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## **To Educate in a Diversified Europe<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

One of the main tasks of the EU is to create a European identity. This is a complex matter because of some lasting consequences of many divisions, conflicts and wars of the past. There are many national boundaries and various ethnic and cultural identities, regional interests. This paper refers to a whole range of aspects, which may be identified as crucial for education in a diversified Europe. After presenting the divisions and emerging changes occurring in Europe, the author of this article examines various parameters / challenges related to the shift in interaction between the levels of society. This dynamic shift introduces a different kind of diversity / plurality and new challenges for education. The fundamental and historical differences can not be easily eliminated; they may deserve to be deepened and analysed. The diversity is a constructive dimension for education in Europe.

### **Keywords**

Europe, education, diversification, challenges, parameters.

Europe is a complex reality. During its long history, the continent was shaped in so many ways. It has been constructed, deconstructed, and assembled again according to conflicting and contradictory principles and events. The present situation is deeply marked by the scars of the past. Creating the European Union requires that the past is going to be integrated and overcome in factual and symbolic ways. All the arguments in favour or against the extension of the European Union are conditioned by the memories of the past, by the remnants of previous regimes,

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<sup>1</sup> Major part of this article has been presented by the author as the introductory lecture during the Congress of Equipe Catéchétique Européenne in Budapest in May 2004.

by apprehensions, image building, prejudices, particular interests, etc. The issue of education in a diversified Europe is a complex and delicate one because of the history and because of different sensitivities at many levels. I do hope I will respect, all the sensitivities, even if my perception and interpretation may differ from the reader.

“Europe 25” now represents 451 million people and 20 officially recognised languages, I hope that the translation and interpretation processes, an inevitable dimension of the multi-linguistic composition of the EU, will contribute to a deeper mutual understanding and cooperation. The further extension of the European Union affects and changes the fundamental pattern of the Union. It affects the type of diversification we experience in our continent. I concluded that to become aware of the shifts in diversification has important consequences for education. My reflection then will follow four steps. First, I will recall some aspects of the European reality. In a second paragraph I will present some data as regards the changes occurring in Europe. In a third step I will give some observations about the challenges for education as we can identify them in the light of the diversity specific for Europe today. And finally, I will present some orientations for education.

## **1. Europe today**

### **1.1. The division of Europe**

The division of Europe into West, Central and East could be traced from the division of the Roman Empire in AD 395. But it appeared in its full rigid form after World War II. Historians have distinguished the western from eastern part of the continent according to the density of the population. The East being less populated than the West; the West favours more the urban development in opposition to the decline and stagnation of towns in the East. On the other hand, linguistically speaking, Roman and Germanic languages were opposed to Slavic languages. From a religious point of view, Catholic and Protestant churches were opposed to the Orthodox churches. Of course, from a cold war perspective, the West is usually associated with capitalism, the East with socialism. But these are over-generalizations; in reality the situation is much more complex.

The decision of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences drew the most dramatic division in the past century of European history. None of the Central and Eastern

European countries had a choice. The iron curtain, severing cultural and economic contacts, contributed substantially to the gradual growth of a new differentiation between two parts of the continent. The notion of “Europe” became limited to the territory beyond Soviet domination, with as a result, the deepening distinctiveness of the Easterners usually related with Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Yugoslavia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia and Moldavia. When describing the situation of these countries under the communist regime, it is necessary to give attention to the differences among these countries. Most of the new members, who joined the EU on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004, due to the previous links with the Latin culture, in fact belong to Central Europe, as distinct from Eastern Europe. Being Polish I would like to refer shortly to the specificity of my country.

The situation of Poland is a particular one because it has been a Catholic country for more than a thousand years and also when it was under the control of the Soviet Union; Poland remained autonomous mainly due to five factors: 1/ the independence of the Roman Catholic Church; 2/ the existence and domination of private ownership in agriculture; 3/ the link with Western European culture and sciences; 4/ strong Christian moral value system; 5/ the independence of major areas of public life.

