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foraus global

The «*foraus* global network of open think tanks» – in short «*foraus* global» – strives for the creation, development and cooperation of open think tanks around the world. We use innovative crowdsourcing methods and grassroots structures, offering a participative platform for thinkers of the next generation. We thereby democratize the shaping of international policy. All member organizations of «*foraus* global» share the common goal of pursuing constructive international and transnational policies based on the common understanding that today's major challenges require international cooperation. Member organizations of «*foraus* global» are politically independent and committed to using scientific rigor to produce the most innovative policy suggestions. Our agenda is global and we are looking for partners and co-founders from all continents.

Switzerland: *foraus*

foraus (Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy) generates independent, high-quality recommendations for foreign policy decision-makers and the public, thereby bridging the gap between academia and politics. Its non-partisan approach aims to promote an open dialogue and informed decision-making on all aspects of Swiss foreign policy. *foraus* is a grassroots organization. Its success as a think tank is based on its members' voluntary commitment. Members are primarily graduates and young professionals, active in a nationwide network of young researchers and foreign policy enthusiasts. The think tank was founded in 2009 and has since become a major civil society actor in the field of foreign policy.

Germany: Polis180

Polis180 is a grassroots think tank for European and foreign policy. It is a nonpartisan and member-driven platform. At Polis180 young people contribute their political ideas outside of traditional frameworks and get heard in the political sphere by policy makers, civil society and political stakeholders. Polis180 cultivates creative, political concepts as well as new event formats. In doing so, Polis180 addresses decision-makers and translates academic literature into clear messages and policy recommendations. Recently, Polis180 was ranked number 8 of the best new think tanks 2016 in the «Global Go To Think Tank Index» by the University of Pennsylvania.

France: Argo

Argo is inclusive, fact-based, global, and optimistic. Sourcing and delivering innovative policy ideas and revitalising the public debate in this way, the think tank offers a means of democratic expression not beholden to party politics or to the electoral calendar.

Argo pools policy ideas and expertise through a crowdsourcing platform, following the *foraus* model, allowing individuals regardless of age or profession to have a hand in shaping the policies that affect their lives. Through its outreach branch, the think tank engages those voices across society that are hardest to hear in exchange for experience and inspiration, for stories and ideas. This practice reduces the gap between policy and people and gives leverage for Argo to place their policy proposals with decision makers.

I n Rome, almost 60 years ago to the day, six countries signed one of the fundamental building blocks of the European Union. They agreed to create the European Economic Community and develop the four core freedoms of today's Europe: free movement of goods, people, services and capital.

If Europe was at a crossroads 60 years ago, today it is facing a roundabout: Not only is the future of the European Union in danger, but so is the continuity of our liberal world order, based on an open society. On the national and European level, people feel more and more detached from democracy and democratic decision-making processes. This tendency has strengthened populist movements – both on the left and the right – and in the wake of it, the UK, one of Europe's top three economies, has famously decided to leave the European Union. Depending on this year's elections in Italy, France and Germany, commentators will either retrospectively judge Brexit as a turning point for Europe, or as a minor blip on the radar of history.

To ensure that the EU does not become a phantom project of the past, Europe needs to return to the consciousness of all citizens. We need to convey that new generations can shape the European project. It is on us to come up with new ideas to do so!

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On 1 March, Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, ventured five scenarios for Europe in a white paper. Among others, it outlines a scenario of flexible coalitions depending on member states' willingness to integrate on a given topic. It puts forward a somewhat messy but more agile idea of Europe. In such a multi-speed Europe, it is all the more crucial to have a ready set of ideas and concrete proposals for collaboration to develop pathways. At *foraus,* we have tried to create a first set of such ideas with this publication. The five authors of this publication prove that the new generation indeed possesses such ideas.

foraus has pioneered open, collaborative and crowdsourced foreign policy think tanks since 2009. This publication marks the beginning of a new era: *foraus* aims to create a global network of open think tanks that offer a participative platform to generate ideas that will shape the foreign policy of tomorrow. Polis180, a grassroots think tank from Berlin, was created in the spirit of *foraus* and has already been ranked as one of the top 10 best new think tanks worldwide in 2016. Today, Argo is being launched in Paris as another chapter in the history of global collaborative think tanks that foster innovation in foreign policy.

As a kick-off project for think tank cooperation beyond national borders, the five ideas presented in this publication have been written by authors from France, Germany and the UK. An equally pan-European jury (France, Switzerland, UK) has selected those five ideas from a total of 20 that were submitted in a call for ideas.

