



Strasbourg, 13 June 2016

The Civic Roundtable

REPORT

for the attention of the Secretary General

of the Council of Europe

prepared by the
Fellows of the Civic Roundtable

The views set out in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the official opinion of the institutions they represent or work for. It is the result of a collective endeavour which means that individual contributors may hold contrasting views on specific issues.

Introduction

Co-organised by the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European School of Politics in Istanbul with the support of the Mercator Foundation and Council of Europe/EU South Programme II, this pilot edition of the Civic Roundtable continues the practice of the previous two International SPS Alumni Seminars (Strasbourg 2014 and Sarajevo 2015) to bring together selected alumni from the Schools of Political Studies. By inviting a number of young leaders from Western European countries to join the School Alumni, the Civic Roundtable enables a dialogue for participants from the whole of Europe, thus adding a new feature to the Network of Schools.

The 2016 Roundtable is structured into two working sessions: 2-4 May in Berlin and 16-17 June in Strasbourg. It aims to explore the current state of European and global governance and offers participants a platform to study trends and challenges, to build a peer resource network and to experiment on ways to forge a better civics across Europe and beyond. The list of participants and the programme of the Berlin session can be found in the Appendix.

At the heart of the Berlin phase of the Roundtable, which addressed relevant issues in different working formats, including a group-work exercise, were discussions on the current challenges to democracy, different visions for the future of Europe and trends around inclusive growth and inequality.

Europe today is affected by an accumulation of various long-lasting crises. Citizens across Europe feel increasingly frustrated with the European project and the way it is being handled by political actors at the national and European levels. National sentiments at the nation-state level reemerge. As highlighted by one of the speakers at Berlin, Kalypso Nicolaïdis, we are witnessing a situation of *engrenage*, where all crises are linked in a spiral of negative synergy, each one making the other harder to tackle. During the Berlin session of the Civic Roundtable, a special accent has been placed on trends and policies around migration as well as on Europe's capacity to respond to the current refugee crisis.

In November 2015, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe noted that there was a surplus of reaction and a deficit of reflection, as Europe headed into testing and uncharted waters. As a cross section of European young people, the fellows of the Roundtable took it on themselves to respond to this call.

The present reflections and proposals are the result of their group-work exercise in Berlin. They stem from the insight gained from two days of intense discussions with renowned scholars and politicians, and participants' own expertise. While bearing in mind the entire European context, the proposals to the Secretary General made here focus on the possible role of the CoE in addressing the issues discussed at the Berlin meeting.

The Civic Roundtable sees a crucial role for the Council Europe in confronting today's crises. The oldest pan-European institution and the custodian of our governance standards can be the incubator and galvaniser of fresh thinking and acting.

For decades, we have been on the receiving end of a suffocating discourse, codenamed TINA: “There is no alternative”. We instead are partial towards TAPAS: “There are plenty of alternatives”.

In these troubled times, the Fellows of the Civic Roundtable are convinced that the European civics we need has to start with listening well, talking better, and experimenting creatively with ways to build trust we will sourly need as we navigate new and testing waters.

We should start on this path without any more pretexts and procrastinations.

1. *Reinvigorating the European idea*

“Europe will survive the crises and become even more resilient. However, we strongly need a revitalisation of the European idea, a new founding of Europe. Without it, nationalistic tendencies will continue gaining ground and nationalism is the most dangerous path for Europe. Nationalism leads to war.”

Joschka Fischer, 2 May 2016

Reflecting upon the various historical phases that the European unification project has gone through over time almost inevitably leads to a more fundamental interrogation about the ultimate nature of Europe; about the most characteristic trait of that entity we call Europe.

For many, Europe is primarily defined as an endeavour and an ‘ideational’ entity, with a clear universalistic ambition. It permanently seeks to inspire and embrace any group willing to abide by the same set of values and principles, irrespective of its location. As a permanently open entity, the ‘ideational’ Europe however faces the constant challenge of internal heterogeneity, which may eventually cause its disruption.