In the Polish mentality, Catholicism coincides entirely with Polishness. Religious and national identity go hand in hand. This situation, of course, finds its roots in historical circumstances<sup>2</sup>. Political enemies of Poland always belonged to other religious denominations, for example in 1241 Poland saved much of Europe by absorbing the shock of a Mongol-Tatar invasion, in 1683 Polish arms broke the Turkish siege of Vienna. During the communist domination, the Church was the defender of Polishness, and supported the spiritual strength of the nation and devised a specific “theology of nation”, which resulted in the sacralisation of the term and its values<sup>3</sup>. These convictions, no doubt, are responsible for a strong ideological protection against the sovietisation, recognizable in the massive mass attendance, in the wide spread parish catechesis, in pilgrimages, in official religious ceremonies, in the numerous vocations to the priesthood and religious life. That explains the strong expectations of Poles to find the religious values being recognized in European Constitution.

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<sup>2</sup> On the history of Poland, see N. Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*, Oxford 1986, Oxford University Press.

<sup>3</sup> I. Borowik, *Democracy and the Church in Poland*, “Social Compass” 49 (2002) Nr 2, p. 240.

## **1.2. The “European” entity**

It took half a century for the European “idea” to become a decisive political issue for the future of our continent. The first glimpse of a united continent was suggested, 19th September 1946, by Winston Churchill who called for a “kind of United States of Europe” in a speech he gave at the Zurich University. And the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1947 the United Europe Movement was created. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1948, the custom convention between Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands entered into force. In the same year, on 16<sup>th</sup> April, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) was created to coordinate the Marshall Plan.

On 28<sup>th</sup> January 1949, France, Great Britain, and the Benelux countries decide to set into place the Council of Europe. And, on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1951, the Six (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands) signed the Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The 25<sup>th</sup> March 1957, the Treaties of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) were signed by the same Six countries in Rome. Until today, they are referred to as the “Treaties of Rome”. In 1973, Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined the EEC. In 1981, the EEC is extended with a tenth member, Greece, and in 1986, Spain and Portugal joined as well. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995, Austria, Finland, and Sweden were included. On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1992, the Foreign and Finance Ministers of the Member States signed the Treaty on the European Union, in Maastricht. The EU, now, counts 25 countries and has a population of 451 million.

## **1.3. Educational policies of the European Union**

The European Union does not intend to devise or implement a “common policy” on education. But it has specific ways of promoting cooperation between the different educational institutions at European level, or it establishes a “European educational area”. In reality the EU is implementing the existing tendencies of the different educational institutions in the European countries. The EU highlights particularly lifelong learning, evaluation of the quality of schools and university education, and cooperation with non-community countries.

The European Union, in response to the challenges of globalisation and the information society, set out its new strategic objective for the coming decade, viz.: becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion. This implies major changes, particularly efforts

to strengthen cooperation on education and training policy<sup>4</sup>. The Council of Europe tackles wide-ranging issues: education for democratic citizenship, higher education and research (European Higher Education Area, or the so-called Bologna Process), language policies, and history teaching in schools.

## 2. Emerging changes

### 2.1. Change of self awareness and identity

One of the main tasks of the EU is to create a European identity. This is a crucial and complex matter because of some lasting consequences of many divisions, conflicts and wars of the past. There are many national boundaries and various ethnic and cultural identities, regional interests, with the wide spread ambition among the local communities to strengthen historical roots and to extend their ambitions for the future.

The paradox is obvious. Europe intends to become a united strong continent, able and capable to set its own priorities and targets for a better fate of all its populations and its dealings with other continents. Agreements and Treaties set limits. They create an “inside” and an “outside” and try to clarify who belongs to the Union and who doesn’t. At the same time, each country or region intends to protect its own national or local interests and priorities. This process is not finished yet. Several countries are hoping to join the Union in the near future. And who can foretell where the final boundaries of the EU will be?

