



Citizens of Europe e.V.:

Projects and Positions

Yearbook 2010/2011

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Citizens of Europe e.V.

Introduction: Dear Reader



It took a lot of people and many months to create this book. The idea to have a yearbook to present the diverse activities of Citizens of Europe was born in 2008. As with many voluntary projects – it just took a while ...

It is due to the commitment and cooperation of a broad range of people, people with different backgrounds, different ideas and different ages coming from all over Europe, that you can hold the Citizens of Europe Yearbook 2010/2011 in your hands today. All of them contributed their small piece of a puzzle to produce this publication.

And maybe this is what the creators of our logo had in mind, when they designed the little orange-coloured piece of a puzzle. On the one hand, it shows that the work of Citizens of Europe continues because of the contributions and diversity of its many members. On the other hand, the “arms” of this puzzle piece reach out into all directions and offer opportunities for co-operation to other actors in the European civil society. It is this, which the Citizens of Europe are aiming for: to integrate different civic voices under the umbrella of a voluntary network and thus living the idea of European integration.

With this first Yearbook we want to take the opportunity to introduce some members and volunteers of our association to show the great variety of people working within the network. Furthermore, we present the broad range of projects which have been and continue to be realized under the umbrella of Citizens of Europe: e.g. a project on comic and street art (see “The Comic side of Berlin” on page 13) or the annual short film festival (see “My Europe” on page 14). Additionally, this yearbook is also a good opportunity to thank our many project partners, be it individual or institutions, who are essential for our work and to whom we have dedicated page 22 - 25.

While giving you an idea of some projects of Citizens of Europe, the yearbook does not cover all projects realized in the recent past. Furthermore, there are even more new projects and ideas in the network waiting to be realized. And of course we are open for new people with new ideas and the drive to implement them. The network of Citizens of Europe depends on people.

Enjoy the book and take it as an inspiration for your own environment.

Yours, Anna John

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Open Fora: Debating Citizenship

By Gert Röhrborn and Frank Burgdörfer

Open Forum I: Expanding citizenship in an age of migration?
(Berlin, January 2008)

Open Forum II: Promoting citizenship by education?
(Vilnius, March 2008)

OpenForum III: Defending citizenship against populism and
intolerance (Wrzesnia, April 2008)

OpenForum IV: Mobility as a form of integration
(Pozarevac, July 2008)

OpenForum V: Values in Europe – ideals and realities
(Prague, September 2008)

OpenForum VI: Quarreling over Europe – how to achieve
meaningful results (Paris, December 2008)

OpenForum VII: Mobilising Europe – could democracy help?
(Bruxelles, February 2009)

OpenForum VIII: Daily Europeans – avant-garde or dreamers?
(Cascais, March 2009)

OpenForum IX: The Western Balkans – Europe's (un-)wanted
challenge? (Budapest, May 2009)

OpenForum X: Faces and fakings of volunteering
(Bruges, November 2010)

OpenForum XI: Changing your life, changing the world
(Budapest, February 2011)



Open Forum 11, Budapest: Group activities during the Open Forum weekend

OpenFora are conceptual platforms in the form of weekend debates in various European locations. They setup spaces where European diversity and citizenship can be experienced in practice. Their objective is to bring together people from all over Europe – regardless of their age, social or professional background – in order to exchange views and experience on topics that go beyond mere European-integrationist matters and are of specific relevance for societies in Europe, not only understood as the European Union alone.

The events combine different forms of informal learning. We allocate a mixture of 3 workshop rounds (core activity of OpenFora), where participants are assisted by experienced moderators, and mix it with introductory sessions, public expert panel discussions and activist contentions as well as cultural activities. Follow-up teams take care of disseminating results into related contexts.

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www.citizens-of-europe.eu/openfora

Open Fora:

Faces and Faking of Volunteering

The 10th Open Forum in Bruges,
November 2010

By Maaret Jokela



What is volunteering? Where is the borderline between volunteering and exploitation? Is volunteering a life-style? These questions were the main point of discussion during the 10th Open Forum in Bruges. The weekend was also going to be a preparatory meeting for the event in May 2011 in Landau, celebrating the European Year of Volunteering 2011 (EYV). Friday evening began with a warm welcome coffee of our Belgian hosts and a presentation about the definition of volunteering, held by Agnes Uherczky (AVSO, Association of Voluntary Service Organisations), a member of the planning committee of EYV.

While sharing our experiences on Saturday morning before the first workshop round “Motivations for Volunteering” we could already discover different faces of volunteering: Some of us had participated in youth work, political activism or corporate section, while others had grown up in small communities where baking a cake for a festival and other activities were taken for granted by everyone. The term “volunteering” was harder to define than expected: Following the criteria presented on Friday, could an active member of a neo-nazi party or even more radical, a suicide bomber, also be defined as a volunteer? Was it maybe necessary to consider the Human Rights Charta of the UN? Another question raised during the workshop round “Volunteering and Exploitation” was, when does volunteer action become exploitation? When is it not done by free will and is only for the benefit of others? Many of us had experienced unpaid work in the form of internships, but do internships count as volunteer work?

In the afternoon we could enjoy the lovely centre of Bruges with the best tour guide of the city, our Belgian friend Hugo Ramon (AEDE, European Association of Teachers). After a break we gathered together again to see a film presentation of “MyEurope”, a series of short films from different European countries.

Sunday morning started with the last workshop round of the weekend, “Volunteering as a life style” based on a series of questions as in “Who wants to be a Millionaire?”: The harder the questions, the more they were worth. “What do I expect from myself and the others?”, “What do others think of my lifestyle and how do I see myself as a volunteer?” were still easy to respond and raised intensive discussion, whereas the 1 million question “What am I afraid of and what is my purpose?” was more difficult to answer. As last part of the program we had a special guest, the Minister of the Flemish province of Belgium, Dirk Defauw, who presented the contributions and measures Flanders takes for volunteering.

So, what is volunteering? Just like the planning committee of the European Year of Volunteering 2011, our group could not agree on one single definition. We did agree on the following criteria though: Volunteering is an action performed out of free will and not for financial gain, it is carried out for the benefit of others and responds to a need, it is organized and within a structure and - should not necessarily be fun but gives us satisfaction.

European Citizens' Initiative (ECI): A innovative democratic instrument

By Anna Traub



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<http://www.citizens-initiative.eu>

<http://www.eu-buergerinitiative.org>

<http://www.facebook.com/citizens.initiative>

For the first time in history the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe contained a transnational element of direct democracy: the European Citizens Initiative. It was supposed to enable EU citizens to call directly on the European Commission to deal with a request - if 1 million of EU citizens from a considerable number of member states signed it. In 2005 the implementation of the European Constitution failed, ironically due to the rejection of the document by French and Dutch voters.

Consequently different civil organizations all over Europe launched a common campaign for the implementation of the European Citizens Initiative. In the Citizens of Europe office a group of Berlin activists meet, and soon Citizens of Europe was intensively involved in the campaign. We kept in contact with our partners all over Europe and established the main website in English as well as a German version. In addition, we coordinated the campaign in the German-speaking part of Europe. We carried out public relations activities, arranged evening talks, gained the patronage of prominent allies from many different political and social backgrounds. Our aim was to raise public awareness for the European Citizens Initiative and to contribute to the Europe-wide collection of signatures.

In December 2007 the Lisbon Treaty was signed by the EU member states, and entered into force in December 2009. The European Citizens Initiative is part of the European legal framework. During the ensuing period the campaign advocated for a citizen-friendly regulation design of the European Citizens Initiative, took an active part in the consultation process launched by the

European Commission and collaborated with EU parliamentarians in designing their own regulation draft.

Finally in December 2010 the regulation of the European Citizens Initiative became official due to the decision of the European Parliament: from January 2012 initiators of an initiative get the right of a public hearing in the European Parliament if 1 Million Europeans from at least 7 EU nations have signed online or on paper. The European Commission is obliged to take a position. Hence it is not a direct decision right for the European citizens but the right to influence the agenda setting of the European institutions in a regular and binding mode.

Citizens of Europe is happy to have contributed to this positive development. The European Citizens Initiative will stimulate people to activate others for important concerns and to build Europe-wide cross-border alliances. This will strengthen the European civil society, create new networks and cooperations and promote its differentiation. By enabling European citizens to be heard in a direct and binding way by the European institutions it will encourage them to deal with European politics.

We thank all supporters for their commitment and wish the best success for forthcoming European Citizens Initiatives.



Anna Traub promoting the European Citizens Initiative during the celebrations of the Rome Treaties' 50s anniversary in Berlin



Carsten Berg, Campaign Coordinator, handing over support signatures for the European Citizens initiative to three Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament. From left to right: Diana Wallis (Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) Gerard Onesta (Group of European Greens / European Free Alliance) and Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann (Confederal Group of the European Left / Nordic Green Left).

ACTIVacting:

International Trainings for a complex world

By Rui Montez



Rui Montez is a Berlin based free lance trainer and project manager in the youth and civic education field. He came to Citizens of Europe through the European Voluntary Service in 2008.

The aim of our training projects is to enable people to act successfully in European society. We try to increase their ability to act respectfully and engage with their fellow European citizens. Our vision is that learning should be lifelong; not only because of market demands, but because we believe it is the cornerstone of self development. We strengthen our participants' civic competence as part of a holistic approach to learning and self development. In our training sessions we seek to improve our participants perception, understanding and articulation of a variety of different situations. In doing so we try to support and tutor our participants on the different situations they might face in today's complex society. We also encourage self reflection as the participants share their learning objectives based on feedback, group work and self assessment.

In general we work in international groups and we engage in international learning. The learner is free to choose how much he/she wants to engage in the workshops and this encourages self awareness, ownership and responsibility. We like to hear the participant's own experiences and facilitate an understanding between theory and actions. In order to do this we use a diverse range of methods, non formal education and participative methodologies. We challenge our participants and allow them the space to question their own perspectives and actions. This brings the participants out of their comfort zone and increases their ability to deal with complexity and ambiguity we all face in today's society.

Our training projects also act as a way for Citizens of Europe to deal with new issues and incorporate new topics thus widening our self understanding as an organisation. By doing this, Citizens of Europe has been able to organize training courses on a new and interesting topics such as Non-Formal Education, Human Rights, Transcultural Understanding and Globalization with a focus on a consumer critical approach.

Personal and social development are our guiding lights. Our training projects are value based and we do not hide behind a neutral educational position: we believe that citizens should be empowered to fully participate in their communities and civil society. Therefore we teach them the tools they need to successfully contribute to the development of civil society in Europe. The successful nature of our training sessions can be seen in the follow up projects organized by participants of our trainings: from local actions, like exhibitions, to international projects, like youth exchanges. We believe that the ACTIVacting training has empowered our participants to fully engage in remaking and reclaiming their own Europe.

Training activities and follow-up projects:

the circle on project cycle management

- Training for Europe, (Berlin, December 2006)
- Training for Active Civil Society (Baku, March 2007)
- Training for Europe (Belgrade, June 2007)

ACTIVacting circle

- ACTIVacting Youth (Lisbon, December 2008)
- ACTIVacting: Training Course on Transcultural Understanding (Berlin, August 2009)
- ACTIVacting: Be RIGHT with Europe – Young People for Human Rights (Berlin, November 2009)
- ACTIVacting: Training for Trainers on youth participation and global challenges (Berlin, July 2010)
- ACTIVacting: Training Course on Creativity (Berlin, July 2011)

Other and follow-up projects

- ComicYouth Exchange (Berlin, October 2009)
- Youth Exchange: Environmental pollution: Shoot it! Frame it! (Oradea, April 2010)
- Involve me, Europe! (Bad Urach, April 2011)



ComicYouth:

Comics as a tool to discover cultural diversity and enhance creativity

Berlin, 9-16 October 2009

By Anne Bretschneider and Chryssa Thanella



ComicYouth! Exchange

The multilateral youth exchange “ComicYouth! Comics as a tool to discover cultural diversity and enhance creativity” took place in Berlin, Germany, from the 9th till the 16th of October 2009. For eight days 31 young people from Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal, and Romania grasped the opportunity to have a unique international experience.

The focus on comics

In this artistic project the 31 ComicYouth!-participants shared their ideas and worked as a team. The topic we focused on was comics: as literature and art, a visualized story. Everybody is familiar with comics, regardless of cultural background and age. And this familiarity combined with the ComicYouth!-participants` own interest in producing comics was the initial point for the exchange.

The activities in the exchange

In vivid presentations and discussion sessions we gained insights into the current state and the development of comic scenes in Germany, Greece, Poland, Portugal and Romania. Examples of fanzines, street art, famous national comic artists, reflections of national history in comics and the comics-subculture; examples of the power to criticize, stereotype, support or discover something through comics were given in these sessions. In their presentations the participants created a colorful European mosaic discovering the common points in our lifestyle, history and the situation of the young generation.

Everybody in the exchange program longed for the moment when we started to create our own comics.

Strong ideas, yellow pencils and white rubbers, blank paper and lots of enthusiasm started the journey. The goal was to create our own comics in small groups of mixed nationalities. Meanwhile, friends were made and the intercultural dialogue became alive.

The results and follow up

The outcome of the eight-days-exchange was proudly presented in a booklet. Fantastic comic stories of a rooster, aliens, a USB-stick, a taxi driver and more protagonists were mixed with historic situations, the challenges of intercultural communication, a psychedelic journey, wonderful drawing and painting techniques and some surprising insights. We all experienced the power of imagination; discovering hidden talents for inventing a storyline, drawing together with other young people to create an extraordinary comic-artwork that speaks the language of intercultural dialogue, understanding, respect and friendship.

Exhibitions of the comic artwork were already realized by participants as follow up activities in Poland and Portugal.

A Documentation on DVD presents the ComicYouth! Booklet and the ComicYouth! Exchange.

Network and funds

Thanks to the ActivActing! network enthusiastic promoters were found. The exchange was funded by the “Youth in Action” program of the European Commission in the European year of creativity and innovation.

ComicYouth:

The Comic side of Berlin – my experience

By Francesca La Vigna



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www.citizens-of-europe.eu/activacting

Once in our childhood, or maybe more recently, all of us have dreamed about being a super comic-hero or pretended to be Superman, Batman or Wonder Woman. We grew up with such special and strong “super-friends” and some of us remained faithful to them and to new ones. But comics are more than fun or imaginary characters, they can also tell, deep and sad stories that sometimes help us to better understand our backgrounds as well as cultures and national roots. This is what a group of 31 youngsters coming from several European countries have experienced and learnt in Berlin during the “ComicYouth! Exchange” (9.-16. October 2009).

