movements do not yet have the power or ideas to provide solutions. The proposal that the rich should pay more taxes may not tackle the problem at its root, considering that societies are drifting apart in terms of social and economic power. Why is Vienna is such a safe city? The reason is not because non-citizens have been kept out, but because the general standard of living is high. This is the sense of safety that we need to foster. If a district is excluded from the general welfare, then violence probably rises.

### **Renewal in times of crisis**

The word “crisis” comes from the old Greek language “krinein”, meaning “to judge” and “to decide”. Are we taking the current crisis as an opportunity to create new systems that will allow us to organize both our economies and our political sector in more sustainable ways? The main crisis we are actually experiencing is the crisis of politics and politicians. At the same time we have to examine the influence of an economic system that is based on competition and profit-maximization.

Considering that it will be difficult to maintain our current living standards, that natural resources are slowly running out and that we need to focus on a more healthy environment, we have to ask ourselves what we are really living for, whether we still need to increase our consumption and how we could contribute to more solidarity within our societies. In the end, we need to become aware of what really gives us happiness.

In Tolstoy's novel "how much land does a man need?", he tells the story of a man who tries to conquer the largest possible amount of land. At the end of his quest, he perishes before he can take the time to enjoy his belongings.

Furthermore, the levels of inequality in terms of social and economic power are further increasing. We currently have an outspread division between North and South. In this respect, we need to keep in mind that the Roman Empire fell down because in the regions around Rome, citizens were much richer than the others. In this respect, we for example need to think about how we deal with migration nowadays.

⇒ **The real challenge is to create a more balanced world in terms of well-being**

We are generally talking about a rise of the extreme right in some European countries. The question is whether it is still possible to clearly establish whether a certain position is right or left. First, we are generally lacking information and furthermore, we tend to picture certain people or positions as more primitive or populist than they actually are. In the case of Hungary, we should still discuss with Orbán and his party instead of avoiding confrontation. The ability to listen to each other plays a big role and communication in this sense may be lacking. At the request for creating possibilities to meet with Hungarian representatives, the Austrian Foreign Minister did not feel responsible for this task. Finally, it would be very important for other Europeans to get active within the country and support the general population in their striving for democratic governance.

## **Leadership**

Most important issues nowadays such as climate change need a broad leadership and decision-making on a broad level. Key questions do not respect borders. In order to keep the water quality at a high level for example, continental and global regulations are needed. Regarding migrants coming from Africa, national governments need European assistance. Most of all, national governments would have to agree on sharing the burdens in order to alleviate the situation in some countries.

Mobility brings a lot of challenges with it. Regulations are needed on the global level. Is moving from one place to the other a human right? If governments do not find solutions, populism can easily arise. In fact, the real danger of the economic crisis is populism as it tries to capture the votes of many people by manipulating them. However, we need solutions and populism avoids discussing solutions. If you have something against which you can be, it's easier to create support for yourself.

⇒ **The challenge for leaders in our societies thus lies in creating solidarity without referring to a common enemy, but to common values.**

Do we need to be threatened by a common enemy in order to realize what makes us European? How can we get closer to living according to European values without defining ourselves as opposed to others?

⇒ **Can we really conceive a Europe that is build upon values?**

It is up to the responsible and informed people to raise questions and to develop perspectives. We are currently lacking leadership, in terms of values, in terms of combining different areas of life and assuming responsibility. For the younger generation, it would be important to discuss **what Europe is standing for in the future.**

Can European Democracy be based on a bureaucracy? The quality of the bureaucracy in Brussels is by majority excellent, but they are missing to really communicate with the larger public. Communication needs to happen closer to the general public.

## **The absence of a European public**

There is a lack of European public. The national media generally has no interest in creating a European-wide forum as they would rather stick to their own economic benefit. Furthermore, European issues may often not be as appealing as smaller national issues. Journalists also say that they do not cover European issues frequently, because they are not being read by people. We thus have to think about how we can attract the attention of the general public to issues which affect the future of Europe as a whole. We have to ask ourselves:

- ⇒ **What are the various public spheres in which Europeans engage on a transnational basis?**

There is no European public that would be interested in the future of Europe as a whole. The only European public event may be the Eurovision Song Contest. All participants have the possibility to vote at this event, but the question remains in how far this event represents a European sense of community. Furthermore, there is no European talk show. Asking the European broadcasting Union why there is no European talk show, the answer is that countries would have to divide the money they are making with the advertisement.