The European “identity” is emerging as the result of formal decisions and informal reactions of different fractions of the population in the different countries. And the evolution is not only to be related with geographical, economic, and political parameters. In a historical perspective, the unifying factor for creating the EU changed as well. If in the past, the religious / Christian belonging guaranteed a consensus throughout the continent. Today, the main aspiration and sign of agreement is related to a different self image to be related with personal autonomy, democratic freedom, social and economic security, financial independence and unlimited access to the consumer market.

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<sup>4</sup> See European Commission Education and Training, Education and Training 2010 work programme, (launched in 2001) strengthened in 2009; European Commission Education and Training, Strategic framework for education and training, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc28_en.htm) (3.08.2011).

## 2.2. Changes in the European religious landscape

Religions played a decisive role in the construction of states and nations, of national and regional social identities. The religious belonging, thus being conditioned by the territory one belongs to shaped the European religious geography. Ireland, Poland, Lithuania, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Croatia, ex-Yugoslavia, are predominantly Catholic, Scotland is Presbyterian, England Anglican, Serbia, Greece and Russia are Orthodox, Sweden, Denmark, Latvia are Lutheran, Germany, Swiss, Hungary, the Czech Republic are Catholic/Protestant, Norway and Estonia agnostic, etc. Historically speaking, politics and religion were closely associated in the formation of the European continent. This situation suggests that, once a territory is linked with a particular religion, it is taken for granted that it never will change, because this link guarantees political, social and religious stability.

Today, religious and spiritual boundaries are no longer identified with territories within the European continent. The political unity is no longer linked with religious homogeneity. This is a disconcerting ‘difference’ with the history of Europe. Admitted, still 75% (of the population of 451 million in Europe of the 25 members) identify themselves as Christians (in comparison to 85% in 1981, in Western Europe): 55% Catholics (impact of Polish membership), 15% Protestants (29 % in 1981), 5% Anglicans, 3 % Orthodox Christians, besides 2,5% Muslims, 0,5% Jews, and 19 % (other sources: 25%) who identify themselves ‘without religion’ (13 % in 1981)<sup>5</sup>.

On the one hand, the situation from country to country differs considerably, as the European and World Value Surveys from 1981, 1990, and 2000 illustrate eloquently. On the other hand the evolution reveals underlying fundamental shifts in the perception and reception of religious traditions. There is abundant evidence that both church membership rates and church attendance have declined in most West European societies over the past decades, but the same time have grown in Eastern Europe. English sociologist, G. Davie added another dimension to the debate on religious landscape in Europe by explicitly focusing on the relationship between “belonging,” that is, Church membership and Church attendance, and “believing,” that is, adherence to religious beliefs. Her analyses showed that countries with low church membership rates do not necessarily have low levels of religious belief, which she subsequently called *believing without belonging*. Her general hypothesis is that in Western societies a growing number of people uphold religious beliefs without formal attachment

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<sup>5</sup> J.-P. Willaime, *Europe et Religions. Les Enjeux du XXIe Siècle*, Paris 2004, Fayard, p. 15-72.

to a Church<sup>6</sup>. I intend to come back to the changes in the European religious landscape in the third paragraph.

### **2.3. Transition of society model**

The economic and political transition from the communist type of society to the Western capitalist society started about the same time for all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The move towards the free market seems to be self-evident, and, at first sight, not too complicated. Now, so many years later, the transition is perceived as highly problematic<sup>7</sup>.

The existential, psychological and sociological transition is experienced as a far more complex process, which will take a very long time to achieve its goals. People are now living in a time of transition, where, in one sense, the old system is present and still very influential. In another sense, many aspects of the neo-liberal society are affecting very quickly the life style, the communication, the thinking, the values, and the daily praxis. Both systems seem to co-exist, although, in many ways, they are contradictory. This time of transition is not a comfortable situation. People feel uncertain as the balance of the previous situation is disturbed<sup>8</sup>.

### **2.4. Boundaries as a complex and ambiguous reality**

The confrontation with the historical (interiorised) boundaries is an ongoing challenge for Europe. This problem cannot be overcome through a treaty or by juridical agreements. The “mental” boundaries are at stake and need intensive work among all in order to establish the psychological and spiritual mindset for integrating the concerns of all the Europeans. The following table offers some form of summary of the different dimensions involved in the shift of boundaries.