The most important aspect of this intense and funny “trip” has been the sharing of ideas, emotions, experiences, and knowledge. Thanks also to external and expert help, it was made possible to discover interesting sides of Berlin related to the comics’ world. Besides its never-ending changes and past memories, symbolized by the “East Side Gallery”, you can find in Berlin the interesting and cosy “Bei Renate” comic Libaray and the gallery “Neurotitan”... but for sure more and more. Just keep your eyes open and be ready to be surprised ... by your comic side!

The following text, written during the exchange, describes the positive energy and the work experienced by the participants.

It's early in the cold morning and 31 people drag to the big, warm room somewhere in Berlin ... We are wearing jackets, scarves and boots, with our teas and coffees. Different faces, multicultural backgrounds, diverse lives and languages: Romania, Poland, Greece, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Slovakia!

We have gathered to work together and try to create our own comic book! Just like that! Out of nothing! So among hundreds comic books, the warm atmosphere and perfect organization that Chryssa and Anne arranged for us and the experienced “eye” of Auge, we took off...

Colours, papers, ideas, memories, laughter, thoughts, discussions, pictures, personal statements, figures and shadows were born! Three days later, many coffees and after some magic spells... “taramama” ... the lines and inks came to life et voila! Our own comic book! And you know something? It was fun!

And you know why? Because we saw that 31 people with totally different past, point of view, language and probably future made it!

We shared working spaces, rooms, clothes, feelings and strips from our favorite comics and... we BROKE the borders!

Great comic heroes-animals, aliens, spies, punk barbies will wake up every night, escape from the pages of this book and fly away to spread some of our energy! But anyway... Just Have Fun and Smile!!“

My Europe:

A European Film Festival in Numbers: 18 Screenings, 12 Countries, 17 Films and 2 Winners

By Tobias Kunow and Jürgen Tobisch

Europe decided: “Bingo” by Timur Ismailov and “I’m gay” by Nicolas Kolovos were the audience award winners 2009. 500 people all over Europe voted on their favourite films in the two programmes of My Europe film festival “Living in Europe” and “Politics and Policies”. During the Spring Citizens Weekend 2010, the two winners were announced in an award ceremony in the Berlin filmbar “Filmrisz”.

Life in the outer spheres of society was the overarching topic of My Europe 09. It is the life of mobile people who are faced with their otherness in the society of the country they live in. As with the 2008 programme, the situation of refugees and people who have migrated in search of better life is a predominant subject of the participating films. The filmmakers tell personal stories which also reflect that Europe, 20 years after the 1989 revolution, becoming a more and more multi-cultural society. The vitas of our two winning directors, Nicolas Kolovos, born in Sweden with Greek origins, and Timur Ismailov, born in Azerbaijan, who grew up in Turkey and is now living and working in The Netherlands, show that fact, too.

At the end of November 2009 the participating films were shown in Cinemas, NGOs and universities in 18 locations across Europe, amongst them capitals like Paris, Athens or Budapest but also smaller places like Cascais in Portugal and Bad Endorf in Germany.



In “I’m gay” Alex has decided to reveal his big secret. He is homosexual and now he sits in front of his family.

Nicolas Kolovos was born in 1973 in Jönköping, Sweden. He studied, among other things, interactive media production at the University College of Film, Radio, Television and Theatre in Stockholm and directing at the Swedish School of Television in Gothenburg. Since 1998, he has directed six films altogether.



“Bingo” by Timur Ismailov shows the fate of three foreigner workers at a Dutch demolition site. They have no contract, no social security, and when an accident happens, the main protagonist of the film has to make a decision.

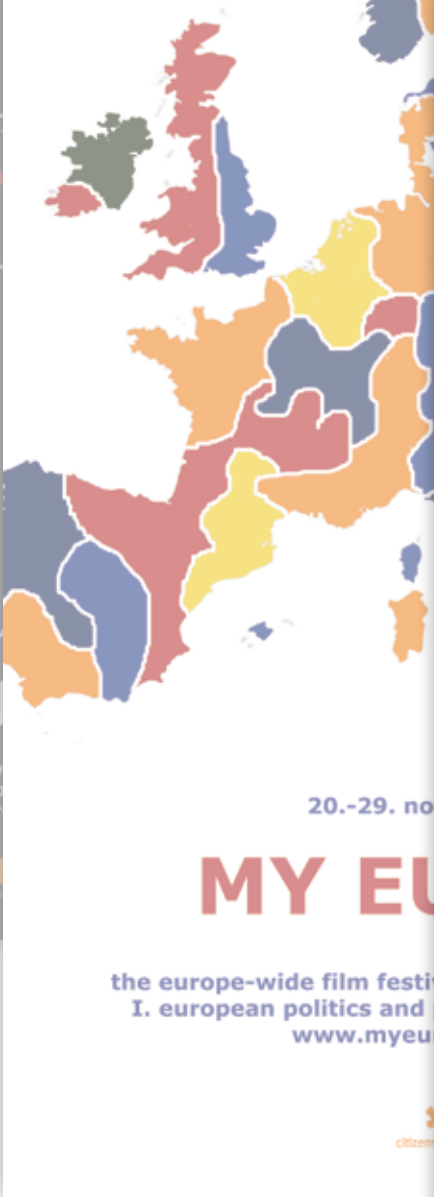
Timur Ismailov was born and grew up in Baku (Azerbaijan) in 1977. In 2004 he was admitted to the NFTA (The Netherlands Film and Television Academy) faculty of screenwriting. After almost three years of studies he switched from screenwriting to directing fiction. In June 2009 he graduated with a bachelor of Film and Television from the NFTA with his film “Bingo”, which he both wrote and directed.



21.-30. nov

MY EUROPE

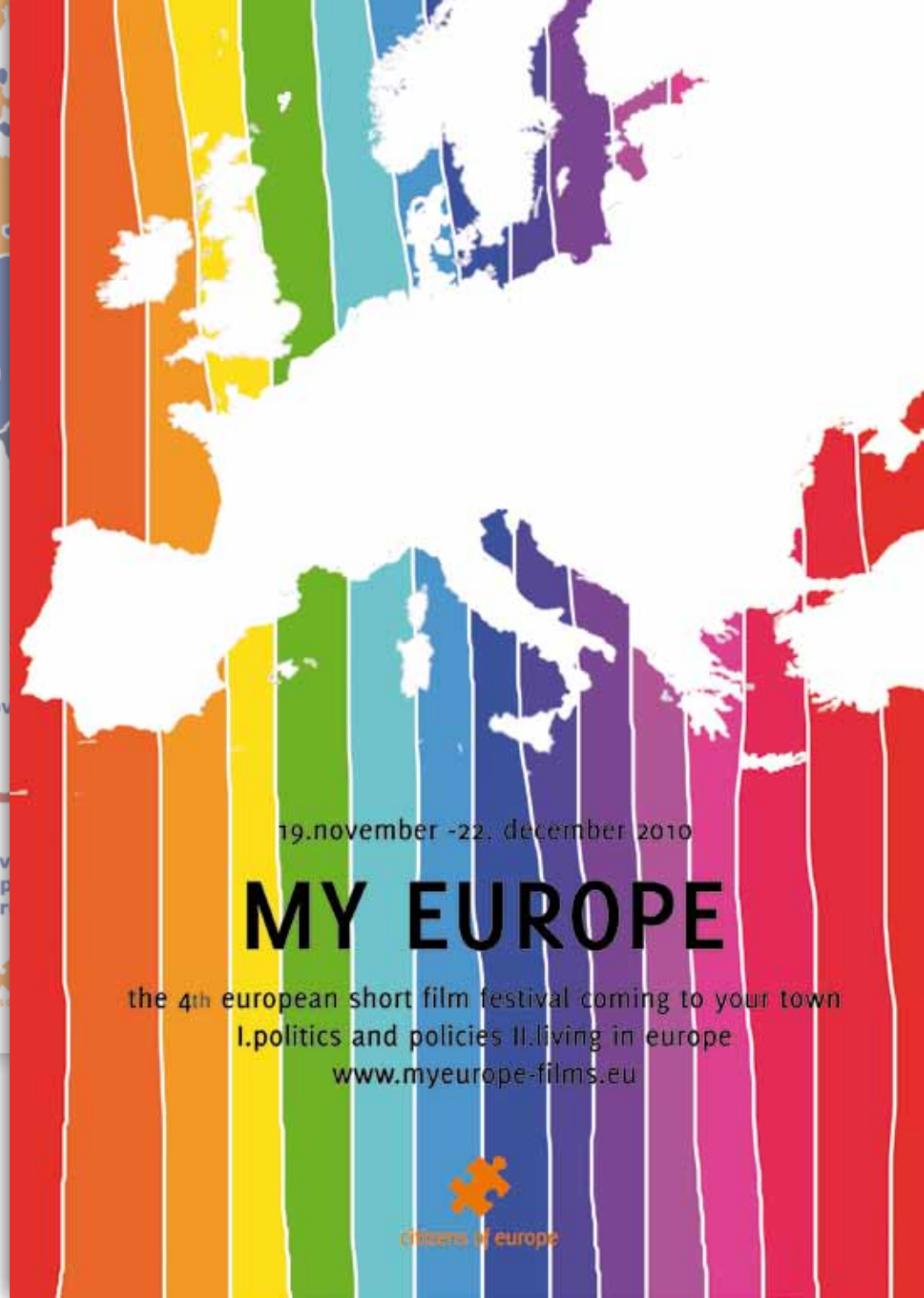
the europe-wide film festival
I. european politics and policies
www.myeurope-films.eu



20.-29. nov

MY EUROPE

the 4th european short film festival
I. european politics and policies
www.myeurope-films.eu



19.november -22. december 2010

MY EUROPE

the 4th european short film festival coming to your town
I.politics and policies II.living in europe
www.myeurope-films.eu



My Europe:

The story of a European Film Festival, or: Life is no pony court ...

By Mara Nedelcu

The baby has to grow and learn to walk alone ...

Life is no pony court but still you can ride! Jürgen and Tobias seemed to have been betting on the right horse four years ago when they decided to work together in organizing the My Europe Film Festival.

Berlin, a rainy afternoon, digital bohemian's café, a brief look into the international film guide – this is a MyEurope working meeting. Close up on the guys – Jürgen and Tobias, both film studies graduates, who presented the 4th edition of MyEurope in November 2010.

I watched Bambi and fell in love

The motivation comes from their personal ambition and passion for films: “I fell in love with the cinema after I first saw Bambi” says Tobias. Jürgen was a teenager when he was infected by the film virus the first time. One may say that film brought them together as they first met in Karlsruhe in 2006 working for the Shooting Europe Student Film Festival. Jürgen was there on behalf of the AEGEE student organization where he was volunteering for cultural and media projects. Tobias was representing Citizens of Europe.

Try to change the world

Together with Citizens of Europe they developed a Film Festival under the name MyEurope further, to foster young initiatives that point out social and cultural similarities as well as differences on the silver screen. “We don't know how MyEurope changes the world, but by exploring different dimensions every time we will try to get an answer to this question”.

Berlin. Citizens of Europe

Having Citizens of Europe on their side led to a clearly defined European identity of the project and a real long term perspective. To work in Berlin is also a great chance as it means you are in the middle of a tumultuous creative industry: “Berlin is where everything happens”. The key element of the festival organization is the focus on an artistic program while the screenings are outsourced. “This way we can approach a larger audience all around Europe”.

Let's talk about shorts

What do Tobias and Jürgen look for when it comes to the screening program? “Experimental, animation, documentary, fiction... as long as they are shorter than 30 minutes”. For the two program sections, Living in Europe - “how it feels to be European” and Politics and Policies - “reflection on politic issues”, they are seeking the European dimension of a film: “it could be a love story, as long as it plays on a European level”.

In order to get a growing visibility, the MyEurope team collaborates with partners all around Europe who are ready to organize the screening of the program on local level. “We want to attract more professional partners to get involved in the project so we can get increasing attention from the public and become one of the regulars”.

Their thoughts for the future?

Tobias wishes “MyEurope to exist as long as it brings people together who have the same beliefs and ideas. I'm eagerly waiting for the moment when the little MyEurope will grow up and walk by itself”



European Voluntary Service: **We learn for life**

Since 2006 EVS projects are managed by:
Frank Burgdörfer
Francesca La Vigna (main coordinator)
Gert Röhrborn



With the European Voluntary Service (EVS) the European Commission set up a framework, in which the exchange and voluntary commitment of young people between 18 and 30 years helps to „develop solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance“ among those participating, thereby „contributing to reinforcing social cohesion in the European Union and to promoting young people’s active citizenship.“

The system is quite easy to understand: a young person from one country goes to another country, where his or her help is wanted in an accredited project. A sending and a hosting organisation provide the necessary support. The travel to and from the destination, money for food, accommodation, insurance and pocket money as well as additional intercultural training on the spot can be financed thanks to the financial support of the European Commission.

Citizens of Europe has been an accredited hosting, sending, and coordinating organization since 2006. To date we have hosted a dozen volunteers and interns from countries as diverse as Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, France, Greece or Netherlands in our office in Berlin. They get to know how a European network functions and contribute to one of our various project formats. Furthermore they have a chance to develop a project of their own. We support the implementation inside our network.

In the last two years we have also sent more and more German volunteers abroad. In accordance with the general profile of our network we mainly establish connections to cultural, social and educational projects.

At the moment our volunteers are mainly in Belarus and Turkey, but we have also sent motivated youngsters to Belgium, Bulgaria, Poland, Estonia and Moldova before. Voluntary engagement is a value in itself, because it enables young people to follow philanthropic motivations, make first professional steps, take up innovative ideas and get new perspectives. Through cooperation in the field of volunteering and internship Citizens helps young people to create spaces where they can present themselves, exchange with peers, develop their skills and implement own initiatives in a collaborative effort. What takes at least a decade in schooling EVS can do in less than a year.

EVS is a business based on mutual benefit. As a sending and hosting organisation we strengthen our network of partners, as voluntary projects are often a door-opener for further cooperation. Every year Tobias Kunow and Jürgen Tobisch are happy again to use well-established contacts and the inspiration of volunteers to spread the MyEurope short film festival to places on the continent Citizens has not touched so far. The following pages with selected projects will give you a short overview of the EVS activities Citizens is currently involved in.



Education and Culture DG

‘Youth in Action’ Programme



*School children at Anıtkabir in Ankara (Atatürk's mausoleum)
as seen by Rasmus Randig during his EVS*

EVS and me:

Different Stories of EVS Volunteers at Citizens of Europe e.V.



