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Skopje October 31 2011

Minister Uffe Elbæk,

In due time before Denmark held the EU-presidency in 2002, we presented an idea to Danish Minister of Education Margrethe Vestager. We suggested that the period of the presidency could be an occasion for Denmark to present the folk high school *format* for Europe. The school format was worthwhile presenting, because EU was and is in need of an appropriate education format, if we all mean serious when we regret the lack of a European public sphere. Denmark could show the way, was our idea. The Nordic residential school *format* and the Danish Act on Folk High Schools were to serve as model examples.

The idea developed into the Youth2002 project association and event. Together with a number of Danish organizations and folk high schools we hosted almost 1000 young Europeans in the summer of 2002. Through 14 days they wrote a common proposal for a European constitution. Bertel Haarder had taken over from Margrethe Vestager. He was then the prominent guest, when the 1000 young European participants' representatives delivered their proposal for a European Constitution at Rønshoved Højskole on June 13 2002.

This time, we are in less due time. However, we would like to suggest the following:

Denmark should take the opportunity and use its 2012 EU presidency period to ask the question: how does Europe intend to commemorate June 1914? It is barren if each of the states goes solo, as they will most probably come up with state-bound and at worst case one-eyed responses.

Imagine instead, that for instance 1000 young Europeans meet at a number of synchronously held folk high school courses of three weeks duration; that the folk high schools events at each of the participating schools consist of mixed groups of Europeans, so that at most there are two or three from each state at each course; that you ask them, how they imagine Europe to commemorate the outbreak of the Great War? Try even to imagine that the participants were asked to describe a number of events, projects, monuments, or commemorations that should be carried out throughout Europe in summer 2014, when the shot in Sarajevo turns 100 years.

Let us assume that Denmark gets the project going in relation to the EU presidency. Let us also assume that the folk high school events take place in the summer of 2013, and that the folk high school participants during the 2013 events describe a number of projects that they plan to implement in the summer of 2014 throughout Europe - in groups, individually, or in collaboration with stakeholders and sponsors in their home countries and regions of origin. Just imagine.

ACC does not intend to take lead in such a project. We are a European organization which means we have only good ideas - no resources.

It can become better than Youth2002:

The project Youth2002 was a success in many ways. However - to us - there was also a certain "system failure" in Youth2002 that made it actually resemble most European projects of its kind. Without exception, working with European projects makes the well-established organizations stronger, and well-established means bound to member states, working within their state borders and replicating the national public spheres. Civil society simply runs parallel to the EU-cooperation at large, where most of the member states have become more significant and all-encompassing than they have ever been in the past. This leaves a question mark, because it means in reality to strengthen the nationally bound public spheres at the expense of an eventual European public sphere - and therefore also an eventual European democracy. The European horizon becomes still narrower when the civil society transform European agenda's into their state limited world.

In brief, there is a self-contradiction built into creating European projects from de jure and de facto national platforms.

A Youth2014 project can become better than Youth2002 in at least two ways. Optimally, more states' schools and organizations should join the project, and the 2013 events ought to take place in more states. It would allow for the project to appear as European, and it would inherently invite to the development of structural change in the civil society by awakening a non-national layer of civil society. Denmark can still boast of having delivered the idea and its format and the ministry can still deliver the crucial dispensations from the Act on Danish Folk High Schools (there is precedence) to the participating Danish folk high schools.

All in all, the perspective and the horizon would enlarge and a European public sphere would come closer instead of being pushed away.

Our best regards,



John Petersen, chairman

PS: We cannot help mentioning that the idea of placing a monument to reconciliation at the Dybbøl/Dyppel battlefield would probably have been met in a much more positive tone, had the idea come from the non-governmental youth of Europe. We do know that Dyppel relates primarily to 1864, but the example is thought provoking anyway.

Copy: FFD, Højskolen Østersøen, Bente Dahl, Grænseforeningen, and ACC members throughout Europe.