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<sup>6</sup> See G. Davie, *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*, Oxford 1994, Blackwell; G. Davie

*Europe: The Exceptional Case, Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*. London 2002, Darton, Longman, & Todd.

<sup>7</sup> I. Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilisation*, London/New York 1995, Verso, p. 95-109.

<sup>8</sup> H. Lombaerts, *Education in European Perspective*, „Horyzonty Wychowania” 2 (2002) Nr 3, p. 155-156.

<b>Kinds of boundaries</b>	<b>Efforts to transcend boundaries</b>
Territorial	“Schengen”: free exchange of goods and people
Historical	a shared European history, historical studies, narrative identity, archeology...
Cultural	declaration of a “European identity” (1973), preservation of a cultural heritage accessible to all, inter-cultural events, exhibitions, festivals, ...
Religious	Inter-religious dialogue / learning, legal recognition of religions, of people without religion
Linguistic	equal value of European languages, study of languages, translations, ICT, English as standard language
Economic and financial	Euro, open market, European Bank, transnational organizations, financial transactions, “globalization”, tax regulations,...
Political	institutions of EU, migration policy, emergence of new (common?) political sensitivities,...
Ideological	Acceptance of plurality of convictions, equal opportunities, anti-racism
Juridical	international law, courts, ethical options, human / children’s rights
Sociological	adjustment of labour / jobs policies, health care, housing policy, salaries, media, taxes, migration policy, family issues,...
Psychological	Prejudices and attitudes, multi-cultural environment
Communication	ICT, Internet, TV and media, GSM, travel, international events
Educational	BAMA, exchange programs, curricula, budget and government policies

### **3. Parameters for diversification and challenges for education in “Europe 25”**

The comments about “Europe 25” entity stress the diversity in the unity. And it is appropriate to focus upon this reality. Diversity, however always has been a specific aspect of the European continent, not only politically, but also culturally, socially, economically and religiously, as pointed out in the previous paragraph.

The aspect I would like to stress upon here is that the changes occurring in today’s society, and the integration of ten new countries in the EU affect the diversity within the EU, and also the relationship with the non-EU countries.

When thinking about changes, I would like to distinguish and underscore especially those aspects, which affect the content or profile of diversity within

the new Europe, and which affect the links with those European countries not yet included in the European Union. I suggest, to call them the parameters / challenges, which may help to discern the priorities for the educational aims and policies.

I do realize, that I am not able to present all the parameters, but I would like to state all those, which I assume may contribute to a fundamental shift in differentiation and plurality. I will proceed in two steps. Firstly I will distinguish a certain number of levels of society and illustrate them with a few examples. In the second place I will draw the attention to the changes, which occur as the result of a shift in interaction or relationship between these levels. This second approach will then help to identify orientations for education (paragraph 4).

### **3.1. Changes occurring at the different levels of society**

On the economic level:

- Privatisation of public services and regulations by market producers.
- Drastic disproportion between the production costs and salaries in W. Europe and Central/Eastern Europe, with as a result the problem of employment and poverty, with the aspiration of many young people to go to Western Europe, e.g. the relationship between West and East Germany.

On the social level:

- The increase of social mobility, communication, travel and integration in the larger European society among people of different social origin.
- The time of transition of society in Central and Eastern Europe.

On the political level:

- The geo-political, territorial boundaries between nation-countries are no longer decisive for the government of the EU: The E. Parliament / Commission / Council decides upon a E. Policy to be adopted by the individual countries, e.g. agriculture policy; the new Constitution.

On the ethnic level:

- Clash of ethnic groups within European Union and groups coming from non-EU countries and other continents (Africa, Latin America, Asia: asylum seekers, refugees, migrants)<sup>9</sup>.

On the cultural level:

- Clash between a growing consensus in Western Europe to rely upon cultural secularity and the long-standing presupposition about the pre-eminence of the Christian European culture.