Rasmus Randig, born 1990 in Wolfenbüttel near Hannover, high school graduate 2011, currently EVS-volunteer in Ankara, Turkey, working for the youth NGO "System and Generation".

Me in Ankara: One month behind - eight months ahead. by Rasmus Randig

From my first moment I arrived in Ankara I experienced the wonderful hospitality of Turkish people, when I was invited for a welcome dinner together with my colleagues. Hitch-Hiking to Cappadocia and back or a business meeting – never without being invited for at least çay (Turkish tea) up to a luxury home-made dinner. The main part of my work at System and Generation in Ankara is project management within the frame of the Youth in Action Programme of the European Commission. This includes the preparation and implementation of approved projects. In my case, this was the project "Noticing the Invisibles", targeted at people working with asylum-seekers, which included the attendance to a seminar of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees at Hilton Hotel Ankara on asylum issues in Turkey and also a visit of the UNHCR office in Ankara, which is the biggest UNHCR office in the world.

Travelling through Turkey with the "Gençlik Caravanı" (Youth Caravan) to inform youngsters about their opportunities within the Youth in Action Programme is the second pillar of my work. Currently we are in the planning phase of the upcoming year, discussing the presentation on the European Voluntary service and working individually on presentations on our home-countries to be ready to start travelling soon.

My motivation for doing an EVS. by Mathias Puddig

NAME (Age) from COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:
Mathias Puddig (25 yrs.), Germany

Country of EVS: why I wanted to go there:
I spent my EVS in Poland. I wanted to go there, because I did a B.A. in Polish studies, and I didn't manage to spend some time as an ERASMUS student (You know, Bologna process made students' life in some relations really complicated.)

Receiving organisation, main tasks during EVS:
My receiving organisation is the Akademickie Centrum Kultury of the University of Gdansk. My tasks were to organise events for foreign students and to care for the English language homepage and blog of ACK.

My motivation for doing a EVS:
I wanted to spend time abroad, to improve my language skills and to do something else than studying.

The greatest challenge/learning I have encountered during my EVS was...
to share one room with two other guys.

My second home: Moldova
by Susanne Backmund, Germany



Arriving in Moldova, I was touched by its cultural diversity as I was living in Komrat / Gagauzia (with Turkish influence) for the first month and then moved to Chisinau, the capital city of Moldova.

In the hard winter I sometimes felt like being in a fairytale book, with horses and their carriage standing calmly in front of green-painted wooden gates or the deeply frozen lake with nothing else around it than nature. Of course, I experienced a cultural shock many times, but mostly it was more positive than negative. Moving to Chisinau, everything changed. We got to know Moldovan people who had a more Western European perspective, which often conflicted with those who still clung on to the old times under the Soviet Union.



I started to work with two social organizations. One is helping HIV-positive and AIDS-sick people, the other one takes care of children who are leaving institutions after some years and who are not able to cope with their lives alone. I helped with drafting projects, establishing contacts to foundations in the European Union, translating project descriptions and a lot more.

I always tried my best to find my way into moldovan society, but it has not been that easy. The language was a big barrier that I had to cope with. So I was even happier when people were telling me that my Moldovan had improved.

During my leisure time I saw a lot of Moldova, I traveled to the North and South, from Soroca to Cahul. Moldova has such a beautiful nature, it is a pity that it is the “forgotten country”. Thinking back, I really miss the time and my lovely Moldova.

The network:

Meet some Citizens

Name:

.....

At Citizens of Europe, I am mainly active in...

.....

For me, the best thing about Citizens of Europe is...

.....

Besides Citizens, I am...

.....

Geographically, you can find me most of the time in...

.....

What I like...

.....

Contact:

Markus Petz

.....

Open Fora and networking of the ideas.

.....

the professionalism and friendliness of the organizing people. I like also the range of people and possibilities that comes through citizens.

.....

doing activism (mostly through the Pispala Contemporary Arts Association (aka Hirvitalo). I am very involved with the Global Villages movement at an international level.

.....

Pispala, a part of Tampere, Finland, but travel a lot through Europe.

.....

home made cloudberry ice-cream and all the wonderful people that are my friends and comrades.

.....

ravenwyn@gmail.com

Lilia Tamamdzhieva

.....

Training courses, citizen's weekends, open fora

.....

That it is a very active organization with people who work with high professionalism

.....

Member of AEGEE-Sofia, student

.....

Bulgaria

.....

Active traveling, non-formal education, music, inter- and transculturality

.....

yyimailz@gmail.com

Name:

.....

At Citizens of Europe, I am mainly active in...

.....

For me, the best thing about Citizens of Europe is...

.....

Besides Citizens, I am...

.....

Geographically, you can find me most of the time in...

.....

What I like...

.....

Contact:

Nina Vredegoor

.....

the activities around the European Year of Volunteering. In cooperation with Citizens of Europe I did my thesis-research about young volunteers and their life's. Now I am member of the board.

.....

that the organization gets very different people from very different backgrounds together in a open and equal atmosphere, where information and points of view can be exchanged.

.....

almost finished with my study Cultural and Social Work. After that I have a lot of dreams about what I want to do, but still not figured out which one I want to follow the most!

.....

Amsterdam, Berlin and Apeldoorn. Since I don't have a proper house of my own, I travel and live in three city's at the same time.

.....

I like reading, cooking, dancing and visiting museums. But the best I like to hang out with friends, drink tea, having home made pie and talking for hours.

.....

nina.vredegoor@citizens-of-europe.eu

Maaret Jokela

.....

Open Fora and the V11-event in Landau. Since May 2011 I am vice chair of Citizens of Europe.

.....

The people and interesting projects!

.....

Political scientist, nature and sports loving feminist, volunteer and NGO-worker.

.....

Switzerland, Finland and Italy

.....

Getting together with people from various countries/ backgrounds, volunteering, learning, reading, good food and wine, skiing, traveling.

.....

maaret.jokela@citizens-of-europe.eu

Name:

.....

At Citizens of Europe, I am mainly active in...

.....

For me, the best thing about Citizens of Europe is...

.....

Besides Citizens, I am...

.....

Geographically, you can find me most of the time in...

.....

What I like...

.....

Contact:

Hugo Ramon

.....

cooperation projects of Citizens with EDE (Association Européenne des Enseignants):
Vice Secretary General - www.aede.eu

.....

creating a network to facilitate friendly contacts all over Europe so people learn more about each other and get to understand and appreciate other European cultures

.....

a volunteer in many cultural associations

.....

At my home: Provincieweg 72, B-8470 GISTEL-Moere (near Bruges) Belgium, but now and then I have meetings, mostly in Brussels and AEDE meetings all over Europe: Geneva, Warsaw, Madrid, Rome, ...

.....

is seeing Europeans meeting, talking, losing their narrow nationalistic view and find friends all over Europe.

.....

hugo.ramon@aede.eu

Gert Röhrborn

.....

the office as executive officer and in the OpenFora Programme

.....

my fellow citizens. It's a bunch of passionate and pragmatic, creative and welcoming people.

.....

a political scientist and a good guy.

.....

Warsaw

.....

Constructive behaviour, sunshine and beauty

.....

gert.roehrborn@citizens-of-europe.eu

Francesca La Vigna: Following the Job

Interview by Philipp Koch



.....

<http://www.europeandme.eu/11legs/544-following-the-job-citizens-of-europe>

Good evening, Francesca, it's nice to meet you here in Kreuzberg (district of Berlin), in the club 'Wendelbar' to celebrate your promotion from EVS volunteer to general administrator of 'Citizens of Europe'. What brought you originally to Berlin and the European Voluntary Service?

Originally, I was looking for an experience abroad after my academic studies and my target country was Germany in general, not Berlin in particular. Once I had discovered the 'Youth in Action Programme' of the European Commission I sent lots of applications to the biggest cities in Germany, Berlin included. Citizens of Europe was one of the organisations that replied. I started a long correspondence mostly with Frank Burgdörfer, chairman of the association. Later we met in person in Brussels during an OpenForum, so I had a chance to get to know him and Gert Röhrborn, the executive officer, as well as a few other people from the network. My first impressions were good and together we decided to focus on "the arts of engagement", reflecting a shared interest in the arts and active citizenship. So after my graduation, I landed in Berlin and was positively surprised by the city itself.

So how come you were initially interested in Germany? I know the language can be quite difficult for Italians...

True. My first contact with Germany was three years ago when living with a German girl for six months whilst she was on Erasmus in Rome. A year later I visited her in Wiesbaden in the south of Germany, which was the first time I had set a foot on German soil. You know, I was surprised by the beauty of the area around the River Rhine and I wanted to come back. So together with two of my friends I decided to study German at

university and I liked it. I thought it was a very beautiful language. I have always been fascinated by authors like Nietzsche or Goethe and, believe it or not, my favourite composer is Beethoven. So you can say I already had a kind of connection with German cultural space. Some time later I discovered this opportunity to go abroad thanks to the Youth in Action programme of the European Union and I started to check it out. I wanted to be in a country different from mine. Spain would have been too easy for me. I wanted to experience something totally different and because I already knew the basics of the language, I decided that Germany was the best choice.

Philipp: I'm curious to know about your experiences with the European Voluntary Service. Are you satisfied with what you did in your term and how the whole thing was managed?

On balance I'm satisfied, yes. I had the chance to do several things outside my EVS as well, because I established quite a few other contacts here in Berlin, although at the beginning it wasn't that easy. I confess I was a bit homesick and it was something really new for me. I had also another experience of living abroad before when I lived for six months in England. There I had been totally fine, I never missed home. With Berlin it was different, I instantly felt that something was missing; it was a rather difficult start, and as you might guess it was also not all that easy to understand exactly the work in the office. Then it turned out some projects I was supposed to help with did not get accepted, which meant we had to adapt my duties in

*Francesca on top of
the German Parliament
in Berlin.*



the office. Anyway, step by step things evolved and in the second part of the EVS, let's say after Easter, it went really smoothly. I think it depends also on the difficulties with the language itself, because at the beginning I was speaking mostly in English and then I switched to German. It's not easy sometimes to have the feeling that you're not really able to do things just because you don't understand. Your brain is working like hell but there are no results and it's really frustrating; it also has a lot to do with your personal mood. Anyway, now it's fine. I have to say I was really flattered about the proposal to stay longer and take over the office management.

Alright, we'll come back to that a little bit later. First I'd like to know more about your own project called "shapingCITYzenship", which looks at the city in transformation. It's currently Berlin-based, but who knows, maybe it'll be open to other cities in the future as well. Is it a coincidence that you set up this project during your EVS, while living in a city totally new to you?

Initially there were two reasons: I was very impressed by the city itself and I realised the huge differences between Berlin and Rome. Rome was the place where I had lived for the past six years, so I got used to the environment. After being in Berlin for just a week I was already struck by its energy. Every corner was different, it was so amazing! Everything is new, you don't have

historic places. I mean, obviously, relatively new, you don't have things like the coliseum. In comparison to Rome, Berlin is a baby city. It needs to be developed totally. I started reading a lot about the history of the city and also explored all its different districts. Whenever I had time I jumped into the S-Bahn and went through the city, took pictures and did all the other things a tourist does. At some point I got hold of a book, "The Ghosts of Berlin", written by a American writer Brian Ladd, exploring the relationship between architecture and history. This was a mind-changing experience, because from then on I was able to read the history of the city through architectural styles. I was very fascinated by this, so I decided to explore this field further. I had written my final thesis in urban geography, so I could already refer somehow to existing knowledge and interpretation of urban changes and urban development in general. After a while another idea came to me: what about citizens? What is their role in the ever-changing, creative process of the city? How do daily events and individual actions create a European space? I mean how do they influence the development of the city itself? So I decided to look out for other people who wanted to help me with this research. Thanks to you, Philipp, I met Elisabetta, an Italian photographer who's still cooperating with me. We basically share the responsibilities in the project. I'm focusing on the social aspects of the research, finding interesting people and doing interviews, while Elizabetha is more into the aesthetic part. So far we have produced an archive of interviews and pictures, which is currently hosted on artinterventions.eu, one of the major programmes at Citizens of Europe. The idea is to have also a physical exhibition and, why

not, also to extend the concept to other European cities. For this we need to find more people, of course; individuals who'd like to explore the sometimes striking, sometimes enigmatic differences between the cities they live in, to identify and visualise the internal forces at work inside the city and affecting everyone of us. So we wholeheartedly welcome new collaborators!

I am impressed. You are rather a newcomer at Citizens of Europe and the board already appointed you general administrator. You will be responsible for managing the office and also partly in charge of projects. That's quite a promotion, Francesca, congratulations! So please share with us your thoughts about it and let us know what you plan to do in the position.

First, learn the job, really! (smiling) I had a very good – so to speak - master: Gert, who also supervises shapingCITYzenship. I found his way to lead the office really good and I learned a lot thanks to him. The offer was a surprise to me and also a great challenge. Generally I am not a born frontman (or "frontwoman"), I prefer to rock back stage. Still I decided to go for it, because I feel it's a way to grow up both in a personal and a professional way. So in the end I will come to understand what happens in the office beyond the volunteer's desk: the boring but necessary stuff that needs to be taken care of well. Finally I realised it's important to me too. Together with Gert, I am currently developing my project further towards cooperation with local and international partners. Last but not least I can stay one more year in Berlin and, who knows, maybe I'll enjoy it even more this time.

The people within Citizens:

On Volunteering, the beginnings of the organization and different playgrounds

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Anna John talked to two of our long-term members, Andreas Heindl and Gert Röhrborn. Although both have a political science background, they enrich the network with their different approaches and experiences. Following their discussion you may understand better the development of Citizens of Europe in the past five years.

.....

I got to know you both during the 2008 OpenForum in Vilnius, when you had been involved in the network already for some time. Since when have you been active in Citizens of Europe? What were your main tasks/ functions?

Andreas Heindl: Although I have not been a Citizen from the very beginning I was familiar with Citizens since its foundation in 2002 – I knew all the people committed to the initiative from university. Later I took part in events like the European Youth Convention and got actively involved in several projects. In 2005, I was elected to the Board – I took responsibility for the internal and legal affairs and, of course, for several projects – like in Munich or Perm, Russia.