The five selected ideas all focus on citizen involvement, exchange and participation. Francisca Schmidt, a member of Polis180, proposes better communication of the local impact of EU programmes. Using Eurobarometer surveys, the European Commission representation offices should organise information events on the most pressing subject in each member state.

Acknowledging both the current impossibility of a EU treaty revision and the necessity of reform, Julia Clavel, a founding member of Argo, takes the idea of collaborative bottom-up idea generation a step further. Democratic European national conventions would gather citizens and give them a voice in reforming the European project. Based on a common understanding of the status quo, these national conventions would be organised by topic and involve civic representatives, national political leaders, opposition leaders and local governments. European conventions would then gather the input from the national conventions to draw a common European project.

Digitalisation and new technologies offer a massive potential to implement large-scale deliberative processes. Iurii Banshchikov proposes a concrete way that digitalisation can be used to garner more regular and direct feedback from citizens on enacted policies. Live polling via apps and crowd rating of proposed solutions are ways to increase direct interaction of party officials with their electorate.

Regular exchange and leveraging of new technologies are crucial success factors for the European project, according to Laurent Abraham too. Another founding member of Argo, he sketches out a European programme for training and innovation that would be hosted within the European Investment Plan. Applying at national agencies, European citizens would be able to access (online) training, paid internships or apprenticeships in all participating countries.

Because exchange encourages cohesion and intercultural understanding, but in turn requires basic language skills in Europe, Daniel Fitter has developed Lingo. Using existing twin partnerships between European towns, Lingo would es-

tablish an international network of school partnerships. Children aged 9 and 10 would learn the language of their partner school through online courses and get the opportunity to exchange with their partner school. As a sort of Erasmus 2.0, Lingo would be well-timed for this year's 30-year anniversary of the Erasmus programme.

Exchange encourages cohesion and intercultural understanding.

We hope you enjoy what you are about to read, and we encourage you to engage with and react to the ideas presented here. We are building a global platform for collaborative projects and debate, so please feel free to use it and get in touch!

With our very best European wishes,

Florian Egli (Project coordinator europe.think.again and *foraus* board member) and Kassandra Becker (Head of Office and board member Polis180)

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1. Reform or Reframe? Europe Needs to be Reintroduced to its Citizens

Francisca Schmidt

A lack of knowledge of the EU and its institutions, how the EU functions and how it affects the lives of citizens is prevalent throughout its Member States (MS). Eurobarometer studies show that 42% of Europeans believe they do not understand how the EU works[1], less than half of EU citizens understand their rights as citizens of the EU and only one third of Europeans have heard about EU co-financed projects to improve their region's development. Furthermore, one in four Europeans does not trust the EU and over half do not believe that they have a voice in the EU.[2] To address the widespread information deficit and to change public opinion towards the EU and its effectiveness, new public formats need to be developed to allow citizens to become informed of the EU's activities in their MS and also provide opportunities for citizens to become actively involved in strengthening the relationship between the EU and their respective MS. These measures address the perceived lack of transparency and allow citizens to have a greater voice in the EU by helping shape and implement its policies.

European Commission (EC) representation offices need to increase and improve their public outreach programs.

Inform Citizens of the EU and its Activities

Uncertainties surrounding the EU's regional and local impact and effectiveness need to be addressed. The EU budget supports a wide scope of policy areas, ranging from improving employment and education opportunities to reducing development disparities in different EU regions. The role of these funds differs per MS, as each MS has individual deficits that need supporting and thus makes use of different funds. For this reason, the role the EU plays in each MS can vary. When asked which political representative should inform citizens of the impact European policies have on their day-to-day lives, a majority of respondents answered that regional or local representatives are best positioned to do so, rather than national or European parliamentarians.[3] For this reason, European Commission (EC) representation offices need to increase and improve their public outreach programs. There needs to be a focus on better informing citizens about the impact the EU has by offering regional or local informational sessions to discuss new developments on the European level and how these influence the way of life on a more local level (if at all). Through the Eurobarometer surveys, the EU maintains vast knowledge about what policy areas are most important to citizens on a national level. For example, currently the biggest concern for citizens in Germany is immigration and the most pressing concern in France is unemployment. The events that are offered in the respective countries can and should be tailored to address the interests of the citizens in that coun-

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1   European Commision, Standard Eurobarometer 83, *Public opinion in the European Union,* July 2015, http://bit.ly/1Q7wjrG

2   European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 86, *Public opinion in the European Union: First results,* December 2016 http://bit.ly/2hKHVGL

3   European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 427, *Public opinion in the EU Regions Report,* October 2015, http://bit.ly/2n8OOUX

try, including presenting local or regional success stories. This will result in a higher impact, as the information given is then viewed as more relevant for the people.