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<sup>9</sup> J. Niessen, *Migrants, Refugees and Minorities in the New Europe*, in: J. Wiersma (ed.), *Discernment and Commitment*, Kampen 1993, Kok Pharos Pub., p. 185-219.

On the religious level:

- The process of the so-called secularisation in the different countries of Western Europe, with the well-known decline of religious practice and loss of control of traditional institutionalised religions upon the faithful: the European Value Studies of the last thirty years illustrate this evolution, including the surveys applied in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>10</sup>.
- The initial interest in religion in Central and Eastern Europe after the Communist oppression.

### **3.2. Parameters / challenges related to the shift in interaction or relationship between these dimensions**

I now move to the second step, which deals with the question: what kind of diversification or plurality in the EU is raising new and fundamental challenges for education? In my opinion, the change in the relationship between the levels of society introduces a different kind of diversity / plurality and new challenges for education.

#### **3.2.1. The religious identity no longer coincides with the political territory**

In the past, Europe used to represent a juxtaposed religious plurality, depending upon the countries, as mentioned in the beginning of this presentation. Today, Europe is moving from a juxtaposed religious plurality to an integrated religious plurality. Inside the different countries, different religions legally co-exist. At the same time, plurality emerges inside every religious tradition. Sociologists call this the individualisation of the religious orientation of people. Because of the dissociation between territory and religious belonging, we observe an erosion of the religious dimension of the collective (national) identity.

#### **3.2.2. Cultural secularity (laïcité)**

In the name of respect for diversity / plurality, the Western European society tends to establish a consensus, acceptable to all, about a cultural secularity (laïcité)<sup>11</sup>. The cultural secularity is based upon four characteristics:

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<sup>10</sup> J.-P. Willaime, *Les religions et l'unification européenne*, in: G. Davie & D. Hervieu-Léger (eds.), *Identités religieuses en Europe*, Paris 1996, p. 291-315; J. Fulton & P. Gee (eds.), *Religion in Contemporary Europe*, Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter 1994; for the European Values Studies, cf. [http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/data/add\\_studies/kat50/EVS\\_1999\\_2000/ZA\\_Information\\_52\\_2003.pdf](http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/data/add_studies/kat50/EVS_1999_2000/ZA_Information_52_2003.pdf) (20.04.2004).

<sup>11</sup> H. Bost (ed.), *Genèse et enjeux de la laïcité*, Genève 1990, Labor et Fides.

- a. Neutrality of State in religious matters and public powers; which implies autonomy of the State towards religious authorities, and of religious authorities towards the State
- b. Recognition of religious freedom and freedom not to be religious
- c. Recognition of the autonomy of the individual conscience = personal freedom of man and woman towards all religious or philosophical authorities
- d. Critical reflection is applied to all aspects of life (religion, politics, science...); in other words, free examination and contradictory debate.

### **3.2.3. The relationship between politics and religion**

In Central and Eastern Europe, because of the presence of Communism, the situation was complex and delicate, and differed among the various countries. For a long time, in Poland e.g., the church had moral authority over the political government, and later on, when opposing communist oppression, new political parties were using religion for achieving political goals. The Church then had to find a new place in the political arena for achieving the well being of the population<sup>12</sup>. In Western Europe, obviously the political society is intrinsically related to the historical presence of religions. The separation between State and religion is re-designed; as a result some of the taken-for-granted influences of churches are reduced in the name of plurality and tolerance. The tensions experienced at the moment express the concern for the political society to guarantee the freedom of officially recognized religions to exist and to have their space<sup>13</sup>. The “Europe 25” is now facing a direct confrontation between the Western tradition (the separation between State and Church), and the Eastern Tradition (the integration of the political and the religious powers).

### **3.2.4. The emergence of a different “religious sentiment”**

Throughout Western Europe, from a sociological point of view, the homogeneity of a religious sentiment, as it is occurring among many people is associated with six aspects:

- 1) individualisation (do it yourself; compose your own religious identity);
- 2) subjectivisation (the importance of personal religious experiences);
- 3) aestheticisation (a feel for staging the religious event);
- 4) emotionalisation (religion of the heart, opposed to the formal institutional religion);

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<sup>12</sup> J. Mariański, *Kryzys moralny czy transformacja wartości*, Lublin 2001, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL; D. Foreser, *The Place of the Church in the New Europe*, op. cit., p. 67-98.