Gert Röhrborn: I met Frank Burgdörfer in December 2006 during an award ceremony of Heinz Schwartzkopf Foundation in Berlin. I had just graduated from university and was looking for a job, but also for my purpose in life. The easy-going chat during dinner rather quickly turned into an intensive discussion of project ideas. We were both somehow looking for a social space in which to exchange freely with others without permanent respect to political correctness, user utility or individual vanities. So a few weeks later our baby was born: the OpenFora debates. Why do I describe this seemingly minor start to such an extent? Well, creating this kind of social space is what I have been doing in Citizens ever since. All the functions I had in the past four years – my quick promotion to the position of vice chairman, my term as executive officer and EVS responsible – rather happened to me; they were an effect of this initial cause: this micro big bang between two very different people, the Good guy and the Gert guy.

This sounds like engagement in Citizens is more than just an alternative to spending leisure time. What have you gained or learned personally through your voluntary work?

Gert Röhrborn: For me volunteering is basically about getting to know myself, a means to reach myself. Although I also had to realize that volunteering is an encounter with my fundamental aspirations and fears; it took me years not to shy away into lofty credos and to stand honestly looking at my inner constitution, the mess of my mind, the struggle of my soul. I don't look back in anger at my former leftist aspirations; I am happy to feel the satisfaction about having come to understand which question really matters for me: How to reach community?! This world is beyond redemption, but I am not.

Andreas Heindl: You are right. Volunteering has a lot to do with self-experience – although, for me the self-experience aspect was only some kind of a side-effect. Personally, there are two main reasons why the work for Citizens was attractive to me and why I gained – and still gain – a lot from being involved in the network: First, I would characterize myself as someone who likes to draft concepts and to realize these ideas. Second, I am a person who needs to deal with different opinions and to argue with people in order to get new input. For that reason it was exciting and instructive to support the work of Citizens and to shape the profile of the organization in a very dynamic, but also extremely challenging period – with a remarkable, very satisfying result: The baby learned to walk... Furthermore, I gained a lot from exchanging different opinions and debating with people from all over Europe.



Gert Röhrborn, born in Erlabrunn/Germany in 1979. Political scientist and project manager. Gert is interested in the impact of arts and culture on formatting historical consciousness and political space. The former Vice-Chairman and Executive Officer of Citizens of Europe now lives and works in Warsaw.

See www.gert.roehrborn.info.

There must be a reason why you stayed with us.

After all these years: What do you like most about the network?

Gert Röhrborn: Citizens is an asshole-free-zone. I have never come across something like it elsewhere. What's also very relieving for me is that Citizens welcomes mistakes. Probably most of us know that humans learn considerably through making mistakes and adapt their approach accordingly. Yet it's really rare to find people who practice a culture of mistakes. And it doesn't just create an agreeable atmosphere, it's really working! Once you understand that it's okay to come as you are and that your full personality is wanted, you may also slowly start to confront your wishes, inner weaknesses and vanity that influence your behaviour towards others. Nobody does a face check here.

Andreas Heindl: That is true. Citizens cultivates an atmosphere of tolerance and respect – and all the people at Citizens are pleasant guys! But I would like to add something else: Citizens was – and still is – a perfect “playground” for getting involved with the things which are important to me and push me on – like the European integration process. But please do not misunderstand: I am fascinated by the idea of a common European future but I am not a naive and uncritical EU apologist! For that reason, most exciting about Citizens is the fact that it is not an organization limited to EU politics and simplistic Pro-Europeanism but a platform for controversial dispute on current issues concerning our life in Europe – and beyond. I think that the diversity of people within the network, the mixture of formats as well as the variety of topics, opinions, and ideas reflects this kind of openness of Citizens.

Which project or initiative is for you personally so important that you wished it would be continued?

Andreas Heindl: A characteristic feature of Citizens is its wide spectrum of methods and formats ranging from seminars to trainings, film festivals, and art performances. The mixture and combination of these different approaches allows coming up to one topic in different ways and from various perspectives. In doing so, Citizens becomes very colorful and opens space for new ideas and inspiration. At the same time, it prevents Citizens to become a close corporation of political scientists. Personally, I have some preference for OpenFora because of the interdisciplinary, open-minded, and inspiring debate which is close to my own professional background and interest – although I enjoy every input from other projects.

Gert Röhrborn: You say it, this is what I always wanted to set up with the OpenFora. Naturally I hope that others are appropriating the concept and go on exchanging with peers about the questions that drive them. Beyond that I think that the initiative of our new office manager Francesca to reach out for local people and connect us to other organisations in Berlin is a very worthwhile effort. Yes, Citizens is a European network realizing projects in many places all over the continent, but how can we be European without a strong local basis?



Andreas Heindl was Member of the Board of Citizens of Europe between 2005 and 2010. He took responsibility for several projects as well as the internal and legal affairs of the organization. Since 2006 he is working as research fellow at the Institute of Political Science of the University of Heidelberg. His main research interests are topics concerning communication strategies as well as European integration and Central and Eastern Europe.

What is your vision for the network Citizens of Europe in the near future?

Andreas Heindl: I do not have a “vision” for Citizens of Europe but I have a clear picture of how the organization should develop in the next years. I want to raise three key points. First, the people who are enthusiastic and want to think outside the box are the heart of the organization. Therefore, Citizens should be even more attractive and open for people from all over Europe to join in. Second, projects are crucial to the work of Citizens. The aim should be to establish a certain portfolio of high-quality formats as some kind of trade-mark of Citizens of Europe. Finally, every organization requires certain structures. This means that the association should be less dependent on single persons and should improve its organizational capacities.

Gert Röhrborn: This path we have already been following for some time now, but you are right, Andreas, we will have to progress even more. Yet I always feel a certain uneasiness growing inside me when I hear this visions talk. It tends to be empty and without proper reference to the social forces at work. Maybe I’m just getting older, and although I do not agree that often with former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, it appears to me that he got this one right: “Who has got visions should pay a visit to the doctor.” For me people are priority. I am deeply convinced that we are desperately in need of spaces for self-representation. One of the pressing problems in Europe is not it’s democratic deficit, but the chance for everyone to call out for what he or she really needs, be it solidarity, the protection of local cultures or the blending of formerly

mutually repelling narratives. I just hope that Citizens will go on to attract devoted and crazy people. The normal ones cause too much damage anyway.

Which aspects of your time with Citizens of Europe are useful in your current occupation?

Andreas Heindl: I already mentioned Citizens as a “playground” for new ideas and inspiring insights. But the association is also a field for professional experience which is useful to my own working environment. I became familiar with the functioning of organizations: I gained knowledge of how to team and motivate people; I learned how to draft and implement certain projects professionally; and I took knowledge how to improve internal structures and how to push my own ideas within an organization. In this respect, Citizens is not only about idealism but also about professionalism.

Gert Röhrborn: I agree with you. Citizens is a hub of pragmatism. It offers ample space for fresh ideas and applied creativity, and in the end there will be a result, not always perfect, but as a good base for further development. We practice hot delivery with cool heads. I got the most out of my time in the office in Berlin. Being responsible for a variety of projects, keeping contact to the various active people and their different initiatives as well as representing the network in different contexts have given me more sensitivity and confidence in my abilities to connect people. I accepted the role of an operator, and this is what I do also in my current job at Polish Robert Schuman Foundation in Warsaw, where I coordinate a project that promotes the future Balkan accession countries in the European Union.

Essay:

Taking back the ZONE. Appropriating Belarus.

By Gert Röhrborn

.....

How can you live without a past

that can be re-appropriated time and again?

A past you have to tell, to take, to teach

without striking at it, sucking it in, spitting it out?

– You cannot. But you have to.

.....

Left alone in the void

You haven't heard of Belarus yet? Well, it would be too easy to put the blame on the self-enclosure of a truly post-communist regime alone, which portrays the West as a rotten realm of social instability and moral decay to Belarusian population. First thing you do after arrival in Minsk is to stop wondering about the number of well-frequented MacDonald's outlets. The regime is post-communist in the sense that there is nothing left of the communist claim to transform society. State ideology is merely an empty shell repainted every May (8th, not 1st). School kids are to cheer storm troopers dressed in restored gear of the Great Patriotic War in view from grand stands at Stalin line, part of the former Soviet defence system, now an open-air museum just outside Minsk. This is History's, not God's Own Country.

Many people I met mourn they cannot enter the self-proclaimed "community of freedom, security and prosperity" just outside their Western borders. They are fed up with the malfunctions of their administration and pretensions of authorities. At the same time they are not able to take part in European economy, life and politics, although Europe already today directly or indirectly affects their life, by inciting imagination and setting borders. Manifold cultural and historical predispositions also lock in people: since childhood they are rarely treated as equal communication partners, who are interesting just for being who they are.

For many the only feasible options seem to be acquiescence with the situation or going abroad (and never coming back from the promised land, whatever it might really turn out to be). People tend to eagerly listen to

– and partially play with – what is presented to them from (supposedly superior) Eastern and Western powers as "civilised" manners. Only few ask what their own strengths could be, and some even do not know what they are personally interested in, not least because such questions were never presented as values in their social context. Yet I was surprised not to run into more pretty faces distorted by cynicism. Lifeblood seems to find other ways, hidden to the visitor's senses, to circumvent blockades.

Eternally booked on Desire Line?

But don't think that this place is awaiting civilization like Afghanistan. Less and much more. Less in absolute terms, as this country has always been part of European history to the fullest. World War Two is surely the proverbial tip of the iceberg only; the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Union in early modern times is rich in political ideas and religious variety; and until the first half of the 20th century the area was the centre of European Jewry. Much more indeed in relative terms, if judged by the majority opinion of my conversation partners. I have to admit, also one of the many voices in my head did not tire to send me this message. I calmed it down after a few days, and that was when I really started to enjoy the stay.

From the perspective of the temptation to transform material into fetish Belarus is like any other European country. Modernity is ultimately a pagan age. In Belarus it is just much more obvious how dead material and rigid entities are obscenely worshipped in the public sphere. You may marvel at cold war rockets presented like phallic symbols at the famous “Stalin line”, or see happy children greeting you on posters glorifying the Belarussian workforce. In good old “Christian Europe” elitist religious institutions cover up the hegemonic worship of the golden calf. Hence the difference the trip to Belarus made for me was realising that I actually have the choice to see. Yet the question remains: can something beyond Eastern “vainness” and Western “vanity” be realized?

*Mourning the void:
The monument for the
Minsk Ghetto by
Leonid Lewin.*



So my question is: how to create a zone, in which a different way of communication, of real life exchange, is possible? A zone that defies the asymmetric relations inside and between individuals and social entities which form it? How do people, in a joint effort, imagine a zone in which collaboration does feel good to the persons included? Belarus is just an extreme case here; it is possible to learn from it for activities in other regions as well. It is my experience from various projects that unarticulated differences in target definition, hierarchy and conflict behaviour affect collaboration between people much stronger than deviation in values or stereotypes.

The key variable is trust. As soon as trust is built between people who wish to collaborate, cultural difference changes its quality: it transforms from conflictual to creative potentiality. This does not mean its use is going to be less hazardous. How many people do you know who like to see their life concepts challenged all the time? The crucial point stays this: trust is not simply a given – it is the qualitative result of a constantly repeated process; a process which starts with the readiness to show oneself and which brings about unconditional interest in the other person I wish to collaborate with.

Authenticity and solidarity

Oh Belarus, learn your lessons, and learn them well. Your people – quite like everywhere else in the world – instinctively understand the underlying principle of the country’s political system. I refer to a political system here only in the sense of a sophisticated set of procedures determining the (unequal) distribution of

material and immaterial values. What might even bring them in front of “light’s-always-switched-on-Westerners” around here, Belarusians seem to somewhat understand our system also (what is definitely not the case vice versa). One of the reasons why the multitude in Belarus seems to accept the restricted offers of the regime is that they are afraid of the price to pay for liberal transformation. This was the Ukrainian lesson learned fast: rapid transformation brings about terrifying social instability.

That’s why it is so fatiguing to listen to the leaders of different parties and movements opposing president Lukashenka’s policy. Personally they may behave with pleasant integrity, but their varying illusions about

joining the European Union are just painful. How to react on seeing respectable men who present daydreams for reality? Daydreams they even cannot convince their fellow compatriots of? Do they know they will never make it and just pretend for political reasons, or do they really believe in it – in a repetition of the constructivist, constructive and finally successful discourse led by a few high-profile Czech and Hungarian dissident-poets about “Central Europe” in the mid-1980s? In this case it is vital to carefully define the relations towards one’s neighbours on the basis of realistic assumptions.

Frontier revisited

I don’t see the point in calling Russia names like the big brother, the sick sucker, the false friend, like a number of alternatives and politicians in the West and Belarus alike seem to prefer. There is more reason to grasp Belarus in a regional context: as part of a strip of land between the Baltic and the Black Sea stretching out through Eastern Europe and the Caucasus down to Turkey. It is a kind of frontier zone between two continental empires, marked by a complex overlap of strict administrative borders and diffuse social and cultural boundaries with much shared history. The potential for creating an authentic in(ter)dependent position between the European Union and Russia is qualified by what I call the German lesson of 1989: achieve an authentic position, or you will be absorbed by big brother.

Of course this does not tell you anything about what happens if you do. There is a second lesson to learn, the Polish one: if you want to strip the current regime of its social support you need a national position that promises change – change in the distribution of material

*Polozk, geographical
“Centre of Europe”*





Souvenirs in a small town shop. The long shadow of war and terror

and immaterial values significantly different from the current terms. The 1980s Solidarity movement gave this strategy its honourable name. Solidarity has got the credits for achieving the only popular transition in the former communist bloc.

It should not be forgotten, though, that Polish transition was completed only with the double victory of the Law and Justice Party (PiS) in the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2005. Thanks to the anti-elitist and anti-intellectual habitus of its leaders and functionaries PiS was able to remobilize Solidarity's former mass base and pay tribute to the inherently populist character of this historical movement, abandoned for the sake of ultra-liberalization in the early

1990s. Whatever I might think of its political content: Polish independent and home-grown transition has become a genuine part of European heritage, equal to the French Revolution. So here comes the message to Belarusians: forget about content if it can by definition only be liberal. Go popular.

Silenced bodies

Politics cannot fill voids, especially not the one inside ourselves. In Minsk I had the chance to attend a talk by Leonid Lewin, honoured architect and for 20-year-chairman of the Jewish community in Belarus. Lewin, a man orphaned by the war of annihilation of one European dictatorship just to live his life under the totalitarian aspirations of another, behaved like "history inscribed in person". I asked him about his intentions in creating the monument commemorating the suffering and death in the infamous Minsk Ghetto (see the image). This monument touched me like few have done before. It tries to visualize how a whole branch of civilization was wiped out – not by showing the "suffering" of people, but by presenting destroyed everyday objects to which the disappeared had related to in little subjective imagined communities with their needs and wishes (for building a home, for example). This table and that chair: to me they speak like human faces, scarred by deadly fatigue and sadness.

