



Conference “*Active citizenship in the Balkans: How regional and cross-border cooperation can promote active citizenship*”,

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## EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP (EDC) AND NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT (NPM)

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first thank the organizers for inviting me here today. I am honored and it is my pleasure to address you and to take a part in a debate in active citizenship. I find the topic crucial for the further fostering of democracy and human rights, that is WT I main task within the SPP structure. I hope that I will manage to successfully, at least to certain extend, replace a presence of my boss, Mr. Svilanovic, who has other obligations today that he previously undertook.

We have gathered to discuss how active citizenship can contribute to the EU integration. I would dare say –by introducing, preserving and fostering EU values into every day’s life. Easily said than done of course.

Equally interesting is how to introduce active citizenship concept into daily routine, and this is going to be a main team of my intervention in this panel. In preparation for this conference, I simply Googled a term “active citizenship” and within a less than a second got 1 350 000 hits in English and Serbian pages only! So, I decided to skip an attempt to come up with any definition, but to stick to a notion of the phrase, that I suppose most of us here share, that **-together, we’re better.**

I will try to demonstrate that Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) and New Public Management (NPM), two separate concepts, set of values and tools, applied together on all level of governance, but particularly on local level, can give substantial results in increasing an awareness of need to embrace a duality of citizenship concept-rights and responsibilities, two main features in the heart of the active citizenship concepts. What make these two concepts even more alluring, in my eyes at least, is that one does not need significant structural exchanges in order to start implementing them. It is a sheer matter of a good will, commitment and creativity.

Nevertheless, what citizens need to function as effective citizens in a democratic society is not a simple matter. It is important to know the structure of government and the processes of democracy. It is also important to know how to build consensus and how to find a meaningful role as an individual within the more diverse structure of social relationships. Citizens need facts, figures and opinions, but they also need capacities related to sustaining positive relationships and participating in the creative processes of democracy. I will also try to demonstrate that application of EDC and NPM can significantly increase capacities of citizens that enable them to permanently learn, live and protect democracy.

Even stable western liberal-democracies and social democracies throughout the world are at risk. There is increasing evidence among most of them that students, for example, go through school without learning the knowledge, skills, and values that are essential to becoming responsible citizens. As governments become more decentralized, complex social problems, such as violence, crime, poverty, diseases, natural catastrophes, terrorism and pollution, will require more active participation by informed citizens working together to solve them.

The region of the Balkans is in a process of restoring democracy; therefore its fragile democracy is even more vulnerable. We live and deal in the region where most of the societies are still torn by the demands of the political and economic transition to democracy and free market economy. Some of them still have to cope with a huge burden of recent bloody armed conflicts and authoritarian past, while new challenges are piling. In the same time the international community is slightly shifting its attention towards more pressing issues on its agenda.

Embracement of the EDC, a concept introduced by Council of Europe (CoE), is thus a must if we want to enable sustainability of democratic consolidation of the Balkans and South East Europe (SEE). The SP SEE and CoE priority given to education on democratic citizenship is based on the desire to benefit from the positive aspects of our changing societies: individualism as liberation from the social conventions and increased potentials; diversity as a source of mutual respect and enrichment; the information society as an extension of choices, an opening up to the world and growth of knowledge; and the global village as the setting for mobility and communication. One of the objectives of EDC is to enable everyone to make the most of these new living conditions.

The importance given to EDC in CoE and SP is the result of concerns and debates all over the Europe. Namely, there is clear evidence of declining engagement in traditional democratic processes, with governments, companies and other organizations considered to be remote, and insufficiently accountable to their stakeholders. Yet, it is also widely believed that globalization calls for new, and more devolved kinds of political and social structure, in which individual citizens will play a more active part. This suggests that people need to be re-engaged as “active citizens”, and enabled to take informed decisions about their lives, communities and workplaces. However, many people are both disengaged and lack the skills, knowledge or understanding to do so. This is particularly true for people with little formal education and most at risk of social exclusion on other grounds.