These informational events should be organized and held by the EC representation offices, with support from local or regional politicians. In order to ensure a steady flow of relevant information, the events are to be held on a quarterly basis and be open to the public. Furthermore, the Commission representation offices should partner with local organizations that are impacted by the policy developments to encourage the attendance of relevant and interested stakeholders.

Involve Citizens in the Activities of the EU

Further to informing citizens of the role the EU plays in their MS and the impact that policy developments have on their countries and regions, opportunities should be created that allow citizens to become more involved in shaping EU policies through developing ideas for cooperation between the EU and the region or country. A recent Eurobarometer survey[4] shows that 17% of citizens who had heard of co-financed projects thought that the projects had a negative impact on the region or no impact at all. Reasons for the negative impact included that the funding was allocated to the wrong project or that the project was not implemented as expected. Public forums can offer a dialogue space

Creating awareness of what is already being accomplished and what could be accomplished is vital if more Europeans are to believe in and foster the European project that began 60 years ago.

for people to brainstorm ideas for cooperation between the country or region and the EU. These public deliberation forums should involve the regional Members of European Parliament, as this will allow the representatives to gain a better understanding of public opinion and perhaps take note of concrete cooperation or funding proposals that align with European policy objectives.

The public deliberation forums should take place in both rural and urban areas throughout the EU, organized by both Members of European Parliament and Commission representation offices. As with the informational events, regional or local politicians and interested local organizations can assist in the organization. The deliberation forums will address both the interested public and stakeholders with knowledge of or expertise in a certain topic, as concrete proposals can be developed in the forums. Forum topics can include all policy areas, but should generally be tailored to the country and focus on prevalent issues in the region, as this will garner the most attention and interest. By focusing on concrete cooperation opportunities between the EU and MS, as well as inter-MS opportunities, participating citizens become involved in shaping the cooperation for topics that affect them.

Creating awareness of what is already being accomplished and what could be accomplished is vital if more Europeans are to believe in and foster the European project that began 60 years ago. A first step in creating this awareness is showcasing the relationships between the EU and their MS by informing citizens of current projects and past success stories. The second is involving the citizens in shaping the cooperation by creating new projects that can have local, regional, or national impact. This will ultimately improve public opinion and trust in the EU and its institutions. As EU leaders meet in Rome this summer to celebrate six decades of successful EU cooperation, the EU is in a state of fragility like never before. Reminding citizens of the good that has come out of the European project is as much a challenge as it is an opportunity. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day.

2. Finding a common vision for Europe: European conventions

Julia Clavel

Popular disengagement and a sentiment of disenfranchisement both with and towards the European Union (EU) can hardly be ignored. 46% of French citizens were either *«not very attached»* or *«not attached at all»* to the EU in 2016, only to be exceeded by an average of 47% throughout the EU. One explanation for this situation could be the widespread perception that citizens have no voice in the European decision-making process. European legislation is technical; some of its institutions have no democratic basis; its debates are subject to very little media coverage. Nonetheless, ever more competences have been transferred to the EU.

Yet another treaty revision hardly seems an appropriate course of action. Due to the technocracy and opacity of such procedures, any revision risks being rejected in popular referenda. Moreover, against the backdrop of the EU's current crisis and the disunion between its member states, it would be difficult to fill a new treaty with any proper content. A revision is nonetheless necessary in the medium to long term. The EU is caught in an in-between place where its integration, especially on the economic plane, has gone too far for member States to remain fully equipped to weather certain challenges by themselves, yet not far enough to be efficient. For instance, the euro area is in an imperfect middle ground where having a fully integrated monetary policy but insufficiently coordinated fiscal and structural policies can reduce the efficiency of both

4   European Commission, Flash Eurobarometer 423, Citizens' Awareness and Perceptions of EU Regional Policy, September 2015, http://bit.ly/2mTXkoL

national and common economic policies, especially when facing an economic shock.