As problematic as it is when objects are to testify for people's needs and wishes, even this is hardly possible in the case of Belarusian Jews (who can be taken pars pro toto for Belarusian society here) – World War Two obliterated vast arrays of human life; Minsk for example was destroyed up to 95% and rebuilt as a

communist “sun city of dreams” (Artur Klinau). From a cultural-sociological point of view this adds to Belarusian identity as a palimpsest: a society programmed on the basis of a script-(to-be-)repeatedly-wiped-out-and-rewritten. Political allegiance, religious disputes, ethnic variety – how much have they changed on this soil in the past 500 years. The erasure of culture during the 20th century is almost beyond comprehension. It is thanks to the efforts of people like Leonid Lewin that I could grasp a little more of it, that communication about it is feasible at least, that re-appropriation defies proscription at last.

But what does it help to define an ultimate loss if you have to bear it? Lewin did not elaborate on my question. He was like a surfer on a wave that wouldn't wet him. But which could destroy him with a natural sound. Is the context really still that bad? Did I put the question wrong? What he later said about his “monuments of love” was swaying between naïve and suggestive: “Monuments tend to be seen by many children. I want to send them a message of love, from the strongest force on earth.” There it was in the end – the hope for a new beginning! But the practical questions remain: How to touch each other in spite of fear? How to stand overreactions fed by overwhelming pain? How to cry out and laugh about something in order to make it common? How can I reach out to you, Leonid Lewin?

In the Central Committee at last

In the splendid meeting hall of the Central Committee of the Belarusian State Youth Organisation (BRSM) I learned the most important lesson. Here, in this self-proclaimed non-governmental organisation which, in a typical Belarusian twist of mind and smile, calls itself “non-partisan, i.e. pro-presidential”, I encountered another void. I realized that most of those people I met during my stay, naturally BRSM absentees, have been active for many years on their own accounts. They search for opportunities to apply their experience in transnational exchange. Many have acquired authenticity already; now it's our chance to work with them in solidarity. There is an abundance of young people, especially in the regions outside Minsk and no matter in what position, who are full of energy and ideas for own initiatives. The question is how to form an approach inclusive enough to take serious in their





*The Minsk Free Theatre:
Entry (left)
and Performance (top)*

needs all people involved in common activities. Serious meaning that everybody has the same stakes in forming the approach.

Consider Lenin’s revolutionary wisdom “who (dominates) whom?” for a moment. In his view the social avant-garde was forced to revolutionize the (capitalist) system, i.e. bound to intervene in and turn around the constant redefinition of the complex social exploitative relations between individuals, including even the permanent redefinition of what is an individual itself (the New Man was a communist term, but it has much longer been a capitalist practice). So the answer to capitalism’s permanent urge to revolutionize itself by expropriating the integrated creativity of individuals

– “accumulate by rule” – was: “rule by accumulation”. Both answers cannot satisfy individuals who feel and accept their needs and wishes as the only and always provisional expressions of their (constantly developing) self. To objectify needs and wishes means to expropriate them.

Every time I work at Citizens of Europe with interested and interesting individuals, no matter where and where from, I start out from the needs and wishes of everybody involved in a project. Needs and wishes: they are neither material for temptation and deception nor individual selling points and weapons to hit the system’s neuralgic points. What counts for me is to create a new kind of common understanding and appreciation of subjectivity. It is about applying art for engagement – art can help to explore and express one’s needs and wishes; and it is also about fostering engagement for art – for the art of creating a society of solidarity in which the needs and wishes of every person are respected as unique expressions in their own right, not as objects; objects, which are, otherwise, always only for battle and for sale.

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These reflections and observations were made during a study visit organised by Evangelische Akademie Berlin and The Network for Reporting on Eastern Europe n-ost in Minsk in March 2010.

Interview with Pavel Turchaninov

Thinking on Belarus: Let me know that I'm not crazy

Interview by Frank Burgdörfer

You raise your voice for changes in your country, keep contacts abroad, visit international meetings dealing with Belarus. All this has negative consequences for you: for example, in 2008 you took part in a demonstration in Minsk and got arrested in a rather violent way. Why do you do all this?

In my point of view my country is at a critical crossroads. Either we manage to initiate positive change in the nearest future, or we will see utter chaos in the medium term. People cannot live happily for long in a situation where their rights and freedoms are constantly stifled. Their discontent is like a time-bomb: if it is not defused, sooner or later it will explode and many innocent people may get hurt. I do not want this to happen.

So your intention is to promote peaceful resistance?

I advocate for peaceful resistance, but peaceful in the Western meaning of the word. To be peaceful and tolerant over here in Belarus means not to get involved in anything, to sit in one's kitchen and quietly observe any injustice that may be happening around, in other words it means complete apathy. At the same time, I advocate for education and access to uncensored information. If we think about why the people of Belarus do not look at the success of their Western neighbors who broke free of the scourge of communism in 1989, we will learn that there is little awareness of the new realities of life in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland. The reason for this lack of awareness is that state-owned mass-media keep comparing the level of socioeconomic development in Belarus with our eastern neighbor – Russia (and with Ukraine that is just beginning to recover from the shock that inevitably follows any deep economic and political restructuring).

There are a few civil society groups that conduct macro-economic analyses of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and then try to inform the public about the results of these comparisons in an attempt to refute popular fallacies, but in the absence of independent mass-media they do not have a voice, and their efforts run into numerous obstacles and are limited to giving small seminars, circulating printed materials among like-minded people and posting them on the Internet. This work is quite important and it will continue to raise awareness in the Belarusian society. I believe these and other similar educational activities are the appropriate modus operandi for combating the ignorance-related component of the problem.

Is it realistic to expect a gradual change to the better? Can this happen within the existing state controlled structures under current conditions?

A quick change of the executive would certainly be conducive to increased public access to uncensored information and education. In the best case scenario a major cross-section of the population would take to the streets and demonstrate to the government that many people want change, not just a few thousand. A new democratic government would then pass laws that reduce state control, privatize state-owned companies and de-regulate the economy. But as the tragic post-election events of last December demonstrated, the state currently has too many resources at its disposal, so it is capable of violently suppressing any kind of mass mobilisation that is below a certain threshold. This is why education is necessary to boost mobilisation and civic participation above that threshold.

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Pavel Turchaninov took part in the OpenForum Vilnius "Promoting Citizenship by Education?".

Everything expressed in this interview is Pavel Turchaninov's personal opinion.



Pavel Turchaninov works in Minsk as a freelance translator for several NGOs. He has been actively participating in several Citizens of Europe events and views his professional activities as a modest contribution to fostering understanding between the world community and his fellow countrymen.

So in your point of view the change must come from within the country?

Absolutely. However, at the same time, foreign governments could support such a process. Economic sanctions make sense. If civilised countries refuse to buy Belarusian petrol and potassium fertilizers, its centrally-planned economy will collapse. That will prove to the people the inadequacy of our economic system. A visa ban for government officials is another example of effective sanctions. Those officials go out of their way to lambast Western values and lifestyles on Belarusian television, and at the same time travel all over Europe at the expense of taxpayers, go on shopping sprees at shopping malls in Vilnius, and purchase real estate in London and other European capitals.

How did you develop your personal plans and set your aims?

The fact that I work for NGOs and try to contribute to a dialogue between Belarus and the rest of the world is probably a result of living abroad for some time. I like to think about it in terms of an aquarium. A fish that lives in an aquarium cannot understand what is beyond the glass until it jumps out of the water and spends some time outside. While living abroad, I learned that societies that are based on consent and cooperation are much more successful than those that build on coercion and fear. In my entire foreign experience I can single out two stages: a practical stage and a theoretical one. The former encompasses my summer visits to the US and Europe on Work and Travel Programs. That showed me the practical benefits of living in democracies: higher standards of living, longer life-expectancy, and so on. The theoretical part includes

my studies at Sussex University in England - that gave me an insight into why standards of living are higher in democracies than in authoritarian states (a scientific explanation, so to say).

What needs to be done in order to enable more people to get this outside view you are talking about?

International summer exchange programs are just as important as sponsorship of academic placements at foreign universities. Also, contacts with local opposition activists make a lot of sense. I attended your Open-Forum in Vilnius as its topic – Citizenship Education – looked interesting to me and I wanted to meet similarly minded people from Europe. Citizenship education is what is missing in Belarus and I see it as a way of uniting the people of Belarus and shaping our national identity.

In the West and the Centre of our continent, many people perceive “Europe” as something opposing their national belonging.

I don't fully share this view. To me, becoming European means embracing common European values while preserving specific national idiosyncrasies. The famous slogan of Europe is “United in Diversity”. For Belarusians, turning towards Europe means protecting and winning back our historic national identity, turning towards Russia would mean destroying and erasing it.

This means, for you Russia or Europe are more than geographic terms and belonging to either side is more than being part of a political bloc?

I believe the difference is much more significant. It is a matter of mentality and values. We all know how differently Europe and Russia behave on the international arena – the arguments they use in their political discourse are different. It reflects the fact that the mentalities are different. Where Europe relies on logic, Russia relies on brutal force.

Let me be provocative: aren't the problems the Belarusians to formulate a clear identity and civic concept of their own nation the perfect proof, that they are "more Russian than European"?

It is difficult to have a consensus in a nation. On the one hand, there are a lot of people here who understand very clearly that we are a European nation. If you look back historically, you will see that in the past the area now known as Belarus used to be a part of The Great Principality of Lithuania. Then it came into the orbit of Russia, and after that Soviet assimilation came about. But despite all that its historical roots are still European. Our pro-Soviet government is trying to disguise and eradicate those roots by manipulating academic curricula at schools and universities, but fortunately a lot of people remember history. On the other hand, many others – I'd say, the majority - are confused about the past of our country. The political elite is taking advantage of this confusion, because it can brainwash people and pacify them into obedient labour at state-owned companies while the elite itself can enjoy a luxurious lifestyle that feeds off the energy of the confused. But the people are slowly beginning

to realize what is happening in the country. And it's making them angry.

I meant the mentality or the political culture or the absence of a civic political culture. Your western neighbours had a clear identity and there were many people who had an idea of the future of the own nation, which made them take things in their own hands.

I do not think that civic political culture is non-existent here. It is suppressed. It operates at the minimum level, waiting for the right time to flourish, like a snow-drop in the winter. It might die though, if the winter lasts for too long. But there are heralds of spring already – the people who are now in prison for political reasons, who are ready to suffer for their ideals.

So you see Belarus unavoidably at the crossroads between Russia and the EU in a sense that it will be either part of either one or the other?

I don't think it will be part of the EU for a very, very long time, but I fear that it could become part of Russia very quickly. I think we should steer clear of Russia, and develop on our own as a proud independent nation, and somewhere down the line – who knows? – maybe we will be able to join the EU and in doing so to rediscover our historic roots and political identity.

What would it mean for you personally if things did not develop as you hope?

If Belarus gets annexed by Russia, that would be the end of my hopes. It will cease to be my country, and I will definitely leave it. And I am sure that the majority of the intellectual elite would also leave. Only the people who care about nothing but money and food will stay.

So what is essential for protecting the seeds you were talking about? For encouraging those who are in favour of a peaceful democratic change?

What's important is giving moral support to the brave people who are unjustly persecuted here. If they see that the world community sympathizes with them, they will not be broken. From my own experience I can tell you that when one lives in this sort of absurd environment and has enough education to understand what is really happening, one can think: "Is it the world around me that's crazy, or is it just me?" If people from democratic countries voice their support, many more Belarusians will put their doubts aside and funnel their energy into fighting for Belarus I would be proud to be part of.

Europe and me:

Outsiders inside the Union (Norway)

By Ingvild Lindgren Skarpeid

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I'm in a European state of mind.

It is a sunny September afternoon in Paris. Having just moved to the cultural capital of Europe, I have decided to go and see what is one of Paris' greatest works of architecture and its historical pride and joy: the Panthéon.

"Your residence permit, Mademoiselle, s'il vous plaît?"

"Pardon? Residence permit? But I'm Norwegian – I don't have a residence permit because I don't need a residence permit within the EU! No? But I have a valid student card for both France and England?"

"Yes, but Mademoiselle, I need proof of residence." Then, in an ice-cold voice: "Norway's not in Europe. If you don't have proof of residence in Europe I'm afraid I can't let you in for free."

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<http://www.europeandme.eu/7brain/416-outsiders-inside-europe>

As a Norwegian I am often quite interestingly reminded when travelling and living abroad, that Norway is not in Europe. Or, a bit more precisely: we are not members of the European Union. Two referendums in 1972 and 1994 have confirmed the Norwegian people's "no" so far – a conscious positioning outside the political fellowship that is the EU. Still, I find myself wondering why I feel offended when the Germans talk about their "Europa" as if it were not my Europe, as if we don't live in the same reality. Is it really a given fact that participating in Europe means participating in the EU? It seems so.

The EU outsiders, alongside all other European countries, are participating more than ever in cultural exchanges with our neighbours. Since Erasmus began in 1987, two million students left to spend a semester or more elsewhere on the European continent with Erasmus, and there are additional similar academic arrangements. In all these agreements, non-EU countries may also be full members, side by side with equal rights to those of their EU neighbours: the Erasmus agreement, for example, is shared by 31 European countries, including Turkey, Iceland and Liechtenstein, who are not in the EU. [...]

Although we are all Europeans on this small continent, some are not fortunate enough to be EU Europeans. For the European Economic Area (EEA) countries, economic agreements ensure that vital access to the European markets and the movement of individuals are as unrestricted as for any EU member state. Thus, the average Norwegian will for example hardly ever notice that she is not a 'real' European. Furthermore, we

participate in, and are equally ashamed of, the musical quality of the Eurovision Song Contest every year alongside our EU neighbours [...].

However, when the question of European participation becomes political, our standards are sharpened and the competition is fiercer. This is illustrated by the debate over the eligibility of Turkey for the EU, a debate also concerning the limits of our cultural fellowship and of tolerance at a political level.

A 'real' European?

Among a group of Turkish students in Paris – here on Erasmus of course – is Can Eren. Sitting together in a typical French student restaurant, a girl from Oslo and an Istanbulian are acting as cosmopolitan as can be. Can is well educated, well spoken and well dressed. He is young, interested and perhaps more well informed about European life, EU policies and economy than any French person you might meet. How come?