The entire material and ‘ideational’ edifice on which Europe rests is the product of the Enlightenment and of its championing of reason. By emphasising critical rationality over dogmas of the religious or other kinds, the Enlightenment has brought about an unprecedented period of political reform as well as of economic and social growth - yet the Enlightenment heritage is not unstained. The emphasis on reason gave rise to a number of philosophies centred on the individual subject and nurtured a belief in science and progress.

The legacy of the European Enlightenment is thus ambivalent to say the least: it has led to the development of principles such as Human rights, democracy and the rule of law and of institutions promoting these principles (such as the CoE). Without Europe, rule based multilateralism around such institutions as the UN or the ICC would not have materialised or survived. However, the European cult of reason did not impede Verdun, Auschwitz, or the Algiers battle. In other words, rationality fathered science, citizenship and economic growth but also imperialism, fascism and colonialism.

We have the distinct feeling that ambitious narratives of the past about manifest destiny of Europe and its hard won achievements do not ring convincing and do not galvanise majorities. Europe’s role in the world inevitably colours these debates. Past centuries have witnessed multiple occasions where countries, now members of the CoE, waged war and conducted colonial enterprises. To this day, Europe aspires to being a force for good in the world. Some of the favorable self-assessment is of course justified. Yet, we also have to admit that our narratives are often more pristine than our conduct and we need to be self-critical and reflective.

This reflection needs to take into account the real fact that the current state of Europe is one of stagnation. Economically, the continent is growing at much lower rates than other world regions – when growing at all. Politically, the most advanced project of European unification, the EU, is suffering from deadlocks and has lost the ability to generate enthusiasm, as evidenced not only by polls but also by popular votes and referendums. Socially, most European citizens have ceased to look to the future with confidence and now look to their borders with fear.

At a philosophical level, Europe needs to come up with a new articulation of the role of reason - a means to keep the best of the Enlightenment while concomitantly excluding all forms of colonialism, imperialism and fascism. We suggest that the principle of non-domination may serve as a helpful philosophical compass to enhance the legitimacy of the European project both internally and externally.

We as the fellows of the Civic Roundtable are not troubled by Europe not being the centre of the world in the future. We are happy to see the power disparities in the world lessen, and we look forward to being inspired by, and on occasion to inspire, other parts of the world. We believe that the 21st century iteration of European Enlightenment will have to be centred on curiosity and humility, on doubt and scepticism, and not on single-mindedness and hubris. This will imply the ability to retain a critical outlook on any development, irrespective of the way it is being communicated or manipulated by formations of power.

In very concrete terms this means that it will be necessary to reclaim scepticism from the Eurosceptics, so that a frank and honest discourse on Europe's deficiencies may also emerge from within. The CoE itself cannot be shielded from critical inquiry, and has to prove that it has the experience, skills and authority to address the above-mentioned challenges.

2. Europe's Governance

"'Eastern enlargement' was promoted by the West in order to impose conditions on the new member states which had emerged from state socialism in order to safeguard political stability in its Eastern and South-Eastern neighbourhood under liberal democracy, rule of law, and protection of minorities premises; what the new members were primarily interested in was prosperity through market access, access to EU transfers, and the privileges granted by the EU's four freedoms. After the western experience of semi-authoritarian and ethnocentric regimes arising in the East and the eastern experience of post-Communist economies remaining to a large extent backward and dependent, both of those hopeful expectations were frustrated."

Claus Offe, 4 May 2016

Currently, as the levels of democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law differ widely across its member states, the CoE has to walk a thin line in order to avoid double standards and to remain legitimate and relevant in the eyes of its members. In these conditions, the challenge for the CoE is to rethink and calibrate its institutions and monitoring mechanisms, without downgrading the standards of the existing European and international human rights, rule of law and democracy architecture. This will not be an easy task, as the growth of illiberal movements in certain member states ought to be perceived as a call to critically analyse the reasons why the liberal agenda of recent decades has alienated a sizeable portion of the population of Europe.