- ⇒ **How can we strengthen the European public sphere and what could be strong factors of identification?**

There might be some potential for developing and extending a public sphere: where are the spaces in which a public sphere should be extended? What is the role of the citizens? We need more accurate information and curiosity in the European sense. To the question "what is closer to Vienna, Salzburg or Prague?" most people would intuitively respond Salzburg, although Prague is a little closer.

- ⇒ **What is the role of 'European Ideas' ? How can we strengthen that role?**

## **The European Idea in our everyday lives**

It would be important for us to analyze how can we can define or perceive our identities in a multicultural context. In how far can we live according to multiple identities? Can we conceive our modern identities in an inclusive manner instead of defining ourselves as opposed to other cultures and beliefs? How much common identity do we need for a democracy to succeed? Dual or multiple identities are more and more frequent. This is a desirable phenomenon as it increases the understanding between different cultures.

In how far is identity based on national elements nowadays? Especially in an international community, people may often refer to national or regional features of the people they meet. Within the European continent, Europeans may not refer to each other as Europeans. Outside the continent, however, this may very well be the case. The question of identity is a crucial one: at the time of the downfall of Yugoslavia, a majority of its population was speaking the same language. Today, the countries of former Yugoslavia are trying to determine their national identity and they may be trying to define themselves as different from each other. It is possible that this is a necessary psychological step, but it also complicates the solutions to more global challenges.

Listening to Canadian moral philosopher Charles Taylor expressing himself on the Danish cartoon controversy, we have to ask ourselves whether this is really a question of freedom of speech. After all, we have one group which has immensely more political and social capital using this power over a disempowered minority within their borders. One group is saying: we have the power to make fun of your culture and you don't have that power to



exercise over us. This would be quite simply obnoxious. These groups do not have the same power because they do not have the same wealth and not the same cultural and political standing within the Danish state.

According to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Muslims are overrepresented in the low-paying sector of the economy and they live in poor housing conditions. How could we assure the same rights to minorities and immigrants in Europe? In how far can the EU contribute to this equal standing within our societies?

As migration cannot be stopped, the phenomenon needs cooperation on a transnational and a supranational level. In the sixties and seventies, people were accepted but only as workers, not as equal citizens. In Vienna for example, the general hospital can be closed without the migrants, because there would be not enough personnel. Meanwhile the guest workers are in their fourth generation and slowly accede to higher positions. The discussion nowadays on immigration may even seem a bit weird as the city of Vienna was created by immigration in the 19th century. Was it one identity? Maybe not, and this may have been the cause for the downfall of the Habsburg Empire.

In many regards, we should not leave it up to the politicians to take action, but we should take up responsibility and launch initiatives ourselves. Think tanks, intellectuals, business communities etc. need to think about our priorities. In this respect, we should not ask for European treaties: the public is functioning without treaties. What matters is how we live. A proof of the importance of civil society action is given by the help provided after Hurricane Sandy: In fact, Occupy Wallstreet outperformed many others in providing help to the victims. Citizens who made use of their resources such as social media and other forms of communication administered the help in an impressive way, providing blankets, batteries, food and assistance.

### **European Elections and the European Parliament**

On the one hand, boundaries do not always have to be geographical: political parties are also creating a kind of artificial boundaries by dividing the political sector into groups which pretend to have different values. On the other hand, we could argue that if European Parties would be fully fledged and their members would not be voted upon merely on the national level, this could strengthen the EU democratic system. The question is when a European Party list of people elected by all European citizens would be accepted on the one hand by European Parliamentarians and on the other hand within national parties. In Austria, only the Greens asked for the creation of fully fledged European parties.

In a way, first the mindset not only of politicians but also of the public needs to be ready for this change and then politicians can contribute to it. The question is whether the mindset of people can change without them being lead by their politicians. Perhaps it is the role of European Party groups to become more coherent and to agree on general topics to be debated on the EU level. European parties with a European Programme would be important. So far, the European Parliament is mostly voting on national cases.

The electoral reform of the European Parliament lead by Andrew Duff calls for 30 members voted for on a European-wide level. However, the proposal lacks support from MEPs and national parties. This shows that the European Parliament might be too dependent on national parties and politics.

Finally, the European Parliament is spending only one week per month in the constituencies. This time should rather be extended while the session time for example could be reduced.