Building on the realization that a revision of the treaties is both impossible in the current context and more than ever needed, new tools are necessary to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU and to foster a dialogue with the general public in order to recreate momentum. Not only properly consulting citizens could contribute to the recreation of trust between them and their institutions, but in order to really move forward it appears necessary to stop and reflect on the EU's competences and future in an inclusive way, and to finally get a clear vision of where we want this revision to take us.

To achieve that goal, a system of European national conventions could be established. The impulse would need to come from either the Council of the EU or the European Council, both gathering all EU member states.

A system of European national conventions could be established.

These conventions could be implemented in four distinctive steps.

Firstly, to provide a fact-driven, joint basis for the discussion, a set of working documents could be prepared, identical for each country. These would allow for a fruitful debate on a vision for Europe, covering the different topics that can be addressed at the European level: climate change, institutions, migrations, economic policies, etc. These documents would include:

- The competencies that have been transferred to the EU on the matter;
- The policies that have been implemented or are soon to be;
- The effects that those policies have had up until now;
- The costs they incurred;
- Propositions on how the EU can move forward in that domain and what that would require;

In order to avoid a potential bias of European institutions, they would ideally be produced by an *ad hoc* task force of experts from different member States. Those working papers would have to be published well in advance of the conventions and made accessible to the public.

Secondly, democratic conventions would be held in each country. Holding them at the national level rather than at the European one is a pre-requisite to make populations feel included and to attract the initiating governments' interest as well as empowering them.

Part of the organizational modalities should be left to the discretion of member states, because the structure of the society varies from one member state to another it would be counterproductive to impose a top-down approach. This approach moreover provides an opportunity for national governments and populations to make the project their own. Nonetheless, directives would be given to render the conventions as inclusive as possible:

- Conventions would be organized by topic and over an extended period of time, from six months to a year, so that each subject can get sufficient coverage and attention;
- A part of the European budget could be used to help organize said conventions;
- At the political level, they should gather national leaders, both from the governing majority and from the different opposition parties, as well as local government representatives;
- The focus should be put on civic representatives. They should be chosen in order to represent all parts of society. They could for example include: unions, representative associations, student delegates, think tanks, etc., with a potentially varying composition depending on the subject. Ahead of the national conventions, the designated representatives collect the opinion of the members of the group they represent;
- As it is impossible to hold conventions in which everyone can freely participate and intervene, citizens should be able to express their views directly via white papers or other mechanisms of participatory democracy, especially through social media (but not only to take into account the digital divide, particularly vivid in some countries);
- Each topical group would produce a common declaration stating the results of its national consultation.

Thirdly, once all national conventions have been held, a second convention would be held, but this time at the European level. This European convention would be composed of:

- Members of the European Parliament;
- Members of the European Commission;
- Representatives from each member States of which there could be three: one MP, one member or designated representative of the respective government and one representative of civil society.

Drawing on the documents delivered by member states, the objective of this assembly would be to devise a common project, defining what is needed and expected from the EU: More integration? Less? A two-speed Europe? With which powers? What borders? This general vision would be complimented by a breakdown by topic.

More integration? Less? A two-speed Europe? With which powers? What borders?

In a fourth step, the elaboration of a new treaty or a revision of the existing ones could be considered, on a more thoroughly democratic basis. In this way, citizens could have more profound influence on the EU's trajectory, through the creation of a real common space for discussion, eventually leading to a reorientation of the European project towards a new, common, basis.

3. Ok, Internet: how to fix EU cooperation

Iurii Banshchikov

Strikingly, what really stands out in the likes of Trump election or Brexit is the surprise that catches us once these events occur. It turns out there is a great disconnection between political discourse in media, officials' briefings and everyday social struggles. Rather than a fallacy, this discourse divide is a systemic feature of representative democracy ever since Ancient Greece. Doing politics has remained very much an elite's occupation.

With their economic concerns left unheard, the weaker are turning away from the established parties to the extreme ones that articulate fear and shift political discourses into nationalist muddles. The people clearly lost trust in elites, with an abysmal French president approval rating of 4% being its grand manifestation.[5] The frustration results in radicalization – whether in form of wall-building, burning neighborhoods or extremism – that only reinforces the spiral of despair and alienation.