Growing non-compliance with the fundamental values of rule of law and democracy even by countries recognised formerly as consolidated democracies, such as Hungary or Poland, is one of the main threats Europe is currently facing. However, while the legal protection of individual human rights and freedoms has a firm and long-standing tradition in Europe, most notably under the aegis of the

European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the questions of compliance with democracy and rule of law lack such a strong institutional and theoretical background. Furthermore, they also need a more systemic and very often more political consideration than just the simple application of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR).

Our governance debates take place in the context of deteriorating economic prospects for significant numbers in our societies (cf. the section on *Economic growth and inequality* below). We see that to many people who feel affected, the nativist appeal to the ‘golden past’ seems to provide solace and is often accompanied with a yearning for strong leaders. Separation of powers is considered in an increasing number of countries as an impediment to the unencumbered agency of leaders, who aspire to be given extra leeway to repatriate some of the sovereignty which has been eroded by globalisation.

We understand the appeal of strong leaders but remain convinced that diverse groups make better decisions in the long run. There is now ample research to prove that under two conditions, groups make better decisions than their most resourceful members. These conditions are diversity and good faith; how we balance both in order avoid any negative effects on the quality of co-operation is the very essence of our civic know-how. We are each part of the solution we collectively seek, and we are convinced that liberal democracy, with its checks and balances and a robust civil society, is our best guarantee for success.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) has the most proven and impressive track record in Europe in the systemic analysis of constitutional and legal developments with a possible negative effect on the quality of democracy and rule of law. The Venice Commission is a unique asset and essential institutional pillar to enhance compliance with democracy and the rule of law across the CoE space. While its independence and unique expertise shall be safeguarded at any cost, the implementation of its recommendations should be followed-up by more intensive, structured and genuinely political monitoring by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

Moreover, the election observation activities of the PACE should be intensified and the weight of the Council for Democratic Elections (CDE) enhanced to ensure a more tangible political impact and a more solid analytical framework of CoE election observation, as well as a stronger co-ordination with other European institutions (European Parliament, OSCE/ODIHR) active in this field. Coping better with the challenges of both “unfree” and “free but not fair” elections could result in a considerable increase of democratic compliance on the part of the member states as well as in a credibility and legitimacy gain on the part of the CoE.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities also has not reached the limits of its potential. This is why we suggest its rights to be expanded for it to become more effective in its reactions to developments in its remit. This could be achieved in particular by strengthening its country missions in order to enhance the pertinence of its reports.

3. Economic growth and inequality

“We experience a double trend of decreasing global inequality while income inequality is increasing at the national level. Working on the equalisation of domestic inequalities will not be sufficient to further reduce global inequality in any significant way. It needs to be accompanied both by faster growth of poorer countries and by migration.”

Branko Milanovic, 3 May 2016

Whereas the achievements of the European social model dramatically reduced poverty and promoted prosperity in the period following the end of WWII, these important achievements have been suffering during the recent crisis: unemployment and austerity have led to a resurgence of poverty in Europe and to a loss of prosperity for the middle classes.

These phenomena not only threaten the social cohesion of European societies but also challenge human rights, including social, civil and political rights, and question the functioning of democracy.

In our view, poverty in Europe is not an issue of scarcity, but a problem of how income and wealth are shared. Even though Europe has one of the most comprehensive systems of social protection, millions of people are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, with children being among the most vulnerable.

In a recent study, Credit Suisse, to take one example, estimates that the richest one percent of Europeans hold almost a third of the region’s wealth, while the bottom 40 percent of the population share less than one percent of Europe’s total net wealth. In many CoE countries, tax systems are failing to correct income inequalities and, worse, are actually contributing to a widening inequality gap, allowing high earners, wealthy individuals and the most profitable companies to escape from their tax obligations, placing the burden of effort on common citizens.