## Education

How can the public be educated in order to be able to tell the difference between demagogue rhetoric and actually important discourse? It may not be easy for everybody to tell the difference, especially if people have not developed their own political reflection. In some cases, people from neighbouring countries can play an important role by engaging in discussions with the locals. After all, free movement still exists and we could easily travel in order to exchange our views.

Even though we are living in the information society, the general level of information seems to decrease. The reason might be that the overflow of information makes it difficult to judge what is important and what is not. It would be easier to handle the issue of immigration if we would know more about each other. We have many prejudices but do not know enough about others' beliefs, their needs or their assets. For example, we Europeans in general have little knowledge about the divisions in Islam. Furthermore, the richer parts of Europe are not very much aware of other parts of Europe from which immigration comes even though these places were ruled over by the richer countries for long time.

Education is becoming more elitist. The quality of your education nowadays depends on how much money you can pay. This is also a dangerous development. At the same time, many young people are running from one short-term job to another without having a real mission. Erasmus has great value. However, while recently the idea has been brought up that it could be expanded to the working sector, other groups of people have started to question the system as a whole. This shows that a common European responsibility in the field of Education is very much needed.

Education has to start from the family level. Parents cannot be substituted in general. In this sense, family life should be treasured more and parents should be sensitized to their crucial role for the development of their children. At the same time, teachers need increasing support and esteem which corresponds to their social role.

While everybody is trying to be appealing and attractive, education is in crisis while trying to be entertaining itself. On the other hand, it becomes more and more difficult to motivate and engage children as they are overwhelmed by huge amounts of information and ongoing communication. Furthermore, our speed of life does not allow for thorough thinking and analysis. For most teachers, the biggest challenge thus lies in making the kids listen.

The quality and the role of the teachers have to be more appreciated in our societies. At the same time, our educational system should give people the chance to follow other professions alongside teaching. It should be possible to have more osmotic systems, with professionals in different domains assuming the role of the teacher. People in business, in the public sector and others need to be involved in schools and also assume a role to form the young people by sharing their own experience. At the same time, young people would have the chance to give feedback to professionals about their own ideas. This would be one possibility for strengthening the dialogue within our societies.

When analyzing the influence of new "social media", we have to see whether they can really be considered as "social". On the one hand, they may be rather "bilateral" as they do not allow for real discussions on broader level. On the other hand, thanks to social media, people are empowered to interchange their own information easily and fast. Nevertheless, we have to inquire about the nature of our communication through social media. If digital communication replaces a large part of face-to-face communication, then this may be harmful to persons as well as to our societies. As we need to stay connected on a continuous basis, we may not have the energy anymore to live precious moments in which we can open ourselves to others in an exceptional way.

## **The role of Europe in other regions of the world**

On the world stage, Europe usually wants to show a positive example when it comes to the respect of human rights. However, we may have to reconsider our priorities within our own societies before being able to convincingly assume this role.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently stated that Turkey's perspective is now oriented towards the Eastern Block and not towards Europe anymore. At the same time, some people are of the view that Turkish leaders may be directing themselves in their ideology a little bit back to the Ottoman Empire, a phenomenon which may also be connected with the Arab Spring. A Turkish representative recently said at a conference: "Dear friends, you have to rewrite your history books etc.: the most peaceful area was the one of the Ottoman Empire". The Turkish economy is running in an excellent way. Considering the creation of Eurasia, we can observe that Turkey is not only economically strong in the Balkans, but also in the Central Asian States. They are starting to push out the Russians in some of these regions. However, these countries may be reluctant in some sense because of their historical memory. Nevertheless, the Turks have economic power in the region and they share parts of their language, which also favours identification.

Reconciliation would be needed in many regards. In the Balkans, there has never been any reconciliation process on what has been done to Muslims or to the Arab population. The Foreign Commonwealth Office used the ruler at the downfall of the Ottoman Empire and borders were drawn without even looking at who was living there. In Mali, the Southern part is black while the North is mainly populated by the Touareg. These are totally different populations. The French also drew borders there in a non-functioning way. Furthermore, In the books of Karl May we can read that the area of the actual Iraq is populated as follows: in the North there are the Kurds, in the middle there are the Sunnis and in the South, the Shia. However, the English made one country out of it, the Kingdom for the Hashemites. How is this supposed to function?