"Of course I'm up to date with the EU debates, I'm a Turk! Like most 'Stambouliotes' I feel more European than Turkish." In fact, Turkey was one of the first countries to participate actively in European projects since the end of the Second World War. It was a founding member of NATO, one of the first countries to enter the Council of Europe and has been an associate of the EU since 1963. Turkey's present EU application was submitted in 1987, but still it seems like a political impossibility to accept Turkey into Europe and into the EU.

The articles on pages 44 - 49 are taken from our media partner "Europe & Me":

Outsiders inside the Union by Ingvild Lindgren Skarpeid (E&M Magazine N° 7)
Dear Neighbour by Quentin Martens and Nena de Keersmaecker (E&M Magazine N° 9)

Europe & Me is a European online magazine primarily dealing with European topics. It originated from a project of the Studienkolleg zu Berlin in 2007. Since July 2008 it has been published quarterly. Currently eleven editors and more than a hundred writers all over Europe cooperate voluntarily. Europe & Me was the National Winner in Great Britain of the Charlmagne Youth Prize awarded by the European Parliament in 2010 and received the First Prize on the European level in 2011.

Citizens of Europe and Europe & Me have been cooperating for quite some time already. We plan to further intensify this: From October 2011 on we will coordinate our activities from the same office in Berlin.



Thus, however much Can and his fellow 'Stambouliotes' would like to join the Union, they are not allowed. [...] But according to Can this is easily explained: "The Turkish population has now passed over 70 million whereas the part of the population which follows the Ataturk ideology, or those who are well educated and prefer democratic and European structures, is not more than 20 million. In addition, these 20 million live mostly in the west of Turkey. Thus you have a division both in geography and politics: if Turkey were to join the union, 50 million non-Europeans culturally and geographically speaking would also become members. I agree with European politicians; the borders of Europe need to be set somewhere."

Clearly, the cases for the handful of EU outsiders are all different: some are wanted in the Union, some not. The fact that some countries have chosen not to be a part of the political entity that is the European Union does not exclude them from the much larger cultural melting pot that is and has always been Europe. Cultural participation seems to transcend the political framework. Therefore the choice of Istanbul as the European Culture Capital of 2010 is an interesting one. A paradoxical choice for some and an important political signal for others.

Still, however much Can feels European, however much his Istanbul is the cultural capital of our continent for a year, his country is politically not in the Union. Nor is Norway. But one thing in particular separates Norway from the Turks: my fellow countrymen in the north seem simply not to be interested in participating formally in the EU. Maybe this voluntary exclusion is a

proof that the French lady is right: I am not a real European if my country does not want to participate – either you're inside or you're outside.

Some want out, some want in, but aren't allowed, and the rest won't sign

Would the European identity of people such as me and Can be strengthened if our countries joined the European Union? Being 'inside' seems to be important from an 'outsider's' point of view. [...] So far, the EU's identity has largely been defined politically, and has perhaps become a Brussels-phenomenon. Policies connecting "Europe with its citizens" have been spat out frequently, but to limited success so far. Therefore, the most successful EU slogan until today is perhaps "Unity as diversity," a slogan reflecting both the aspirations and the reality of Europe. Despite political and cultural differences the union functions as a mediator, a day-to-day compromise between the 27 nation states that comprise it.

But this approach needs to lead us somewhere in the long term. The feeling of identity and the incentive to vote in EU elections are heavily dependent on each other. The EU is struggling more than ever with the question of internal participation and apathy towards central decision-making. The low degree of identification with the EU may be a cause of this: as shown in a 2008 survey from the Eurobarometer, 91 percent of the interviewees felt attachment to their nations. In contrast, only 49 percent felt an attachment to the European Union, a number reflected in the voting turnout in the EU-parliament elections the following summer of

2009, which reached a new record low despite its media coverage and extensive promotion.

Furthermore, as 'project Europe' stands now, with the immediate danger of armed conflict between its members reduced to close to zero, anti-EU sentiments are again being raised from the 'inside' and not only from the periphery. Certain forces seem to want out of the union – take the UK nationalist movement fronted by BNP, who are actually represented in the European Parliament. Others seem to hesitate in signing important agreements – see this issue's "European Flop", Václav Klaus – and meanwhile vital parts of the EU are left in limbo.

Yes, the EU has its share of functional problems. But despite the everyday problems the EU faces, it has no doubt come a long way towards its goal of bringing Europe closer together. [...] So, can there be another solution to the combined participation in Europe and the European Union? The solution might lie in the question of which comes first – participation in EU or the development of an "EU identity."

The European Citizen – One who participates

Academics and laymen, Eurosceptics as well as Eurofanatics, have voiced the concern for over five decades that the European project has no meaning for the Brussels bureaucrats, and no foreseeable end-point unless the objective is a unified European state, à la "The United States of Europe." An academic somewhat modifying this prediction is Willelm Maas, professor of political science at York University, Canada.

According to Maas [...] whether it is constructive or necessary to imagine a future "United States of Europe," the formation of a "European Citizen" has indeed already begun, and is no coincidence. The EU has long ago realised that there is no road to success without a solid sense of belonging to Europe. Europe is shared geography, shared history and a shared future. It includes the project of the EU, but is also the millennium-long history of a myriad of peaceful nation states closely linked through our Kings and Presidents, our languages, science and literature. As Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac formulated it in 1995, the point is to create "Europe as a homogeneous space."

A few individuals advocate a real 'homogeneous' space – a unified Europe under one constitution functioning as a nation state. For most, a less strict notion of cultural and legal belonging appears to be the most probably solution for Europe and the EU. Nevertheless, one factor in this argument remains constant: one simply cannot talk about political participation without mentioning cultural participation. Without this, it will be difficult, yes impossible, to function politically and democratically. Civic participation will simply not occur without a feeling of belonging.

This is the curse and blessing of the EU: our different nationalities and cultural backgrounds will not fade.

As Can expresses it: "The problem of preserving one's cultural identity but maintaining our mutual solidarity is one of the greatest challenges facing Europe."

Europe and me:

Dear Neighbour

By Quentin Martens and Nena De Keersmaecker

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Usually in E&M's Dear Neighbour article series, two neighbouring countries exchange letters about their common history and their current conflicts or difficulties. But in this issue the letters are posted within the borders of one country: the Kingdom of Belgium. It is a founding member of the EU and it is at the heart of Europe, not only because it hosts the institutions but also because it is the country of origin of many of Europe's finest artists, such as the Brueghel family, Paul Rubens, Hieronymus Bosch, René Magritte, and Jacques Brel. It was a major imperial coloniser in Africa and the centre of the industrial revolution, alongside England. For years now, however, the country has seemed to be on the verge of breaking apart. The elections held by the kingdom in June made the Flemish separatists the largest fraction of the parliament. While the coalition negotiations will take months, Belgium is set to take over the rotating Presidency of the European Council on July 1st.

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<http://www.europeandme.eu/9brain/484-dear-neighbour-flanders-and-wallonia>

French-speaking Community Letter:

Dear Nena,

In our Belgium, I am so sad about the lazy inability of French speakers to really understand the Flemish point of view. I am revolted by the prejudices that we hold against the Flemish: "they want to separate", "they don't have any desire for solidarity", "they are racist".

Our country is like a couple. Dutch-speaking Flanders plays the role of the 40-year-old wife who wants to take one weekend off every month to go out with her friends on a city trip. However, her husband, the French community in Wallonia, has been saying no for years. But we French speakers do not try to understand the reasoning and deep desires of our wife. Following that scenario in a couple, after a while, the wife leaves the husband, when it was not at all her intention to do so at the beginning.

We are blind, egocentric and lazy husbands. Most French speakers don't care about Flanders individually, and the politicians don't care collectively. That must change.

Honestly. French-speaking politicians don't have a project for Wallonia, except unity. But unity does not mean anything if the voice of the other half is not listened to. We ought to want each of us to find our place in the relationship, rather than forcing the other to give in by imposing our views and refusing theirs. The results of the election were predictable. I was not surprised by the N-VA score (the Flemish separatist party, which gained 27 of 150 seats in parliament). I was surprised by the inability of the French speakers to

consider what is really meant by this choice, made by one quarter of the Flemish. It does not mean separatism, it means shooting harder to understand each other. Because of laziness on our part, the wife starts to get nervous and to wonder if she has her place in the couple.

A couple needs a common project. Flanders has a project. Wallonia does not. You have hope of becoming a more efficient country. We don't. We have fear. Fear of your fears, fear of your project. Fear of being alone, faced with nothing but ourselves.

How is it possible that some important politicians never talk to each other? Isn't it the first thing we learn at university when we do groupwork together: to respect one another, to listen to one another, to offer confidence, to polish the individual's relations, to exchange phone numbers?

It is now our responsibility, for us, the new Belgian generation, to bring back ideals in politics. How? By engaging in politics without playing partitocratic and community games. We have to go further, we have to be more exigent, we have to bring people who are engaged in politics together despite their different political views. This is essential because Belgium is a symbol of being able to live together, opening our minds, and refusing to be lazy. Being Belgian is not about staring at each other. It is about picturing each other.

And Belgium, as a symbol of Europe, must not become the symbol of a Europe which gave up on itself.

Best wishes, Quentin

Quentin Martens studied sociology, philosophy, European studies and conflict resolution in Belgium (UCL), Sweden (Uppsala), Poland (College of Europe), Toronto and Paris. He loves poetry, history and movies on social questions. He worked at the Cabinet of the European Commissioner Michel on development and humanitarian aid, and is now working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Belgian Presidency. He is editor of the social sciences journal Emulations (www.revue-emulations.net).

Nena de Keermaecker is 19 years old. She is in her second year studying languages and literature at the free university in Brussels (VUB). Nena spends most of her time acting, reading, writing and playing music. She wants to become a scenarist.

Flanders, Dutch-Speaking Community Answer:

Dear Quentin,

I also realise that a lot of things need to change drastically in our small but restless country. The parties in the previous election kept on messing everything up. Month after month, year after year. The quicker Belgium reached a turning point, the better. Now we have reached one with the elections in June. I'm just not sure if NV-A is the right answer to our problems.

The victory of NV-A was indeed very predictable. The Flemish people were getting tired of the dragging negotiations that always led nowhere. NV-A seemed to be the only party that promised efficient solutions, so the choice was quickly made for the many irritated Flemings. But I'm not quite sure that NV-A is going to solve Belgium's many problems. However, NV-A will get rid of one of the most important problems: it will give Flanders more authority and therefore enlarge its individuality. Less social security money will flow towards Wallonia, so it will have to learn to stand on its own feet and become more responsible for itself. Many Flemish people consider the Walloons as lazy little children who spend their pocket money, received from mum and dad (Flanders), on the wrong stuff.

We also have to remember that things used to be totally different. Sixty years ago, the flourishing economy of Wallonia lured a big part of the Flemish working class. In a certain way, Wallonia also supported Flanders. The relationship between Mrs. Flanders and Mr. Wallonia is based on many years of contradiction. In many ways, they are even each other's opposite. Not only on

the political field where Flanders is rather right-orientated and Wallonia rather left-orientated, but also in terms of culture and, of course, language.

Ever since the birth of Belgium in 1839, and even before this point, Dutch-speaking people have always been repressed. The French language was considered as the main language, Dutch was the language for the common, somewhat ordinary people. It's not a big surprise that not only the French-, but also the Dutch-speaking Belgians wanted to preserve as much as possible of their self-esteem. Wallonia indeed acted like a stubborn husband who knows only one answer: "No". But now NV-A will not ask for your "yes", they will just enforce it. In my opinion, this isn't the best way to solve a problem. I don't think NV-A's tactic will bring Flanders and Wallonia closer together; on the contrary, our already very fragile bond will keep on getting thinner and thinner until we become complete strangers.

In my opinion, the Walloons have the right to be anxious, especially after almost thirty percent of the Flemish have voted NV-A to the top. The NV-A doesn't shout the word separatism from the rooftops anymore, but an independent Flanders in Europe is still their ultimate goal. They will indeed solve many problems, but not the most important. They will fix Flanders, but keep on damaging Belgium. So yes, it is time to work together as grown-ups instead of as selfish little children who only want what they can't get. We will only achieve what we want, if we start listening to each other and if each of us sets a bit of his Walloon or Flemish self-esteem aside.

Nena De Keersmaecker

Thoughts on Greek debt crisis and EU

by Dimitrios Gkatzogiannis



Dimitrios Gkatzogiannis, 27 years old, was born in Athens, Greece. He studied in United Kingdom, today he lives in Frankfurt a.M., Germany, and works in IT. For Citizens of Europe he reflects on his home country's situation and gives an insiders' outside perspective on the issue.

Undoubtedly, all Greek eyes are now pointed not only towards the heavy austerity measures that will eventually downgrade the living standards for the majority of the Greek population but also towards the bankruptcy danger that threatens the country. According to reports from the IMF, Greece will spend hundreds of billions of Euros on bank interest debt and refinancing payments over the next 6 years alone, which makes it easy to understand how critical the situation is for the population. Less money will be spent on hospitals, schools, pensions and the unemployment rate will dramatically increase, leaving especially the youngsters in a desperate position to start an independent life. I personally, grew up with the idea that Greece will advance and blossom through entering the Euro zone. Now, I am confronted with the "new truth", i.e. that I come from a beautiful but corrupted and unstable country with an unsafe future. It is then logical that thousands of people are continuing to gather in squares to demonstrate mainly against the Greek government that brought the country into this mess and also against the rough measures that IMF with the blessing of the EU has appointed. They have been using social media like blogs, twitter, friendfeed and facebook as well as e-mails and SMS messages to organize these peaceful sitting protests. Youngsters, middle-aged people, pensioners, women with children, disappointed voters of the two main parties, left wing people, unemployed, people from all social classes with different backgrounds and different political colors compose this public demonstration. Everybody is welcome, as long as they do not represent someone. Everybody is able to take the microphone and express his views, opinions, solutions about the crisis and the current situation. They are

all people that will not stop until they see a positive change or until someone finally pays.