Further EU cooperation is a salvation only, if Europe is regarded as a democratic project again. Jürgen Habermas among others famously advocated an increase in powers of the European Parliament to keep Europe united. But overcoming EU democratic deficit does not only require further supranational institutionalization. Strengthening the link between the level of mean-

Strengthening the link between the level of meaningful political action and the level of social struggle would return trust and belief to the people that they are heard.

ingful political action and the level of social struggle would return trust and belief to the people that they are heard. Societal digitalization offers a key in this regard. Communication has arguably undergone the most profound digitalization out of all spheres of life. Accordingly, political communication does digitalize. New ways to connect with the public using the internet can be identified as either supply-side or demand-side solutions.

The former describes top-down advances of parties and officials. Their goal is to boost a politician's publicity and connect to voters directly, bypassing the filters of media and policy analysts. In turn, they open the gates for populism. Online targeted political advertising, that for instance the Tories took advantage of in the last general elections in Britain[6], has recently been named one of the top 3 future web development challenges by World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee.[7]

Supply-side solutions may be hugely popular, as Donald Trump's Twitter or Beppe Grillo's blog, or niche phenomena as Angela Merkel's mobile app of the 2013 general elections. The centrist forces seem to lose heavily in this online battle. If elections were held this Sunday based on the Facebook likes' count, the winners would be AfD in Germany, Marine Le Pen and FN in France as well as Geert Wilders and PVV, who would have won in the Netherlands. Demand-side solutions are more well-known as e-participation. These solutions are made for (and

often by) the citizens to engage in politics. E-government portals and public budget dialogues are primary examples of «delegating back» the executive powers, whereas legislative initiatives include e-voting, cooperation on drafting legislation, or petition websites such as change.org.

Widening in scope, they nevertheless enjoy only marginal popularity and impact on policy-making (with notable exceptions of Estonia's e-voting system, the Icelandic Pirate Party's feedback service and a few others).[8] Often user-unfriendly, these services also lack mainstreaming from the elites that are reluctant to delegate the powers back.

E-participation should become more interactive, thus natural, and bypass the state stringencies present in many countries.

To (re-)establish trusted connections between the public and the officials, both supply- and demand-side solutions are necessary. But in contrast to the passive role of citizens in supply-side solutions, it is the demand-side ones that really activate society. While the UN E-Government Survey 2016 tellingly highlights the state component by stating that «[e]-participation highly depends on strong political commitment, collaborative leadership, vision and appropriate institutional frameworks»[9], e-initiatives have the potential to truly reinvigorate democratic processes when they come from the citizens themselves.

Arguably, to move on, e-participation should become more interactive, thus natural, and bypass the state stringencies present in many countries. More interactive, it would result in more wide-spread social action of greater quality. Rather than waiting for the politicians to share their power, online approaches to tackle political problems can already employ civic society mechanisms.

As one solution, a crowdsourcing-based research community «Participation Remade» is developing an online live polling platform that incites political deliberation (by discussing the polls and rating solution proposals by NGOs and citizens) and social action (by supporting the best proposals financially). Published in widget form in online media, poll questions are then discussed on the platform. While liking others' comments and proposals on the problem raised, users accumulate likes and in turn social leaders emerge among them. These social leaders then formulate a call for action (and donations) or a petition to a relevant politician.

Provided such projects are of wide popular use, politicians would join in. And to scale them up onto European level, especially in the countries where the youth is Eurosceptic, could be a strong remedy against current connection breakdown.

5   Le Figaro, *Popularité: à 4% de bonnes opinions, Hollande touche le fond,* 25 October 2016, http://bit.ly/2njqbTa

6   Digital Strategy Consulting, *Politics case study: How smart social targeting helped Conservatives win the UK election,* 27 January 2016, http://bit.ly/2mzvgHe

7   Tim Berners-Lee, *Three challenges for the web – Open Letter,* Web Foundation, 2017, http://bit.ly/2mxrXQu

8   United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *UN E-Government Survey 2016,* http://bit.ly/2aKfhm5

9   Ibid. p. 77.

4. European program for training and innovation

Laurent Abraham

As the European Union celebrates this month the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the challenges to its unity and to the pursuing of integration remain high as political parties hostile to it have been gaining momentum in several countries. A concrete achievement, such as a European program for training and innovation, illustrating how the Union can use one of its key characteristics – the freedom of movement – to support the economy, to fight unemployment and to shape its own future could be a useful contribution to the reversal of this trend.

