Written reply on questionnaire/ roundtable with EU-Commissioner Wallström/
Friday May 19th 2006/ Post & Tele Museet Copenhagen/ACC represented by Camilla Englyst

1) **Which experiences do the NGO's have in trying to influence EU-policies by establishing European networks? EU's role?**

The raison d'etre of the ACC lies in the endeavor to show a way to let a European public sphere/formation of European citizenship come into being. The way is European Community Colleges.

We believe the Nordic de-centralized (based on citizens initiatives) folk high school *system* and in particular the folk high school *format* (residential schools) could represent a model for a future European "school" system for citizenship formation/political European literacy/creating a European public sphere.

Our strategy is to short circuit the resistance on the one hand within the EU-states to hand over formation of an EU-citizenship to federal legislation (Amsterdam § 149), and on the other hand the structural self-contradiction, if this task is taken care of by the EU member-states and/or the nationally defined civic organizations.

The trick is to leave this task to European citizens. Not the EU, not the states, but the European citizens, via a supporting instrument. In terms of policy development, we have suggested instruments forwarded previously to the EU-Commission, the governments, the CoE, thin tanks and media. The "Act on European Community Colleges" in 2001 was a try to formulate an idea legislation, while the "Action 6" was a less ambitious, but more realistical attempt to suggest a new action within the Youth-programmes – since in principle exluding adults, it was thought of as only a first step.

Leaving the task to the citizens would solve another problem as well: by leaving it to decentralized, but still European citizens' initiatives to define the contents of the individual European Community College courses, the top-down approach, that nobody would like in a European context, could be avoided. A deliberative approach is a *sine qua non*.

We have experienced especially the vocabulary of Mrs. Wallström to become closer and closer to our ideas and formulations, and we believe ourselves we have succeeded in influencing. We believe even the existence of this very questionnaire partly proves our influence. The communication whitepaper with its mention of "meeting places" for Europeans, the press-coverage when releasing the plan D as

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well as speeches of Mrs. Wallström makes us beleive that our message has passed through (as late as May 19th at the Copenhagen University).

It remains to be seen, if the whitepaper becomes real EU-policy, just as we haven't seen yet, if the vocabulary will lead to another strengthening of the nationally defined civil organizations (which often runs counter to building up of a European public sphere).

We have to face, that the "establishing of a European network", the Association ACC, has not in itself necessarily been the only reason why influence worked. It was from the beginning (1999) our strategy to present civic organizations and state administrations in the Nordic countries for our idea, since they would via their tradition probably understand easier, what we meant, and since they would have the power to support us.

In 2001 we therefore presented the idea to "use" the Danish EU-presidency to make visible the idea on European Community Colleges/European Folk High Schools for the future. We did hope our Danish partner-organizations in the project that came out of it (Youth2002, 870 Europeans at Danish Folk High Schools, drafting a European Constitution) would "wake up" and see the idea, and help us promoting it. What has happened is that our vocabulary, arguments and methods have been taken over by Danish networks and organizations (in some cases simply copied). Our strategy has been a double-edged sword. The price for making our idea visible through a large event in Denmark has been the strengthening of national civic associations.

That is why we cannot really say the "establishing of a European network" has created influence only by being a European network. Rather, it is probably also a combination of well-established national civil associations' (event makers') fear of a European civil society to come into being (competition), economical interest of the national organizations (visibility in the media), the heavy state support of nationally defined civil organizations (out-competing European structures) that has made them copy and promote our ideas as well. All this takes place within the existing nationally defined structures in stead of supporting European capacity building.

We are a member of some European networks; the European Association for Education of Adults (EAEA) and the Education and Civil Society Platform for Lifelong Learning (EUCIS). Because of the lack of money for European structures like the ACC, we have too few resources to follow the work closely. Ironically, in some cases it even means that we have to talk to the nationally defined organizations, who are members, for information on what happened at the last meeting. That is why we are not able to answer the question in these cases.

If the EU really wants to see a European public sphere come into being, the EU should first change or at least supplement the "strategy of continuity" (the belief that it will emerge out of supporting every

kind of existing nationally defined structures in their *work about* Europe) into a "strategy of discontinuity" (simply believe in it, when new transnational/*European work* emerges). The question to be asked is, if it is the EU's role to strengthen the national public spheres – including the existing structures?