Research by Oxfam suggests that inequality is the missing link that explains how the same rate of growth can lead to different rates of poverty reduction. While growth is still possible in countries with high levels of inequality, the latter reduces the chances of such growth spells being robust and long lasting. It is the distribution of economic growth that matters for poverty reduction rather than the pursuit of growth for its own sake.

The CoE has the mandate and responsibility to take proactive measures to identify and address entrenched discrimination, both direct and indirect. For this reason, in concert with national governments and the EU, the CoE should consider to provide vision and solutions for sustainable growth and equity in the European region.

One such solution could be the introduction of a minimum income for all. This concept is a reflection of a post-industrial revolution scenario where fewer and fewer “hands” are needed for production. The term ‘minimum income’ may be defined as a periodic cash transfer granted to all members of a political community high enough to ensure an existence in dignity and participation in society. Such a minimum income would in all likelihood not be a fixed amount in all member states, but would be calculated relative to each country’s GDP. Along with this new idea to help people emerge from poverty, a strong effort needs to be made to bring as many people as possible into work, so as to not discredit the minimum income as a ‘handout’.

In addition, as the EU will not manage to integrate its many welfare states into one unified European welfare state in the foreseeable future, the CoE should take more action to enable the national social protection systems to continue to perform their role as well as possible in the context of globalisation.

From this perspective the CoE, in its quest for human dignity and social cohesion, could become an evangelist for minimum income just as it has been doing for human rights.

One welcome side-effect of the promotion of this concept by the CoE could be the emergence of a popular perception that the Organisation is taking action for all Europeans, including those who are not mobile across borders beyond the occasional holiday or business trip. Such positive perceptions are essential for the legitimacy of any international organisation.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) could add an additional fifth sectoral line of action to its portfolio: Combating Economic Inequality, as well as to continue and enhance the approval of projects that target the reduction of inequality in CoE member states. Additionally, efforts could be made by all target counties which are members of CoE, but not of CEB to join the Bank, having in mind the new sectoral line of action. CEB should work on projects in every member state in the future. Options for recapitalisation of the bank should be considered, too.

4. The migration and integration challenge

“In order to build trustful relations between migrants and the local population, it is important to understand the relation between migration and social capital and the way in which immigration countries can use human and political resources to the best effect. The requisite conditions for a more benevolent approach to the refugee crisis across Europe are located in the co-ordinated interplay between external control and the (diverging) capabilities of receiving countries for both short- and long-term reception and inclusion.”

Grete Brochmann, 4 May 2016

Already before the outset of the current refugee crisis, the CoE has made some effort to formulate and promote a constructive narrative on migration, recently endorsed by the Council of Europe’s Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019) and the CoE Human Rights Commissioner’s issue paper [“Time for Europe to get migrant integration right”](#) and complemented by the appointment of the Secretary General’s Special Representative on Migration and Refugees.

However, current CoE communications on migration do not seem sufficiently comprehensive to form a “narrative” which, in addition to highlighting the liberal values that support migration, also addresses the apprehensions of many Europeans regarding the costs of migration, and which is robust enough to help ease the divisiveness of this issue.

Today, the CoE’s discourse on migration relies almost exclusively on liberal values - democracy, human rights and rule of law, thus appealing to a narrow European audience that already shares these liberal ideas. In particular, the CoE’s current communication on migration lacks a candid reflection about the short- and long-term economic, security and social costs of migration. The CoE’s current rights-based argument implicitly or explicitly dismisses the fears and concerns of those who feel attracted by the

rising European extreme right, as well as of those who may hold more centrist views but who still have very real fears, legitimate or not. For instance, speaking of xenophobia as a phenomenon to be “combatted” rather than understood and addressed may be counter-productive.

