

Project description of: European Citizenship in Action - seminars and publication on the concept of a European Demos

- by the ACC International Programme Office

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Summary

The main objective of *European Citizenship in Action - seminars and publication* is to frame a European-wide debate on the concept of Demos as a key-concept for promoting the dialogue and reflection concerning the ethical and spiritual values of the European development.

The *European Citizenship in Action - seminars and publication* consists mainly in two seminars (European Community Colleges), an open conference and a publication on results:

- Demos Community College (Rhodes)
- Active Citizenship Community College (Snoghøj, DK)
- Linking-Local-Conference
- Publication - A European Demos

The Demos Community College (Rhodes) results are going to be multiplied and taken up as point of departure for the Active Citizenship Community College (Snoghøj, Denmark) and again made into material for the publication on the issues and under the headline of "A European Demos". The publication shall be easily convertible as a conference-programme for organizers of an expected large-scale European Culture and Politics Festival to take place in Zamora (Spain) and for organizers in Snoghøj of the Danish Folk High Schools' European Culture Festival to take place in summer 2006.

The *Demos Community College* and the *Active Citizenship Community Colleges* are targeting mainly young people, the publication focuses on the network of ACC-contacts, politicians, opinion-makers

media etc. all over Europe, while the *linking-local-conference* targets both participants at the Active Citizenship Community College and the local inhabitants of the locality of Snoghøj.

The distinct but interrelated activities:

- a) A preparatory workshop, in which core partners will prepare the seminars.
- b) Two seminars within which "European Demos" and "Active European Citizenship" are the key concepts to be debated.
- c) A concluding open "linking-local"-conference including points of stands of the concepts debated and an action plan on how to unite the local identities of Snoghøj (DK) and Zamora (E) with the common European identity within large scale European Culture and Politics Festivals in 2006.
- d) Release of a publication with all the results.
- e) An effective dissemination campaign, which will ensure wide impact through the means of a targeted publication.

Three events are going to take place within the project. The seminars are going to take place in May and August 2005.

The publication of results is going to be released at the ACC-Site www.acc.eu.org and in the ACC Bulletin in summer 2005.

The purpose of this project should be seen in the continuity of ACC's overall objective to (a) contribute with a new initiative for permanently discussing how to link the Active European Citizenship, European Governance and The European Political Institutions and (b) to be a step forward in establishing European Community Colleges (learning communities) on the background of thorough considerations of the nature and sources of a probable European demos.

Background in general

It is the point of stand of the ACC that the reflective approach to the European realm and to Europeanness *is* what may define Europeanness and European value. This approach might point forward towards a future and worldwide destiny. A reflective approach is per definition decentralised and avoids euro-centrism.

This rather process oriented concept of rationality and value obliges us not only to reflect on the reflective approach, but also to try to draw consequences on how this could be formulated better and how it could be implemented in schools, events, pedagogic, general education and so on.

The citizen -competent to take active part in the European, national and local political and cultural life- is considered both initiator and result of the debate and the initiative we are taking by formulating this project. It is about putting the European citizen in the center of Europeanness by his/her ability to communicate in the political realm.

We consider this to be in accordance with the best interpretation of the policy of "Unity in Diversity" just as it is in accordance with the century long endeavors of European politicians to keep the balance of power between center and periphery.

Europeans have realized the existence of questions which are not to be solved inside a system of states all having sovereignty in all questions. A certain development has then characterized the history after the Second World War. Sovereignities among states have been loosened and discussions take now place in super-nation-states forums as well as in the nation-states forums. More and more people can imagine a system of states less defined in accordance with national borders. The European capitals former the centers of discussions now have to realize that they are both centers and periphery. The discussions have, unfortunately, not only moved horizontally (to Brussels, Strasbourg etc) and in many directions. The discussions have also moved vertically. Most of us are not participants in the definite discussions. They are much more run by professionals, by officials, most not even elected, and we don't even know their names. Moreover, we do not know the parties discussing, those parties our state-politicians meet in discussions, we don't know their points of view and we don't know the contexts of these points of view.

Those in power in this system (the voters of the citizens) do not know, with whom they are talking. In such a system it is a permanent temptation for those in decisions and for those giving voice to public opinion to make these mysterious unknown dialogue-partners into scapegoats and culprits in problems belonging in reality to domestic affairs.

It is a necessity that the Europeans know much more about each other, that we understand the backgrounds of the points of views presented in the different forums and of the representatives of the different states, and it is important that we understand which cultural values the populations want to preserve and to be respected. It is important to discuss which values should be considered common among Europeans.

In short a common European public and permanent discussion is needed.

Background in specific

The political identification is short of a European level, whereas national and local level identification to a much larger extent is already a fact. This has been met by a range of endeavors to propagate, to inform, and to involve citizens.

In our opinion the main challenge of peoples enlightenment in a time of European and global integration should be met by the simplest mean of them all, namely to situate the debates about concrete political and common questions among common Europeans.

The lack and problem of European integration is not mirroring a lack of information but a **lack of space and forums** to discuss issues to an end together with those who are affected by the concrete questions. The concept of **dialogue**, understood as a cultural, a philosophical and a political-institutional concept should then play a major role in the carrying out of the *European Citizenship in Action- seminars and publication on the concept of a European Demos*.

The object - seminars and publication

Demos Community College

[please go to enclosures/appendices]

Active Citizenship Community College

[please go to enclosures/appendices]

Publication - A European Demos

The results are going to be made available to a much wider audience inspiring to more debate and to present an open question to Europe: "...what should be a European Demos?" This **publication** is mainly going to be distributed through the internet.

Preparatory meetings

In order to prepare the seminars described, a preparatory meeting in the beginning of May 2005 is scheduled.

Timetable

May 2005	Prep and coordination meeting the elements.
May 2005	<i>Demos Community College.</i>
August 2005	<i>Active Citizenship Community College.</i>
February 2006	Release of the publication <i>A European Demos.</i>

Organizational elements

The working body of the ACC is going to be responsible for coordinating the elements of the project, while committees are responsible for carrying out the Community Colleges at Snoghøj and Rhodes. One coordinator, John Petersen, is going to be responsible and assisted by Helle Villekold Jørgensen at the ACC International Programme Office.

The enterprise and the economical responsibility belong to the ACC.

The language of the seminars is English.

Financing

We expect the project to be co-financed by the EU-Commission DG EAC (3024), Nævnet vedrørende EU-oplysning (DK) and by the Council of Europe. Moreover, there is going to be put a lot of voluntary work in the project by the working body of the ACC in particular.

Århus and Rhodes, November 2004

Maria Bakari (ACC Hellenic Committee)
Helle Villekold Jørgensen (project-assistant)
John Petersen (ACC Chairman)