Nobody neglects the fact that the crisis in Greece has been mostly created internally, however there also is a lingering fear that each external financial intervention is aiming only on buying time but not to deal with the root of the problem, a fact that can lead to destructive results. You see, when Greece entered the Eurozone, Greek politicians covered up the country's economic instability and the rest of the EU member states turned a blind eye to the obvious forthcoming economical shortcomings in order to ensure future political stability. They all used the idea and the concept of the EU integration as an excuse only to serve particular interests by giving great promises to the people i.e. that their quality of life will improve. Unfortunately for all of us, it backfired and now the economic instability threatens the political stability and the future is either way uncertain. But it is the people who have to suffer the consequences. Therefore, I am slightly reluctant to trust the pure intentions of the EU's help. I have the feeling that, in the way things have evolved, the Euro currently works as an economical prison for Greece. Perhaps it would be better for Greece to be liberated, devalue, recreate its own currency, make exports cheaper, make it easier for the tourists to visit and slowly get back on its feet. But this path contradicts the concept of the European integration via the Euro zone. If EU lets Greece to default, then the fear of contagion will spread. Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Italy are heard to be next in line of facing a big debt crisis. The domino effect will be inevitable and when there is no money left from the bailouts the whole system will

eventually breakdown. For that reason, I sense that the rehabilitation of Greece is vital for the survival of the whole EU integration concept. A failure in the strategy of the economic salvation of Greece would be a regression for Europe. Will the EU's response to deal with huge debts, which rise from country to country, be effective in order to maintain a stable status and keep the Euro zone intact? Time will tell.

As for the Greeks, the biggest challenge they have to face is adapting to the new situation and trying to overcome the difficulties that come with it in a proper way. Strikes and demos are not really constructive. On the contrary, they create a big problem given the fact that tourists will have second thoughts coming to Greece when they see such scenes of violence happening in the centre of Athens. Greece has already lost its credibility at least in the eyes of other Europeans. There are many EU voters who logically complain to be treated unfairly having to pay for the mess that Greeks created without getting something in return. Business partners are reluctant to invest in such an unbalanced economy. Therefore, Greeks have to change their mentality on the way they see and do things. In political elections, the challenge will be to vote for people who are not politically eroded, for people who are fresh in politics and are not prone to be influenced or manipulated by anyone. The current crisis should be considered as a chance to work on the weaknesses and move on helping the needed reformations to be made in the economy, in education, in production, in the functioning of the state in general in order to form a country which will finally transmit healthiness and trust not only to its own people but also to all the European citizens.

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Beyond the Crisis:

Europe is going through hard times. A world financial crisis in 2008 turned into an economic crisis. In consequence, several Euro-zone countries are experiencing severe problems regarding their state finances. As a result, institutional and conceptual weaknesses of the European Union are becoming obvious, while the European readiness for joint action, solidarity and cross-border intervention are put at a serious test.

The experience gained in these current times of a multi-dimensional crisis will strongly determine the future (self-)image of the European Union. It will affect the expectations, hopes and fears of European citizens all over the continent.

What will be the impact of the current events? How will they shape Europe 'beyond the Crisis'? And how do we react and act based on new lessons learned? These are the questions Citizens of Europe will focus on during the coming months. Stay informed – and get involved.

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*For more visit our website
www.citizens-of-europe.eu
or our facebook group
www.facebook.com/citizens.of.europe*

Essay:

Are there Citizens of Europe?

By Frank Burgdörfer



Europe is experiencing a crisis in the original, the Greek meaning of the word: An unstable situation, a time of decision and judgement. A lot – if not everything – seems to be at stake.

Even if populists hope to prevail, I strongly believe that what we are going through will not be a crisis of ‘Europe’, if Europeans stand firm with conviction and are creative at the same time. The crisis is demonstrating the insufficiencies of the political framework of our monetary Union. As often during the development of the European Union, we have moved ahead towards new aims without being prepared for all events thinkable and possible. This has been our strategy for decades, as we have learned since the 1950s that we would never manage to agree abstractly and in advance regarding all future events. Yet we have always found appropriate means for dealing with concrete challenges. Nobody doubted in the 90s, that the monetary union would need more political and fiscal coordination. But since some thought first of fiscal control while others demanded economic coordination, the decision on the framework necessary was delayed. Instead, we implemented regulations which were a meagre compromise, not enforced and thus not respected by anybody.

When talking about potential problems, we could not agree upon solutions. Now the problems are real. We are in a crisis, which will be a turning point in any case. It will either lead to the consolidation of the monetary union existing by a new political framework, or a new monetary system. As always during the integration process, the new will be revolutionary, without precedent, and leading to new challenges again.

These days, some points seem often neglected or implicitly questioned, although they are as valid as ever:

- “Europe” is necessary; the geographic and demographic conditions remain unaffected by the crisis, just as the conclusions we have drawn from our past.
- “Europe” is not the Euro; major achievements like the European freedoms should never be linked to the fate of the Euro. The monetary union shows structural insufficiencies, which need to be taken care of – that is all and it is enough of a challenge.
- “Europe” is a means; it is not an aim in itself. No administrative or institutional structure deserves support, if it does not prove to be efficient and beneficial for the people. Avoiding the acknowledgement of trouble never helped overcoming it.
- “Europe” is a work in progress; it never claimed to be finished and perfect. The only way of saving the European idea from becoming an ideology is to expose it to criticism and to treat the idealist vision separately of the real political phenomena it is bringing about. As any other idea, the one of uniting the continent remains alive and relevant by being challenged.
- European solutions are superior to national ones; administrative and institutional structures taking Europe in perspective as a whole are still and will be in our common interest, as they are the only approach to avoid dominance, tension and mistrust in Europe and to keep influence in global affairs.

After living in often problematic interdependence for centuries, we Europeans learned how to benefit from a continuous process of problem solving. We established comparable rights and responsibilities for everybody. And we found ways to constrain enduring (national) advantage on the account of others.

Those promoting this approach often complain about „Europe“ being neglected. This time, nobody doubts that it really matters. Nobody can escape, nobody can disregard, nobody can claim not to be involved, addressed or affected. This time, Europe is in the centre. Europe is not a dream, a vision, a hope any more. It is a political reality, with all shortcomings and risks real phenomena bare in contrast to fantastic ones.

If we are really sure about the aims and the general approach, we must also have the courage to openly address all concrete problems which occurred and to question all solutions achieved up until now, in order to make real improvements possible.

Those politically in charge need the readiness to listen, because otherwise they will never be understood and never find the trust leadership needs. And all the many others who are interested and care, need to accept different opinions, to hear about different perspectives, to challenge their convictions and their arguments.

Thus it is time for debate, time for an exchange of controversial points of view, time for ‘normal’ democratic politics. Time to listen, time to think and time to speak.

.....

“Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation.” (Oscar Wilde)

Organising activities:

The Board of Citizens of Europe

Elected by the General Assembly
on 7th May 2011 in Landau in der Pfalz (Germany)

Frank Burgdörfer, Chair

Frank, born 1972, is economist and political scientist. He runs an agency realising civic education and training projects in Berlin.

Jürgen Tobisch, Berlin, Vice-Chair, responsible for Berlin activities

Jürgen, born 1974, is a film studies graduate. He organizes film programmes and festivals and works as a project manager in a subtitling company in Berlin.

Maaret Jokela, Basel, Vice-Chair, responsible for Europe-wide activities

Maaret, born 1982, graduated in political sciences and is working for a women's human rights organization in Bern.

Rasmus Randig, Secretary General

Rasmus, born 1990, is currently doing an EVS in Ankara, Turkey. After this he will be student of the interdisciplinary "Leibniz Kolleg" in Tübingen.

Tobias Kunow, Berlin, Treasurer

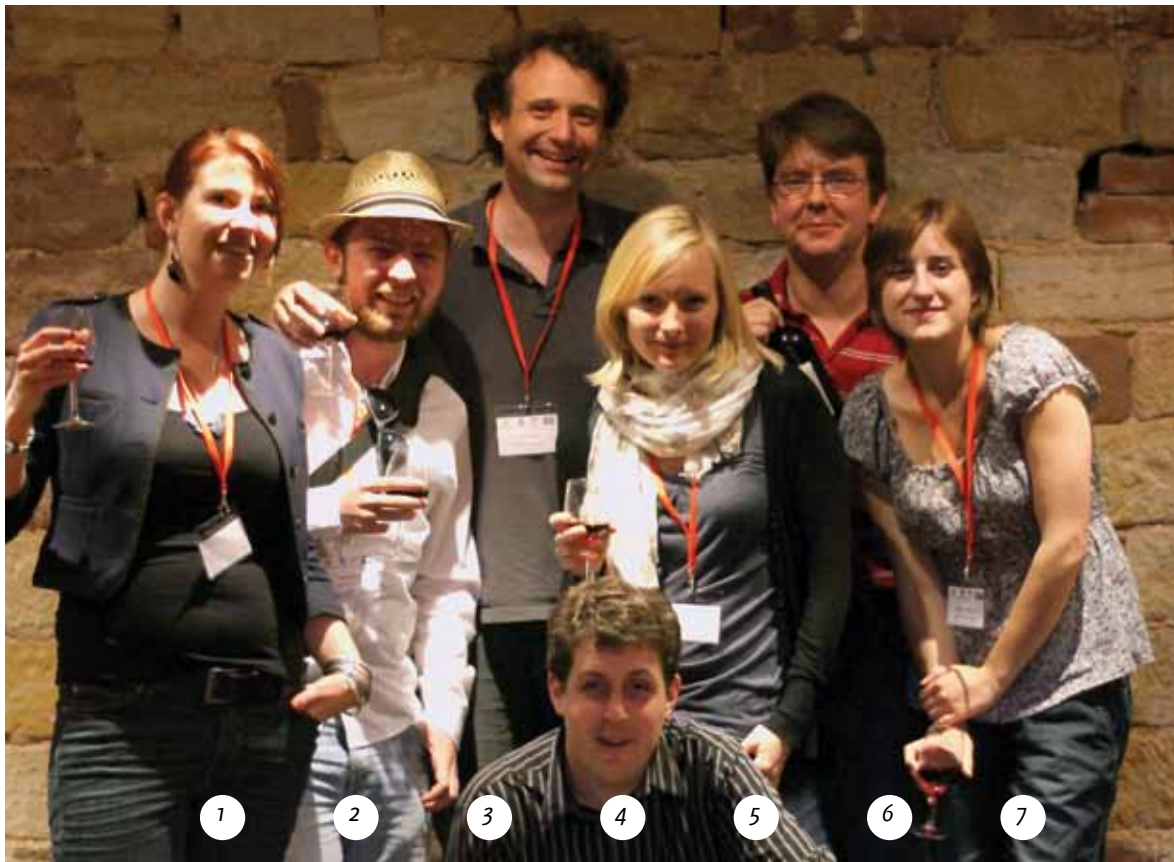
Tobias, born 1979, graduated in Media Studies, History and Literature. He is responsible for the programme of an arthouse cinema and works as an editor in Berlin.

Susanne Backmund, Würzburg, Fundraising and Public Relations

Susanne, born 1990, studies "Political and Social Studies" (Bachelor of Arts) at Julius-Maximilians-University Würzburg.

Nina Vredegoor, Event Coordinator

Nina, born 1986, just finished her studies of Social Work in Amsterdam and is now looking for a job that fits her interests and ambitions.



- 1 - Nina Vredegoor
- 2 - Rasmus Randig
- 3 - Tobias Kunow
- 4 - Jürgen Tobisch
- 5 - Maaret Jokela
- 6 - Frank Burgdörfer
- 7 - Susanne Backmund

Office number three:

You want to see where we work?

Kiefholzstraße 2
D-12435 Berlin, Germany



In January 2006, Citizens of Europe opened a first office in Berlin Kreuzberg. At that time, we welcomed our first volunteer, Gita Vasickova from Czech Republic. As the network became more active and we decided to host two volunteers, we moved to another place in Berlin-Treptow in August 2007. After the creation of the position of an office administrator in April 2009, the situation there became more and more difficult, sometimes several people needed to use the same desk.

Since March 2011, we have new rooms which gives us a lot of flexibility. We share it with several small companies and can use a tea kitchen, a meeting room and a huge roof terrace. From October 2011 on we will have a third volunteer – and we will host our main media partner ‘Europe & Me’ in our office! Visit us when you are in Berlin. At Kiefholzstraße 2, entrance K2, 5th floor in Berlin Treptow!

2002 - 2011:

The Organization's Timeline

- 9 May 2002 Citizens of Europe is founded in Munich
- 6- 10 Apr 2003. Europakonvent (European Convention of Young Citizens) hosted by the German government in Berlin
- Nov 2003 European Tuesdays, monthly discussions on topics of European concern start in Berlin and Munich
- 20- 23 May 2004 Europakonvent II. is organised by Citizens of Europe and hosted by the German Federal Press- and Information Office
- June 2004 Project Polylog starts to survey opinions on European topics together with the Polish magazine Perspektywy
- 27 - 31 Oct 2004 The Union of 25 – Debating and experiencing the enlarged European Union, a simulation of EU-decision making is realised in Budapest in co-operation with the organisation U-Rope
- 19- 21 Nov 2004 The new border in the East. Consequences of EU Enlargement explored during a seminar in Berg Leoni in cooperation with the Bavarian Society for East European Affairs
- 4- 6 Feb 2005 1st Citizens' Weekend in Berlin sets priorities and develops project ideas
- Summer 2005 Establishment of E(U)SA 2020, a project collecting ideas on future transatlantic relations in Euratlantic Tuesdays and Seminars in various locations like Leuven, London or Stara Zagora.
- 11 - 13 Nov 2005. Kaliningrad: German past, Russian present, European future? features as 2nd seminar in Berg-Leoni (Munich) in cooperation with the Bavarian Society for East European Affairs
- 25 - 27 Nov 2005 2nd Citizens' Weekend in Praha decides to develop own training resources
- 1 Jan 2006 Citizens of Europe opens an office in Berlin-Kreuzberg, Gita Vasickova from Brno is the first EVS-volunteer hosted
- 24 - 28 May 2006 Presentation of the first round of the short film contest MyEurope during the Shooting Europe festival in Karlsruhe, Germany
- June 2006 Citizens of Europe becomes a key partner organisation of the Campaign for the European Citizens' Initiative/ECI
- Sept 2006 Publication of a booklet with selected Polylog survey answers
- 29 Oct - 5 Nov 2006 Training for Europe (t4e) starts with a first seminar on project management in Berlin
- 24 - 26 Nov 2006 3rd Citizens' Weekend in Gubin leads to new contacts to Eastern Europe and initiates the development of the OpenForum format