<sup>13</sup> N. Treanor, *Serving the Dignity of the Human Person*, “Horyzonty Wychowania” 2 (2002) Nr 3, p. 71-82.

- 5) ethicisation (focus upon human rights and ecumenism);
- 6) indifferentism (relative meaning of the different doctrinal traditions; pragmatic participation).

This process is not as explicit or as strong in Central and Eastern Europe. People still follow more closely the Church's teachings, what is obvious in the area of religious practices, but less as regards ethical, social or political behaviour. In both situations, though, the evolution of the religious landscape of the EU seems to reflect a tension between the impact of society and the adherence to religious traditions. Some countries seem to find a compromise in terms of "belonging without believing", others in terms of "believing without belonging"<sup>14</sup>.

At the same time, the European churches have developed a consensus as regards a common viewpoint and pastoral policy in the changing context<sup>15</sup>. The two movements however do not coincide; they reflect tension.

### **3.2.5. The relationship between the neo-liberal market economy (globalisation) and the Christian inspiration or ethos**

At this level, Christians throughout Europe are divided; some identify with the neo-liberal system, others adopt a critical attitude or refuse to go along with the liberal life vision. Many young adults of Central and Eastern Europe have an outspoken preference for the Western society and want to migrate (brain-drain). Some political leaders of Western Europe suggested considering certain countries as more advanced than others, and thus they tend to reinforce and to institutionalise the economic diversification within the European Union. Where do the churches take part in the public debate with society and the governments, and offer discernment as regards a political project, which makes a qualitative difference for the whole of the European population, and beyond?

### **3.2.6. The Gender issue**

The scientific and technological progress opens unexpected prospects and possibilities for the improvement of the quality of life. Industrial production, economic trade, and financial transactions have modified profoundly the labour market. The traditional cultural and social structures for protecting people against unexpected events are abandoned or transformed. One of the important consequences is the changing relationship between men and women. Marriage,

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<sup>14</sup> G. Davie, *Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?*, "Social Compass" 37 (1990) Nr 4, p. 455-469.

<sup>15</sup> World Council of Churches, *Christian and Education in Multi-Faith Milieu*, Salford 1991, WCC.

family life, couple formation and gender identity are symptoms of the far-reaching transformation of the image of what the human person represents.

### **3.2.7. The historical commemoration of innocent victims**

As more countries join the EU, different nations have different perceptions and memories of the same historical events. The tendency may exist in certain countries to remove certain events from the collective memory and to forget about it. In other countries, a one-sided or selective memory may prioritise a prejudiced or biased memory. In all cases, Europe is confronted with an impressive history of innocent victims lost for the sake of the European diversities<sup>16</sup>. ‘Europe 25’ offers an opportunity for remembering, for clarifying, and for transcending its historical divisions.

## **4. Orientations for education in a diversified Europe**

Having drawn the attention to the combination of different dimensions and its influence upon shifts in the “diversification” or “plurality” of the EU, we now can try to see more clearly the challenges for the educational mission.

1/ The first ‘parameter’ referred to the dissociation between religious identity and national territories. In the past, catholic countries would have predominantly catholic educational institutions. The present educational policy of a diversified EU does not prioritise the specific historical links of the individual countries with their religious background. The educational institutions, structure of programmes, and diplomas run across the national boundaries and denominational networks. The so-called agreement of Bologna and the BAMA structure for higher education are typical in this regard.

The issue at stake is no longer what somebody believes or adheres to as religious or ethical orientation, but rather the professional qualification and preparation for entering the competitive labour market, for personal development, for integration in society. Hence, “to educate” in a diversified Europe will increasingly be shaped according to these options. It represents a challenge in the sense that we will have to discern what the consequences will be, not only for the people involved in these educational programmes, but also for humanity at large, for people living in other continents.