2) **Which experiences do the NGO's have with face-to-face-meetings between citizens and across state borders? EU's role?**

The ACC organises residential school courses for mixed groups of Europeans. These meetings are face-to-face, but they are more, and it is this "more" that guarantees the success; the residential schools ability to combine formal, non-formal and informal learning methods under one roof. The mixed group of Europeans within the residential school format is what for us has proved to be a way forward (in case it can become something common in the future) to create European political identity/a European public sphere.

Apart from the strategy mentioned above, our main strategy has been to prove our idea by practicing it. Every European Community College arranged by the ACC Committees is meant as a showcase in itself on how to let emerge a European public sphere. That is why we have a lot of experience in organizing European courses/meetings across all kinds of borders.

Our European Community Colleges can be divided into three groups: (1) the thematic courses have always a common European political topic highest on the agenda. Themes are decided by the organizers (ACC Committees), (2) Bridging Community Colleges are colleges aimed at inspiring and training coming up ACC Committees (training for trainers), and (3) Schools for Europe Community Colleges are colleges that contribute to policy making within our field. It is the first kind of type that carries the future, we believe. Type 3 makes sense only as promoter of our political goals.

Since 1999 we have organized residential courses for thousands of European citizens in mixed groups: Campaigning for Community Colleges (LV), Final Editorial Conference (DK), Transylvania Community College 2001 (RO), Schools for Europe Community College I (DK), Experimental Community College (DK), Youth2002 (DK, together with Danish organizations), European Charter Community College (DK), Schools for Europe Community College II (DK), Transylvania Community College 2003 (RO), Europe of Rights Community College I (Tuscany), Bridging Community Colleges I (HU), Challenges of Enlargement Community College (Friuli/SLO), Rural Development Community College (LV), Europe of Rights Community College II (Tuscany), Bridging Community Colleges II (LV), Exploring Border of Identity (NL), Representations Community College (Lower Saxony), Demos Community College (GR) and Active Citizenship Community College (DK). Mentioned should be as well the formula-one courses that inspired the coming into being of the ACC: the one month-international courses at Højskolen Østersøen in 1997-98.

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If the EU really wants to see a European public sphere come into being, the EU should first change or at least supplement the "strategy of continuity" (the belief that it will emerge out of supporting every kind of existing nationally defined structures in their work *about* Europe) into a "strategy of discontinuity" (simply believe in it, when new transnational/European work emerges). The question to be asked is, if it is the EU's role to strengthen the national public spheres – including the existing structures?

In case and when probably the EU doesn't dare to exclude the nationally defined structures from subsidies in their work *about* Europe, the EU should demand of member-states, that their support to "peoples enlightenment initiatives" is opened up for European organizations/work. Every member-state could for example put aside 5% of its "peoples' enlightenment" budget for *European work*/European transnational organizations and initiatives.

3) **Which role can and should traditional media and modern IT play in the building up of cross-border citizens- and grassroots-networks.**

It is our experience that cross-border networks of citizens are very much stimulated by the possibilities of the internet. However, it is also our experience that it only works, when it emerges spontaneously and in a situation, where you need the tool. Our experience is that whenever the tool is provided in beforehand, it fails.

EU should probably stop financing more useless websites.

4) **How can we, generally speaking, ensure a better, more systematic and plural feedback from the public debate about our times challenges and possibilities of cross-border nature to the political level in EU and the member-states?**

In our opinion this is something secondary, and under all circum stances it shouldn't be organized top-down. It has to emerge by itself, but the structural frames (general education) are needed first. What is needed is to make Europeans able to (1) navigate in the European multicultural reality, (2) operate politically, as citizens (voters, voices) at European level (3) consider all Europe a field for job-search. The point in this context of ours is not *that* you learn about Europe, but *with whom* you learn about Europe. The feed back will follow, whenever there is a need.

In general EU should think about the *product* and not so much about the *sale - in-depth* work in stead of *visibility*, *in-depth workers* in stead of *event-makers*.

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EU has to find the paragraph in the treaties that makes this possible. It might sound very idealistic, but our proposal is concrete and it works.

If such paragraph if ever found, there would be a need as well to investigate in methods that serve upon mentioned needs. There is already a lot of material, but the development within the field – transnational, political, deliberative learning – is rapidly growing. This development does very often take place in forums in the private enterprise sphere, probably since involving EU is simply too time- and resource-consuming – application forms, reports, partner-agreements, financial regulations, etc.

5) **In this context, how should we handle the language-problem?**

The language problem is most practically to be solved through the ordinary, formal, school-systems. As far as we know, it is already on track, since it is taken care of by primary schools all over Europe. English has already become the common first foreign language. We are not capable of answering, if it happens fast enough, but under all circumstances, patience is needed.

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