- 11 - 18 Mar 2007 Training for Active Civil Society (t4acs) in Baku
- 25 Mar 2007 Citizens of Europe presents its activities during the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaty celebrations in Berlin and collects of signatures for the European Citizens' Initiative
- 27 May - 2 June 2007 Training for Europe (t4e) in Belgrade
- 5 - 7 Oct 2007 4th Citizens' Weekend in Budapest Dialog '09 becomes a part of Citizens of Europe
- Oct 2007 Citizens of Europe and the European online platform point-e agree on close co-operation
- 9 - 18 Nov 2007 Screening of MyEurope films at different locations all over Europe
- 25 - 27 Jan 2008 OpenForum I (Berlin): Expanding citizenship in an age of immigration
(in cooperation with the Citizens' Foundation Berlin-Neukölln)
- 24 Feb - 2 Mar 2008 Training for Europe (t4e): "Activacting Youth", Berlin
- 14 - 16 Mar 2008 OpenForum II (Vilnius): Promoting citizenship by Education? (in cooperation with the European Humanities University)
- 4 - 5 Apr 2008 Council Meeting and General Assembly, Berlin; Art Interventions become a programme of Citizens of Europe
- 18 - 20 Apr 2008 OpenForum III (Wrzesnia): Defending citizenship against extremism and populism
(in cooperation with WSnRR0W Wrzesnia)
- 23 - 25 May 2008 OpenFora Coordination and Evaluation Workshop, Berlin
- 6 - 13 July Mathias Becker is the first EVS volunteer sent abroad (to Sofia)
- 6 - 13 July Belaplus 2008 in Warsaw (in cooperation with Kultur Aktiv e.V. (Dresden), Wolna Białoruś (Warsaw), and the Initiative Third Way (Minsk))
- 22 July - 10 Aug 2008 Art Intervention "The Return of the Gastarbajters II" In Pozarevac, Serbia
- 25 - 27 July 2008 OpenForum IV (Pozarevac): Mobility as a Form of Integration
- 8 - 13 Sept 2008 German-Russian Youth Parliament in Perm, Russia (in cooperation with Step by Step)
- 19 - 21 Sept 2008 OpenForum V (Prague): Values in Europe - Ideas and Realities (in cooperation with the European Values Association)
- Oct 2008 Screening of 'MyEurope' films all over Europe
- 17 - 19 Oct 2008 5th Citizens' Weekend in Berlin decides on a growth strategy and the establishment of the function of an executive officer
- 21 - 23 Nov 2008 OpenForum VI (Paris): Quarreling over Europe: How to achieve meaningful results
(in cooperation with the Maison de l'Europe de Paris)
- 30 Nov - 2 Dec 2008 Training for Europe: Activacting Youth. Training for Trainers in Non-Formal Learning Approaches (in Cascais, Portugal)

- 22 - 24 Jan 2009 OpenForum VII (Brussels): Mobilising Europe: Could democracy help?
- 27 Jan - 1 Mar 2009 Exhibition: Focus on Belarus - Terra Incognita (photos of Andrei Liankevich),
ACUDGallery Berlin (in cooperation with Kalegium, Pinsk; German Belarusian
Society; Reporters without Borders; Impreuna e.V.)
- 24 Feb - 8 Mar 2009 Exhibition: From the periphery (collection of Art Interventions 2008),
Dom Omladine Belgrade
- 7 - 9 Mar 2009 OpenForum VIII (Cascais): Daily Europeans - avant-garde or Dreamers?
(in cooperation with Rota Jovem)
- 27 - 29 Mar 2009 Council Meeting and General Assembly
2009, Berlin Gert Röhrborn becomes the association's first executive officer
- 8 - 10 May 2009 OpenForum IX (Budapest): The Balkans - Europe's (un-)wanted challenge?
(in cooperation with the Hungarian Europe Society)
- 29 - 31 May 2009 OpenFora Coordination and Evaluation Workshop, Berlin
- 15 - 22 Aug 2009 Training for Europe: Training course on transcultural learning, Berlin
(in cooperation with aidglobal, Fractal, Youth Forum Eye)
- 9 - 15 Oct 2009 Youth Exchange: Comic Youth: comics as a tool to discover cultural diversity and
enhance creativity, Berlin (in cooperation with Fair Trade Hellas, European Meeting
Centre, Rota Jovem, A.C.T.O.R.)
- 9 - 28 Oct 2009 Exhibition: Rising of the Dwarfs: Berlin-Dresden-Warschau - Joint Affair
(in cooperation with Orange Alternative Foundation)
- 23 - 25 Oct 2009 6th Citizens Weekend in Berlin agrees on internal reforms and simplifications of
the statutes
- 20 - 29 Nov 2009 Screening of 'MyEurope' films all over Europe
- 26 Nov 2009 Participation in the conference: Active citizenship and participation through the
media (Madrid)
- End Nov 2009 Seminar: "mostly-bridges" at conference centre IBB (Minsk). A German-Belarusian
joint venture.

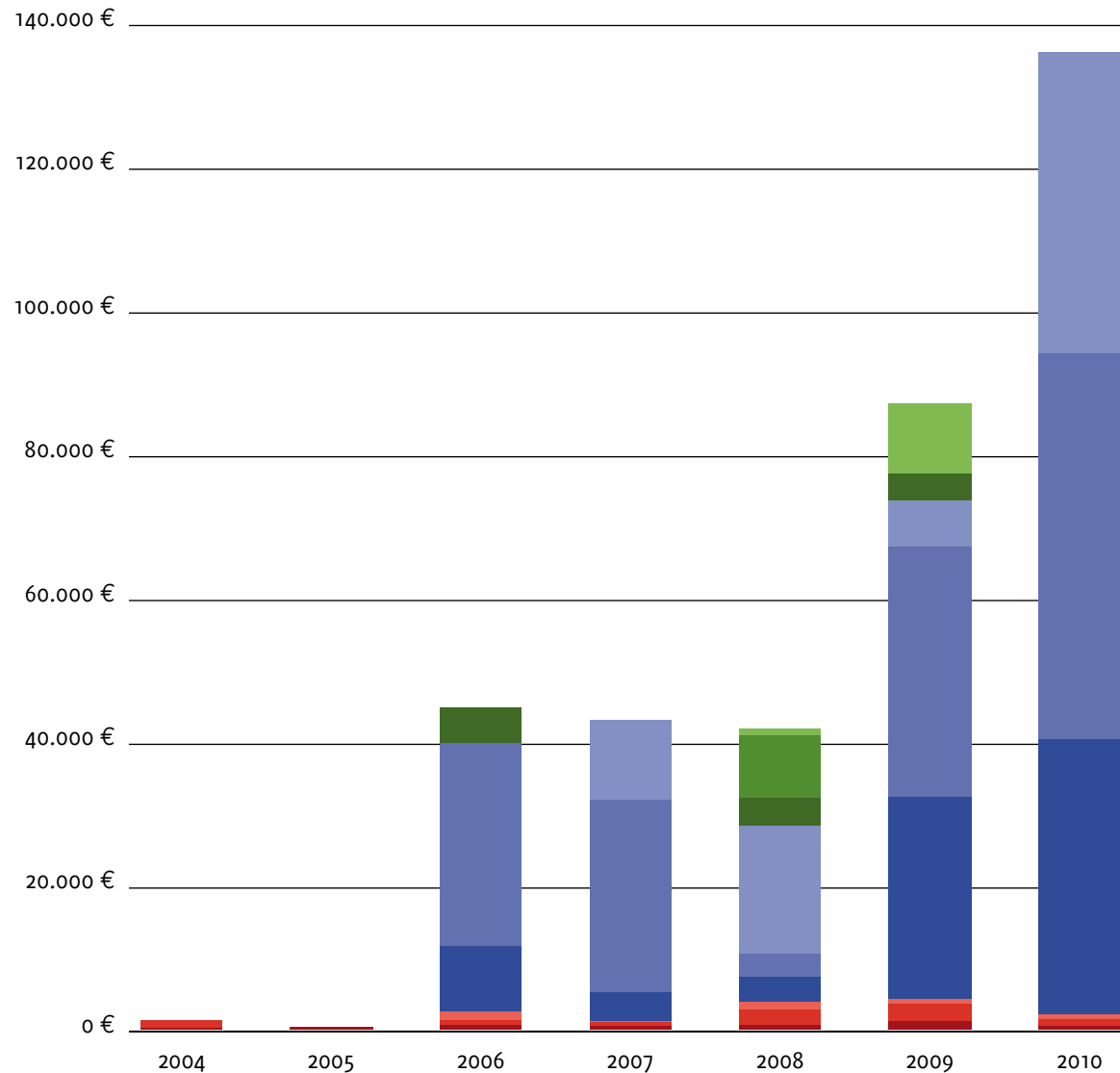
- March - May 2010 Berlin Symposia: Beyond Booming. European & American Baby Busters in the Light of 2020 (in cooperation with TN2020 and British Council)
- 21 June 2010 Citizens of Europe becomes member of the European Movement
- 25 - 31 July 2010 ACTIVacting: Training of trainers on youth participation and global challenges (Berlin). In cooperation with Glokal
- 24 - 26 Sept 2010 Preparatory Meeting for the Project "Volunteering 2011" in Landau/Pfalz
- 23 - 24 Oct 2010 First meeting of Southeast-European Activists on "Poverty in the Balkans"
- 19 - 28 Nov 2010 MyEurope films are shown all over Europe
- 25 - 27 Nov 2010 OpenForum X (Bruges): Faces and fakings of volunteering, in cooperation with AEDE
- 18 - 20 Feb 2011 OpenForum XI (Budapest): Changing your life, changing the world, in cooperation with the Hungarian Europe Society
- 25 - 30 Apr 2011 Involve me, Europe! Training on non-formal methodologies in civic education (in cooperation with Landeszentrale für pol. Bildung Baden-Württemberg)
- 3 - 9 May 2011 Youth seminar "Eurocoop - Europe as a group" (Alentejo, Portugal), in cooperation with Rota Jovem
- 5 - 8 May 2011 Citizens' Convention "Volunteering 2011" (Landau in der Pfalz), in cooperation with the City of Landau, Universität Koblenz-Landau and Europa Union e.V.
- 21 - 27 May 2011 Trans-national youth initiative „Neighbours together - the good thing of living side by side" (Ankara), together with System & Generation
- 24 Jul - 1 Aug 2011 Training Course on Creativity (Berlin)
- 2 - 5 Aug 2011 "I_Culture - Contemporary Crafts Workshop" (Berlin), in cooperation with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute

Money, money, money...

Overview of the financial development of the network

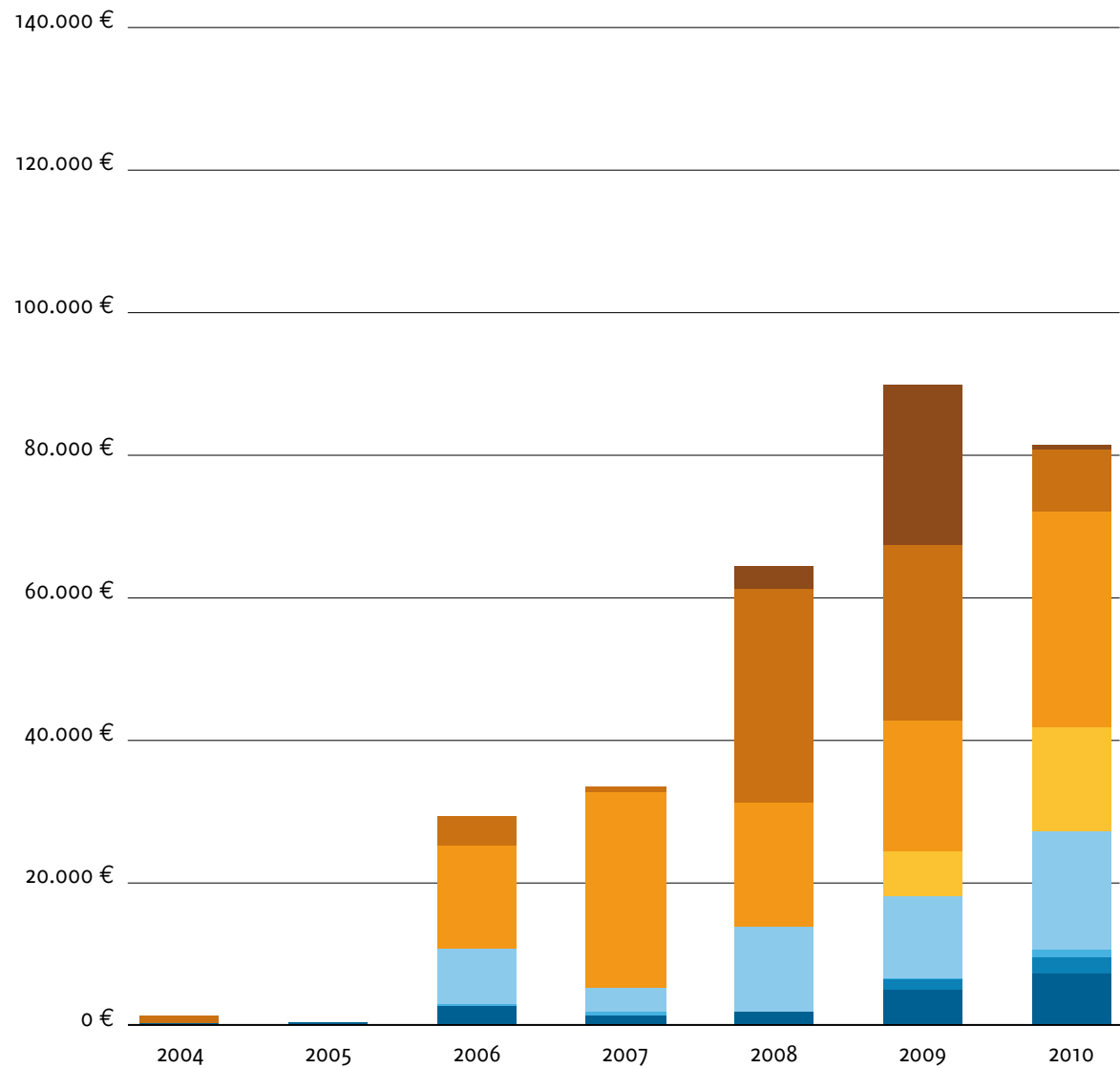
Income

- Foundations
- German Ministry for Family, Senior Citizens and Youth
- Aktion Mensch
- Europe for Citizens
- Youth in Action
- Youth in Action EVS
- Donations
- Participation Fee
- Membership Fee



Spending

- Arts & Culture
- Debate & Discussion
- Exchange & Training
- Volunteers & Interns - Sending
- Volunteers & Interns - Hosting
- Meetings
- Personnel
- Office



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Citizens of Europe e.V.

Kiefholzstraße 2, D-12435 Berlin, Germany.

Email: office@citizens-of-europe.eu

Web: www.citizens-of-europe.eu

Photos: Tanja Haberland, Susanne Backmund (p.21), Mara Nedelcu (p.16), Rasmus Randig (p. 20), Gert Röhrborn (p. 34-39)

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