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<sup>16</sup> B. Taubald, *Anamnetische Vernunft. Untersuchungen zu einem Begriff der neuen Politische Theologie*, Münster/Hamburg/London 2001; M. K. Taylor, *Remembering Esperanza. A Cultural-Political Theology for North American Praxis*, New York 1990.

2/ As second parameter I selected the growing consensus throughout Western Europe as regards a cultural secularity (*laïcité*). I know that this term refers to the debates in the French context, but the underlying issue referred to in “*laïcité*” is an issue for the whole of Europe. The four mentioned characteristics intend to guarantee the principle of neutrality, and tolerance as regards personal convictions and practices of the educatees, for all the educational programmes.

The principle of ‘neutrality’ means, in Western Europe, that the denominational aspect cannot come to the fore in the educational projects, because of the fear for competitive differentiation.

This is difficult for Central and Eastern European sensitivity, because tolerance would mean precisely that the coexistence of different denominations can manifest themselves in the public sphere and as such can come forward with their respective initiatives. This guarantee is insisted upon because, previously, the projects inspired by religions were refused by the communist, atheist authorities, and therefore the option defended by the European Union is experienced as offensive and shocking for people from Central and Eastern European countries. The fact that religions gained their freedom and the right to function in the public sphere is an expression of religious tolerance and freedom. (e.g. the fear of older generations as regards entering the EU is expressed in the slogan “we exchange Moscow for Brussels”).

Hence, it is important, in our trans-European educational initiatives to foster mutual understanding. I am not referring here in the first place to the study of languages! I am wondering whether the Central/Eastern European reality will sufficiently be taken into consideration in Western Europe?

3/ As regards the changing relationship between politics and religion, the State wants to exercise full authority over the educational policy, in order to guarantee the officially recognized plurality and neutrality. The State considers itself as the only authority, able to maintain neutrality and prevent particular groups from imposing their options upon other groups in society. As a consequence, the Churches, who throughout history initiated substantially education in Europe, will have to re-invent or re-define the role they intend to play in the educational field and find the appropriate place to join the public debate in this field. The question can be raised whether there still is space for diversification in educational projects and policies according to religious, philosophical and pedagogical options and personal convictions? No doubt, Christians are challenged by this situation to develop a meaningful contribution of religion in a secular society.

4/ The fourth parameter mentioned draws the attention upon a different common religious sentiment, which seems to respond to six characteristics,

as mentioned already. It is precisely this tendency towards the introduction of a different kind of homogeneity, which affects the traditional components of the educational paradigm. The new affinity differs fundamentally from the typically European Christian / Catholic model of education. It does not mean that religion is to be excluded from education. But, the tendency to situate religion in the personal sphere, to handle it with more freedom underscores the relativity of religious convictions as regards the educational needs of contemporary society. The impact of this consensus should not be underestimated, as it claims full autonomy for spelling out the priorities and aims for educational institutions and programmes, independently of what the traditional religious communities did achieve in the past. In other words, this consensus does not apply only to education, but represents a life style and a vision, with implications for other areas as well.

What are the consequences of this “do it yourself” model of education? Who then still has authority over education? Who will help the young to discern and to see the value of particular options? Who will help them to integrate the diversity in educational options and policies as they can meet them in the different countries where they attend programmes? Thus, the challenge for education is to develop a critical responsibility.

5/ As regards the fifth parameter, I want to recall that the main interest of a neo-liberal capitalist society is the free initiative and the making of benefit. As long as educational programmes remained under the authority of denominational or philosophical standards, the young were helped to integrate traditional values and ethical standards. As this is no longer the case in such an explicit way, restructuring schooling and education take place internationally under the pressure from local and international capitalist organisations and compliant governments<sup>17</sup>. Demand and offer tend to be the main parameters for organizing the educational field. To achieve the highest quality at the lowest cost is becoming one of the leading principles of educational policies. In this situation, educational institutions are searching for the necessary resources for being competitive and for responding accurately to the demands of the labour market. Thus we can speak of a marketisation of education and of a certain form of “deregulation”. As a result, educational institutions often feel lost because the marketisation of education has changed a number of aspects: the goals, motivations, methods, standards of excellence and standards of freedom in education. In fact, capital and neo-liberal ideology and policy are governing education and transform it