The CoE can find enough resources to work with both sides, i.e. with people whose countries experience a huge inflow of migrants as well as with migrants themselves. It should be a new platform, a new model comprising teaching and preparation of the ground for living together in the future. We therefore suggest that the CoE attempts to build a more inclusive narrative which encompasses the distinct and complex perspectives of contemporary Europeans, addressing both core European liberal values such as human rights and democracy as well as replying to the very real sense of insecurity, which is increasingly present in the public discourse. In order to do so, we have found it helpful to think through what Claus Offe identifies as “the three kinds of drivers of social and political action: *interests, passions and reason*”.

Interests

A migration narrative based largely on concepts of human rights and humanitarianism tends to underline the idea that Europeans should help rescue migrants and refugees. We would suggest shifting the narrative to emphasise that this relationship also works in the inverse: migrants can also help rescue Europe.

Recent studies by the OECD demonstrate that well-managed migration can promote both economic growth and innovation, and reduce Europe’s increasing dependency ratio. Accordingly, the CoE should move towards communicating the potential economic and societal benefits of migration. One idea could be to regularly share concrete, personal success stories of immigrants that have contributed to the countries that they currently reside in.

An interest-based approach to migration policies should also emphasise the long-term perspective. Instead of focusing too narrowly on short-term goals of acute security threats such as erecting fences along borders, policy makers could focus more on how to achieve security through long-term efforts of building trust, inclusion and welcoming societies. Investments in newcomers reduce the risk of long-term costs that would be much higher than raising the public expenditure for economic and social inclusion.

At the same time, the CoE should invest in finding ways to have an honest conversation about the interest-based costs of migration for some members of society. While we have argued that the CoE should promote a multi-dimensional narrative on migration, it has to remain nuanced and realistic. In order to be as inclusive as possible, it should also acknowledge and demonstrate a willingness to find ways to mitigate or compensate the costs of migration that may inevitably be borne by some members of society.

Passions and Reason

In an already fragile political environment in Europe, stemming mainly from the ongoing debt crisis, the recent humanitarian crisis and the inability to find common ground and to agree on a short- and long-term strategy has led to a new crisis for the European continent.

Nationalist political forces have risen in popularity and are exploiting the current refugee crisis in order to fuel fear for personal safety and of economic decline. These fears have not been adequately

addressed by the mainstream political discourse, as political leaders and European institutions are focusing their discourse on the legitimacy of the migration flows and on administrative management, rather than also addressing increasing uncertainty and fear within their populations.

Arguably, popular perceptions about migration in Europe today are not based on facts but on abstract values and *passions*. As part of the efforts to create a more inclusive narrative, the CoE could strengthen the more optimistic voices of reason and promote fact- and evidence-based analysis, thereby adding a sense of proportion and perspective to issues associated with migration: What is the percentage of immigrants compared to the total European population? How much does it cost a state to accept a new migrant? Such statistics could help to create a greater sense of control and security, as a counterweight to the sense of panic and allegedly insurmountable problems that is currently conveyed.

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APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

First session: 2-4 May 2016, Berlin

Mr Admir MALAJ (Albania)

Local Expert supporting the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth on social protection and reintegration programs, UNDP Albania & UNICEF

Mr Davit SARGSYAN (Armenia)

Political Journalist, international news editor-in-chief, Public Television Company of Armenia
Lecturer, Department of Journalism, Yerevan State University

Mr Pavel USOV (Belarus)

Lecture teacher of history and political science, Mogilev State University
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Ms Milica RISTOVIC KRSTIC (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Senior teaching assistant and researcher in field of electronics, University of Sarajevo
Municipal Councillor in Ilidža

Mr Miho DOBRASIN (Croatia)

Foreign Correspondent, HINA - Croatian news agency, Madrid

Ms Hanna OHM CLEAVER (Denmark)

Adviser, Permanent Representation of Denmark to the OECD, Paris

Mr Mathieu ROUSSELIN (France)