We created a lot of the problems which we are now fed up with. We should therefore stand in for reconciliation. However, this is easier said than done. On the one hand, we may believe that these borders that were drawn arbitrarily do not have to be defended by all means. On the other hand, if these countries now collapse, than we might see even more violence as civil wars could erupt. Furthermore, in human history, it is difficult to determine a something like a "historical truth". How close can we get to this concept? It usually depends on how far we are looking back. By trying to be as respectful as possible to the region and to people's identities, can we find sustainable solutions?

Furthermore, it is important to explore whether we can only get a certain public for political action in Europe when European interests are touched upon. On the other hand, there may not be any exclusively European Security threat. In this respect, should or can there be an exclusively European response? A UN Security Council Resolution declared Libya a global security threat. Nevertheless, as Europeans we also need to determine ourselves whether these affirmations are actually true. In the case of Libya for example, we have to ask what has happened to the weapons sold during the crisis and who made money selling weapons there.

Finally, security in Europe is also threatened in many ways: the provision of energy and electricity is uncertain in the future and cyber war is developing. In Austria, the biggest security threat comes from nuclear reactors in the former Soviet area about which there seems to be minimal oversight. Europeans need to jointly tackle these issues. At the same time, the US are taking less and less responsibility. The South Eastern Cooperative Initiative for example was initiated by the Americans. Today, the work has been left to the Europeans. With Joska Fischer, the stability pact was created and the involvement of the Europeans in the Balkans started. Today, the US would say that the Balkans are part of European responsibility.

## **Main initial sub-questions of participants**

### **Topic: Democracy in the European Union**

***Block 1: the current state of European democracy and the interplay between national and European democracy***

The legitimacy of EU institutions only holds for as far as they bring material benefits to European populations. This legitimacy quickly erodes when these material benefits cease to be provided. What does this tell us about the state of democracy in the EU?

What does the 'great paradox' tell us? Paradox: On the one hand, European economic government would be needed in order to overcome the European crisis. On the other hand, the political steps taken towards this end are alienating the public, strengthening nationalism and disunity.

Democracy being challenged by growing populism and the erosion of the middle class, can the current crisis be turned into an opportunity for democracy or will it merely contribute to its worsening?

What is the effect of the polarization of national politics (that have been energized towards left and right extremes in various countries) on European politics? Taking into account the awakening of public movements and mass protests, what ways can be found for the EU to counteract the scapegoat position it often finds itself in?

Let's consider that democracy in Europe should be built on three levels: the local, the national and the European level. Some recent events such as the 2012 referendum in Romania and the controversial Hungarian Constitution show that certain EU member states have a hard time to secure the first and the second level of democracy. How is it possible to achieve the third level under these circumstances?

***Block 2: the specific nature of European democracy***

There may be a tension between democracy and efficiency. Is it necessary for the European Union as an organisation to be democratic, or can that democracy be much more local, with the EU acting within its sphere as an efficient bureaucracy, a more meritocratic technocracy?

If the EU should not remain a technocracy, what measures should be taken and how effective can they be?

A few days ago, Thorbjørn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, warned that "corruption is the biggest single threat to democracy in Europe today. More and more people on our continent are losing faith in the rule of law". Is corruption really the greatest challenge for European democracy today? What could be a possible solution to corruption at national and supranational level?

To what extent should democratic participation be given in the areas of CFSP and CSDP?

***Block 3: European Parliament elections and our political systems in general***

Can the European Parliament be considered as legitimately representative in any European country, meaning that it enjoys authority on a par with national legislatures?

Can a European democratic system exist without European parties?

Do 27 independent national election campaigns contribute to a political discourse about the entire Union's concerns?

Would the European electorate be ready for fully-fledged European parties?

Are our representative political systems in Europe, constituted by political parties, still up to date?

***Block 4: The European Demos***

The cultural factor: To what extent can we talk about the existence of a European culture? Are some European cultures considered as more European than others?

What is the importance of the cultural factor with regards to democratic decision-making in the European Union? If language differences and the size of Europe make an integrated European political debate impossible, should the EU try to amend this?

What can be done about the integration and representation of minorities within the EU, such as the Roma communities?

***Block 5: Diverse questions***

Considering that democracy in the EU is currently in a dismal state, can the EU still go on exporting its values and democratic know-how to outside countries?

What new forms of participation could be used (are being used) to engage young people in the question of democracy of the European Union?

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