This is why a fundamental aim of the EDC is the promotion of *a culture of democracy and human rights*, a culture that enables individuals to develop the collective project of building communities. Thus it seeks to strengthen social cohesion, mutual understanding and solidarity. As an educational initiative EDC is *aimed at all individuals*, regardless of their age or role in society. It therefore goes far beyond the school environment in which it is often first applied. EDC is a *process of lifelong learning*. That focuses on the following goals: participation, partnership, social cohesion, access, equity, accountability and

solidarity. I highly recommend to all of you who have not yet come across it by any chance, to visit well elaborate CoE web site<sup>1</sup> on the topic that gives answers to how to engage people in an active citizenship.

How to implement concept of the EDC, how to conduct the process of education is, of course, a big separate issue. Little research has been conducted about how individuals learn to become such active citizens, the role of formal schooling in this, and the potential role of lifelong learning including less formal mode of learning.

I have recently participated in a seminar on the New Public Management (NPM)<sup>2</sup> that I have immediately recognized as a concept and a toolbox for introducing EDC, although it is not its main goal. I recognised a direct link between some of the above-mentioned problems of low citizen's participations, particularly on a local level, that are caused by flaws of public administration (PA) among other things. Most of them can be improved or corrected by implementation of NPM resulting in more active citizenship.

PA is criticized almost all over the world. Some of the criticism is rather stereotype; some is very specific, depending on the circumstances.

The most important points of criticism are:

1. Public administration is too slow
2. It is too expensive
3. The quality of what it does is simply poor
4. Public administration is too far removed from the citizens to be able to (serve) their interests
5. Public administration provides poor information

At the same time, there are additional points that come under fire in some countries, such as:

- Public administration is corrupt
- It wastes financial and human resources
- Public administration has deteriorated into a "line-your-own-pocket" shop
- Public administration is the extended arm of central powers
- Public administration violates the law.

These are the points of criticism that New Public Management tends to address and remove the causes of. Those who are applying the NPM are thus creating more acceptable environment for citizen's participation and their re-involvement in a decision making processes and sharing of responsibility.

So, what is NPM? In short, NPM is a management culture that emphasizes on the centrality of the „customer” as well as on accountability for results. The key issue is to learn from the private industry and to transfer their instruments and mind set in an appropriate way to the organisation, processes and employees of the public administration on all levels. The concept of the NPM is a genuine liberal one, but applicable and already embraced by many social-democratic governments throughout the world. Countries of the EU, to which the Balkans strives, fundamentally believe in market-orientation and responsibility of self-conscious citizens. Therefore, a public administration, which is extended from the citizen that is commonly case in the Balkans, needs, from this

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/>

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Naumann Foundation, International Academy for Leadership, Gummersbach, Germany Seminar on the NPM

perspective, a fundamental reform. More transparency, more efficiency and more quality as well as reduction of expenses are the main targets of NPM. However, New Public Management is not just another attempt of public administration reform like the kind that reformers have carried out through times in the past and still continue to implement all over the world, although with limited success. NPM goes much further. Above all, it involves links to the political level (parliament), i.e. the strategic level. It is also connected to the general public, the citizens, i.e. to the market or customers.

Let me present to you a comparison of the features of lean management, one of the NPM main features, with those of the traditional model of bureaucracy:

- teamwork rather than excessive division of labour;
- flat organisation rather than (a complex hierarchy);
- project management rather than individual desk responsibility
- general expertise rather than specialists
- EDP-networks rather than managing individual paper files
- management by objectives rather than control by rules, regulations and details
- Incentive wages rather than claim to job security principle.

This are actually compared advantages of NPM that give local democracies agencies for example more room and flexibility for cross border cooperation for tackling common challenges and problems with other neighbouring local communities, domestic or across-borders. A research, that I also highly recommend to you,<sup>3</sup> found that active citizens usually learn their citizenship skills through trying to solve a problem or to fulfil a mission, rather than by setting out to “learn to be good citizens.” NPM that focus on the project management and intense delegation of responsibilities enables exactly such an environment for both, public servants and citizens.

Bearing all of this in mind, I am convinced that the blend of the EDC and the NPM can create a fruitful soil for growing and nurturing of active citizens, particularly on local level, that will be capable of successfully tackling common challenges and fostering democracy and human rights across borders.

I kindly ask all of you to feel free and contact me for any other reference that I may provide to you related to those two concepts or SP SEE activities in this field.

Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>3</sup> “Education and Training for Active Governance and Citizenship in Europe: Analysis of Adult Learning & Design of Formal, Non-Formal & Informal Educational Intervention Strategies” (April 2003)