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<sup>17</sup> P. Brown & H. Lauder, *Education, Globalization and the Economic Development*, “Journal of Educational Policy” 11 (1996) Nr 1, p. 1-25.

in an international market. As a result potential pockets of resistance to global corporate expansion and neo-liberal Capital are neutralised or destroyed<sup>18</sup>.

In what sense are individual countries or regions affected by or going along with the marketisation and internationalisation of education? And are the consequences of this process taken into consideration as an issue for critical reflection and discernment in educational institutions? And more in particular, as we find Christians all along the continuum of identification with or opposition to the neo-liberal capitalist system, are the churches involved in the public debate on overall educational policies in Europe, and its consequences?

Similar observations can be made, and questions can be raised as regards the integration of ICT in the formal and informal education. ICT cannot be thought of as simply a technology: they are loaded with cultural values and preferences as well as wishes and wants of what tomorrow should look like. It is evident that the cultural values carried by ICT are largely Western with a particular emphasis on North America and its allies in consumer capitalism. There is more wealth and prosperity in the world today than at any point in history, and yet economical, social and technological divisions run deeper than ever<sup>19</sup>. Given this development, we better can understand that the ICT-market initiates a new type of diversification of the European continent.

6/ As regards the gender issue, the transition of a separated education into co-education still remains a major challenge in every institutional setting. The tendency to minimize differences and to prioritise equality over complementarity is obvious in every area of society. Despite the democratisation of education, though the traditional division resists the aspiration to achieve equality in the academic world, in politics and business<sup>20</sup>. To foster the specific identity, value, and dignity of men and women still remains a fundamental challenge for education in an impersonal, internationalised consumer society.

7/ As pointed out in the previous paragraph, 'Europe25' has an impressively dramatic history. As mentioned before, European countries have been selective in reporting about the continental historical reality. To restore the historical truth is one of the most important challenging tasks for education throughout the new Europe. In particular, to develop the new 'European identity' (if that concept

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<sup>18</sup> Cfr. D. Hill, Global Neo-Liberalism, the Deformation of Education and Resistance, "Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies" 1 (2003), <http://www.jceps.com/?pageID=article&articleID=7> (20.04.2004).

<sup>19</sup> J. Suoranta, The World Divided in Two: Digital Divide, Information and Communication Technologies, and the 'Youth Question', "Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies" 1 (2003), <http://www.jceps.com/?pageID=article&articleID=16> (20.04.2004).

<sup>20</sup> M. Arnot, G. Weine, *Gender and the Politics of Schooling*, London 1987, Hutchinson.

is still valid), requires the integration of the historical paradoxes. As argued in the previous paragraph, the education in Europe has to integrate the attention for its innocent victims, sacrificed all along its history. The education for an “Anamnestic solidarity” is a fundamental condition for succeeding in forming the ethical dimension of the new Europe. It refers to a fundamental commitment, a life style, as the result of the remembrance not only of what happened in the Holocaust, but also as a result of communism, or interracial conflicts, or different forms of colonialism. This complex reality cannot be forgotten, as it is essential for the meaning of our present situation and for the future. I regret, that while highlighting the importance of historical education, the European Commission does not give sufficient attention to a deeper analysis of the complex history and to a concern for reconciliation.

## 5. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, then I would like to refer again to the table included in this paper. It is obvious that the expansion of the EU moved the political and territorial boundaries; they became more flexible. But the mental boundary may be strengthened. Psychological processes of mutual perception, or the historical division according to the ethnical and cultural origin continue to keep people apart, to raise antagonism, to make it difficult to live and work together within the EU. It would be a mistake, though to think that the fundamental and historical differences are to be eliminated; they may deserve to be deepened as well. European solidarity includes the diversity as a constructive dimension for education.

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