

AN OPEN AUTO-ACTIVE SCHOOL FOR AN OPEN EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

SOME REFLECTIONS AROUND THE CONCEPT OF AN IDEAL SCHOOL FOR A GENERATION OF MUTANT TEENAGERS
(SHORT VERSION)

By [Marc Guiot](#)

Every possible step has been taken since the foundation act of Europe except perhaps two essential things: forging and teaching a common European culture and initiating a permanent democratic dialogue between teenagers across Europe.

Prior to politicians and media professionals, it is for the European citizens, - especially the younger among them - to take an active part in the dynamic construction of Europe by sketching a common vision that may gradually give a concrete form to what was dreamt initially by Europe's founding fathers. A European dream needs to be forged gradually through a dialogue of all with all and especially by Europe's younger citizens who have not yet been distorted and conditioned by euro-skepticism and Europhobia.

Amazingly, this issue was never raised within the European parliamentary Assembly and hardly tackled by the media.

Strictly speaking, sixty years after its foundation, there is still no such thing as a "European people", let alone a European public opinion in the sense of an American, German, French or Italian public opinion.

Yet there happens to be a collection or addition of 28 peoples belonging to an equal number of nations that adhere more or less softly to the European Project. As a matter of fact there are no European media, no European press, no European education system except for the often mentioned Franco-German Arte (less than 3% of the audience) or Euro-News that is far less viewed than the popular BBC World or CNN. And there is no equivalent for Voice of America, except perhaps our ambitious Eyes of Europe teaching platform. And there is neither an equivalent for the select and elitist network of European Schools for the happy few, the sons and daughters of "Eurocrats"; no equivalent for the British Open University for the average young European teenagers. Dramatically missing are genuine mass European media as well as a pan-European multimedia auto active education platform to promote and implement a true and genuine "direct" European democracy. There is real need for participative democracy in which the opinions and suggestions of young (and still young) citizens would be fully respected and taken into account in all transparency. What is basically absent is a vast citizen debate about what we really wish Europe to become.

But beforehand there ought to be a prerequisite: common teaching of a common language i.e. English, without which there is little hope for understanding each other, let alone communicate Europe-wide. If anything, this implies the foundation of an efficient and very pragmatic teaching method of English, the world's lingua franca which is only properly conveyed as a second language in some Northern countries and insufficiently in most Southern educational systems.

No wonder that every debate about the future of Europe should be strongly interfered by national, let alone nationalistic bias and interests.

It is no good crying about the non-existence of a European public opinion that will not, spring full grown and clad in armor from Zeus' forehead like Athena, the allegory of Greek democracy, which gave birth to our European democracy.

Is it simply inconceivable to consider stimulating and awakening a European public opinion as long as there is, strictly speaking, no European people.

Fernand Braudel maintained that the French identity was eventually forged in the middle of the 19th century both by French Railways and the introduction of obligatory public education.

National railways were used to convey (transport) national troops to the front and national education to boost nationalistic patriotism which resulted in a long European civil war that started in 1914 and only ended in 1989.

It is high time we turned the tide by a fresh approach i.e. by associating and involving European youngsters in this daring project. It is Eyes of Europe's ambition to endeavor and summon their energies, enthusiasms and interests in order to urge and teach them how to interact culturally and socially to hopefully look in the same direction, that of the European construction.

If we fail to offer our European teenagers concrete and realistic objectives for a European integration, there is a serious risk of disrupting the existing construct" Giscard d'Estaing (Europa p.131)

« La menace de dislocation du dispositif européen mis en place à Bruxelles apparaît à plusieurs signaux. Le plus préoccupant : c'est celui de la disparition du récit mythique européen. Pour un groupe âgé de moins de 35 ans, le taux d'abstention a été de 73 % ! Sans limite et sans résultats concrets sur le chômage le projet européen risque d'être abandonné par la génération montante en Europe. » (ibid. p. 134)

In other words, Europe needs a new story to fascinate its teenagers and youngsters. If we want them to become partners in the projects it is not enough to consult them, they actually need to be associated." (p. 177)

Therefore, Eyes of Europe chose to offer them a free tribune on a subject that is of basic concern to all of them: school and education.

Put in a nutshell, the European youngsters we questioned on this subject are dreaming of an ideal school that would be highly but not essentially virtual and interactive.

We want a school that makes us eager to learn, urging us to discover the fun to progress through personal experience, encounters and interactions. Instead of reading and analyzing a theatre play, why don't we watch a video of it or even better why don't we attend a live performance of it to boost our motivation and share a cultural experience.

We also need to be taught about being happy and living happily together. Put bluntly, we need education in happiness.

We need a school in which learners interact, also with their teachers. We also need a variety of sports to reduce teenage obesity and help us relax.

We are willing to learn English in family partnerships, exchanges and immersion abroad.

We demand teachers who are familiar with the newest technologies whose lessons are available on the internet. We wish to interact with them virtually and live but we don't stand for a school that is only on line, for we want eye contact with them and with teenagers of our age across Europe which we regard as essential for our development.

History, geography, art and eventually sciences should no longer be taught in fat syllabuses but by means of videos (eventually self-made videos), films, documentaries, exhibitions, virtual or live museum visits and outdoor excursions on all possible sites.

Learning and knowledge should be seen as a privilege, not a burden or punishment. Therefore we need an education system in which we are stressed neither by time, poor relations with teachers or excessive homework; neither alienated by the pressure of permanent testing and competition. We need and want to be motivated and stimulated.

More than anything, abstract lessons ought to be made interactive and a lot more concrete.

Basically, school is about interaction between pupils and teachers. If it is to be revolutionized, teachers need to be changed in the first place. Teaching ought to be seen as a call and as the noblest of all professions responsible for maintaining and hopefully improving the fundamentals of society. Teachers should teach us how to be familiar from an early age with new technologies but also and more basically what life is about. Internet is the library of the future and we need to be capable of handling it properly and with critical distance. But the stumbling stone of every reform should be in promoting interaction at all levels and in every sense of the word.

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