Post-doc Fellow at the Centre for Global Cooperation Research; Lecturer in International Relations,
University of Duisburg-Essen

Ms Tamar CHK Aidze (Georgia)

Co-founder, Young Women Experts for Peace and Security

Mr Vinzenz HIMMIGHOFEN (Germany)

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Mr Christos ILIADIS (Greece)

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Mr Daniel HEGEDŰS (Hungary)

Project Manager and Research Fellow, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin

Mr Gezim VISOKA (Kosovo*)

Lecturer in Peace and Conflict Studies, School of Law and Government, Dublin

Mr Bojan BACA (Montenegro)

Research Coordinator, Center for Democratic Transition, Podgorica
Lecturer, York University (Canada)

Ms Zuleikha MOHAMMED (Netherlands)

Student, International Development MSc, University of Amsterdam

Ms Hinda BOUDDANE (Morocco)

Vice-President, Prefectural Council of Fez

Ms Malgorzata MOCH (Poland)

Coordinator of EU legal affairs in the International Relations Department,
Ministry of Culture and National Heritage

Ms Sandra DIAS FERNANDES (Portugal)

Professor of International Relations and Political Science, University of Minho

Mr Alexandru PLATON (Republic of Moldova)

Project Coordinator/Researcher, Institute for Public Policy, Chisinau

Ms Alexandra Patricia BRAICA (Romania)

Director for Human Resources, Romanian Senate

Ms Elina PECHENOVA (Russian Federation)

Project manager, Moscow Business School and IMD "World Competitiveness Ranking" in Russia
Researcher at Strelka Institute, Moscow

Mr Artem TORCHINSKIY (Russian Federation)

Project manager, Anti-Corruption Foundation, Moscow

Ms Tamara TRIPIC (Serbia)

Member of the Vračar Municipality Council, City of Belgrade

Ms Irene GARCIA (Spain)

Project Manager Climate and Energy, the World Future Council, Hamburg, Germany

Mr Carlos OLIVER CRUZ (Spain)

Special Assistant to the Deputy Director General, International Organisation for Migration, Geneva

Ms Karin BRUCE (Sweden)

Founder and Head of LärOlika ("Learning across differences"), Stockholm,

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

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Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Mr Zoryan KIS (Ukraine)

Freedom House, Ukraine co-ordinator

Mr Joe HALLGARTEN (United Kingdom)

Director of Creative Learning and Development, Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts,
Manufactures and Commerce (RSA)

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Project Manager, Institute for Integrated Transitions (IFIT), Barcelona, Spain

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BSc International and European Economic Relations - MSc Ecological Economics

APPENDIX II: PROGRAMME
First session: 2-4 May 2016, Berlin

THE
CIVIC
ROUNDTABLE

	2 May 16, Monday	3 May 16, Tuesday	4 May 16, Wednesday
I	Opening and Introductions 9:30 - 10:30	How do groups work best? with Hakan Altınay and Planning of the Report for the Secretary General 9:30 - 13:00	Europe Entrapped 2016 Claus Offe 9:00 - 10:45
II	Governance Debates in Europe Ivan Krastev 10:45-12:30		Trends and Policies around Migration Grete Brochmann 11:00 - 12:45
III	Working Lunch: How can Europe master various fundamental crises and still move ahead as a process? Joschka Fischer 12:30 - 14:00	Lunch 13:00 - 14:00	Farewell Lunch 12:45 - 13:30
IV	Europe in the World Nathalie Tocci 14:00 - 15:45	Prospects for Inclusive Growth Daniel Gros 14:00 - 15:45	
V	An European Teleology? Kalyso Nicolaides 16:00 - 17:45	Global Inequality: Empirical Analysis and Political Options Branko Milanovic 16:00 - 17:45	
VI	Daily Evaluation 17:45 - 18:00	Daily Evaluation 17:45 - 18:00	