The proposal introduced here for a European program for training and innovation is built on three assumptions, namely that the Erasmus program functions as an illustration for the success of such an approach, that the recently set-up Investment Plan provides the necessary financing and thirdly, that the EU has recognized the importance of investing in human capital:

- The Erasmus program, adopted thirty years ago, has allowed European students to experience life in other countries, to meet their fellow students and citizens, to learn on various topics often with different methods and to practice other languages. For these reasons, it is a very powerful illustration of how this freedom of movement can be a source of progress, of opportunities and of cohesion

Freedom of movement can be a source of progress, of opportunities and of cohesion.

among the Union and inspiration should be drawn from it.

- In order to fight unemployment, to remain one of the world's leading economies and to have a significant impact on the challenges of the next decades, the European Union has to invest in future defining sectors. This need has most recently been addressed through the Investment Plan set up by the European Commission in 2015 and its strong arm, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which aims at mobilizing private capital to finance innovation and infrastructure projects. It specifically targets sectors such as energy, digital, environment, etc.
- Lifelong learning and professional training are also key tools to fight unemployment. It is significant that in the current French presidential campaign almost every candidate has major proposals regarding these topics. At the European level, it has been a recurring observation since its launch that the Investment Plan lacked a strategy for investing in human capital.[10]

Ideas regarding mobility, youth and training have already been mentioned in various papers. For instance, a tribune published by the Jacques Delors Institute's working group on youth employment suggested a new «Erasmus Pro» program aimed at having a million young European apprentices by 2020, providing great insight on how such a scheme could work.[11] While it only focuses on young people, it also mentions existing in-

10   Confrontations Europe, *Prolongation du Plan Juncker: quelle analyse?*, 5 January 2016: http://bit.ly/2nf7JOD

11   Jacques Delors Institute, *Erasmus pro: for a million young European apprentices by 2020,* 15 May 2015: http://bit.ly/2iz-pBgT

itiatives and programs in this field: the Youth Guarantee, the EURES network, etc.

This proposal for a European program for training and innovation aims at contributing to the ongoing reflections on this topic. This program, associated with the Investment Plan, would help European citizens to follow course sessions and to do internships or apprenticeships throughout Europe and would focus on future defining sectors such as renewable energy, digital, transport. By nature, it would probably target younger generations, but its purpose is to reach out to as many as possible. Likewise, it would be designed to benefit both people at the forefront of innovation in future defining sectors and those looking for a professional retraining in these sectors.

Someone, employed or unemployed, who is looking for training or retraining could find out about a training session organized in any European city, through information provided by their national employment agency.

The main function of this program would be the following: someone, employed or unemployed, who is looking for training or retraining could find out about a training session organized in any European city, through information provided by their national employment agency. These training sessions could be on more or less specific topics such as data analysis, wind turbine maintenance, thermal renovation of houses and their duration could go from a few weeks to several months depending on the requirements of the topic.

The interested people would apply through their national agencies, which would be able to send a certain amount of applicants to the session depending on the size of the country. The training session would be organized by one or multiple schools within a city which would have been chosen for

this particular field. It could take place in the local language or in English, depending on what appears more appropriate and applicants would, if possible and required, receive language courses before their departure and during their first weeks of training. This training would be paired with paid internship or apprenticeship opportunities provided with the help of the school and of partner companies.

This scheme would require funding for the training, for the internships and apprenticeships but also in order to support the expenses of the applicants (accommodation, travel, language learning, etc.). This financing could come from a small part of the EU/EIB financing of the Investment plan or from its extension, from national employment programs, from cities and from the private sector.

The creation of a curriculum could follow three steps:

- The European body in charge of this program, which could be part of the Commission or of the EIB, decides to create a curriculum, based on its own idea or from a suggestion by a school or a company.
- Once the curriculum is created and interested companies, schools and cities are notified, a European body coordinates the interested partners (for providing the curriculum, the internships, the funding) and then takes the final decision on where the curriculum will take place and with which partners.
- The curriculum calendar and application process is then published. The responsibility for communicating about the curriculum in

order to convey it to potential applicants lies with the companies as well as the national employment agencies.

Some training programs could even be integrated into some of the projects the EFSI co-finances, giving stakeholder companies even more incentive to finance training as they will benefit from this training for this project and for future ones. This connection with the Investment Plan matters as it conveys the message that human capital is the most essential part of any innovative project. As a whole, a program of this kind could help to reduce unemployment, support innovation and reinforce among Europeans the sense that the freedom to travel, to meet, to learn and to work together is a key achievement that deserves to be protected.

5. LINGO: European Language Exchange for the Next Generation

Daniel Fitter

A new Europe-wide educational exchange and language learning programme for schoolchildren called «LINGO» could contribute to positive cognitive perceptions of Europe among the leaders of tomorrow.

60 years after the «Inner Six» signed the Treaty of Rome, the European project faces an existential crisis. At this key juncture the EU must rediscover its first principles such as the elimination of barriers which divide the continent. Erasmus has played a critical role in developing European mobility, collaboration and identity among millions of students. However, the EU is missing the opportunity to strengthen exchange and identity-building at an earlier age.

The Programme

The LINGO programme aims to establish European exchange and language learning for all schoolchildren in the EU28. The policy would encourage every junior school in Europe to have (at least) one partner school in a neighbouring Member State, coordinated via the European Commission. Children aged between nine and ten would have weekly language lessons, opportunities to make friends from partner schools via an online educational platform and a one-off, two-way exchange. LINGO roots language learning in real relationships outside of the classroom.

In March 2016, the EU launched the Cultural Diplomacy Platform «to promote and facilitate durable cultural exchanges, people-to-people activities and co-creation processes between Europeans and citizens from countries all over the world.» LINGO complements this external action by pursuing similar goals internally. From a practical perspective, LINGO would take learnings from three proven models of exchange: the Cultural Diplomacy Platform, the Erasmus programme, and Scouts' International Links Scheme.

LINGO roots language learning in real relationships outside of the classroom.

Rather than beginning the arduous task of establishing partnerships, LINGO would harness the formal links and social networks between twinned European towns that have existed since the end of WWII. Many schools already have successful school partnerships which would be reinforced and institutionalised through LINGO. Since schools are limited in their language teaching resources, the exchange could be focused around a common language to both partner schools such as English, French, German or Spanish.

The Platform

LINGO contributes to European common-pool resources. Weekly language lessons would be complemented by an online platform to which class teachers and children have access.

Inspired by the success of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), the LINGO platform would host educational videos and forums for children and teachers, sharing educational resources and learnings. Therefore, from a human dimension, LINGO not only encourages nine and ten-year-olds to make friends in other EU Member States but qualitatively enhances language learning. In the long run, the

LINGO would give birth to a new generation of citizens who identify with Europe.

LINGO platform would build a transnational epistemic teaching community.

The Psychology

Developmental psychology provides a sound argument for investing in the younger generation to improve European cooperation and perceptions. Between the ages of four and ten, cognitive-linguistic and social skills develop at an incredible pace. A child is most likely to learn a language to fluency if begun in these first ten years of life. LINGO also incorporates insights from social-cognitive studies to counteract prejudice-formation. Although studies show that already by the age of five children exhibit racial and ethnic prejudice, intervention through the LINGO programme can address this effectively by instituting regular positive intergroup contact as advocated by the social learning theory. By 22, which is the average age of an Erasmus student, individuals have resolved many questions of identity and habit according to the preeminent psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson. European students who choose to participate in the Erasmus programme will typically have stable, pro-European outlooks and a narrower social background – you are preaching to the converted. Concentrating on European citizens in their formational years of childhood will encourage a sense of shared values and common experience crucial for cooperation later in life. Imagine how this could improve cognitive perceptions regarding Europe and foster a pan-European cooperative spirit among the next generation of Europeans.

The Funding

LINGO would operate through increased Erasmus+ funding, bringing greater coherence to a highly plu-

ralistic set of initiatives for schoolchildren. Meanwhile, the platform would require a significant, one-off injection of finance to create a best-in-class educational resource, which could be factored into the EU's next Multiannual Financial Framework. Once created, the platform could be easily maintained with a lightweight development team. High-quality learning resources, lesson plans and videos would be uploaded by a core community of champion teachers from the LINGO pilot.

The Future

LINGO could make a powerful contribution towards improving European cooperation and reshaping perceptions of the European project for the *longue durée*. The programme provides focus and funding to a population neglected by the Commission. An increased density of communication and exchange between teachers, schoolchildren and town authorities will lead to the emergence of new epistemic communities. LINGO would give birth to a new generation of citizens who identify with Europe. LINGO would not undermine or dilute national cultures but rather validate and enrich them. As Goethe recognised «Those who know nothing of foreign languages know nothing of their own.» European 10-year-olds may not have a vote in the 2019 European Parliament elections, but they will in 2029.

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