The Impact of the New Nationalism and Identity Politics on Cultural Policy-making in Europe and Beyond[1]

by Peter Duelund

The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.

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[1] The paper draws on preliminary studies of *Identity, Nationalism and Cultural Policy in Europe* by Peter Duelund, including the proceedings and discussions of the panel on *Identity and Nationalism in Contemporary Cultural Policy* (ICCPR2008, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, August 2008), on the conference on *Identity, Nationalism and Cultural Policy in Europe* (Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, November 2009), and on a final discussion on *Cultural Policy as Identity Policy* (ICCPR2010, University of Jyväskylä, Finland, August 2010) organised in the context of the studies. Insertion: Regarding processes in the Nordic countries, see also: Duelund, Peter 2008. *Nordic cultural policies: A critical view* in International Journal of Cultural Policy ; vol. 14, no. 1, February 2008. Milton Park, UK: pp. 7-25. Duelund, Peter 2009.*Our Kindred Nations : On the public sphere in Nordic cultural policy* in: What about cultural policy? Interdisciplinary perspectives on culture and politics. / ed. Miikka Pyykkönen; Niina Simanainen; Sakarias Sokka. Helsinki, Jyväskylä: Minerva, 2009. (SoPhi; pp.117-141).

Fuelled by factors such as globalisation, European integration and migration, there is evidence of a resurgence of nationalism in Europe and beyond. This trend is being increasingly reflected in national and regional cultural policy-making, often linked to a new focus on the politics of collective identity.

How concerned should we be about such a trend? What action, if any, should be taken by the Council of Europe and by those who promote concepts such as "multiple identities", cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and the dynamic interpretation of cultural heritage? To what extent does this new trend towards nationalism in cultural policies reflect an increasingly primordial approach to national identity formation[23] which directly contradicts the vision of a people's Europe in which the individual is at the centre of a multicultural society which respects not only fundamental rights and freedoms, but also the cultural and social identity of individuals?

It is argued here that this emerging nationalism in cultural policy-making needs examination and discussion. What follows is an attempt to give examples of the new nationalism in cultural policies, to identify through those examples the underlying trends and finally to point to some of the challenges which it is hoped will provoke wider interest, reflection, discussion and action.

Where is the evidence for the impact of resurgent nationalism and collective identity politics in European policy-making?

The establishment of a Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development in France in 2007 is an interesting example of a governmental measure to improve national social cohesion by combining national identity policy with migration policy. The intended role of the new ministry was to curb migration flows, to foster co-development, to improve the social integration of migrants and to promote national identity. It was set up to combat illegal immigration and organise legal immigration, contributing to the development of countries of origin in order to achieve integration and strengthen the French national identity.[4]

When President Nicolas Sarkozy stated his intention to create such a ministry if elected, a spirited debate ensued about the ideas of identity, nationality and constitution. Support for the creation of the new ministry was weak in both the political and the cultural public sphere. Not for the first time, newspapers condemned the President for being racist, and the only political party to express open approval of the creation of the ministry was Jean-Marie Le Pen's notorious extreme right-wing *Front National* party. Much of the media coverage deplored

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[2] Broadly speaking there are three predominant and different conceptions of the relationship between identity and nation - *the primordial, the modern social constructivist and the ethno-symbolic paradigm.* In the *primordial paradigm*, collective forms of identity such as national identity are regarded as genetic and biological phenomena that always have existed and always will. In contemporary cultural policies and theories of primordialism, race is usually replaced by the concept of ethnicity. In the *social-constructivist* paradigm, the conjunction of identity and nation is viewed as a social and historical development. In this paradigm perceptions of identity and nationalism are regarded as relative phenomena that may be abandoned, changed or reconstructed by constitutional means, such as through cultural policies and strategies. Over the past few years an *ethno-symbolic paradigm*, has been introduced in which values, emotions, myths, rituals, symbols, local, regional and national narratives are viewed as having an independent and irreversible significance for the construction of national identities and feelings of belonging. Finding valid political and cultural responses to neo-nationalism and primordial approaches to identity has also led to the paradigm of *multiculturalism*, an attempt to find an intellectual and political alternative to national suppression of minority cultures. Communitarian *multiculturalism* seeks to create a *multicultural citizenship.*

[4] www.immigration.gouv.fr/

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political institutionalisation of the cultural promotion of national identity, demanding an explanation of how France, as a multicultural country, could legitimately defend a singular and uniform vision of national identity. The creation of the ministry prompted protests from the left, as well as from historians and academics who said that it stigmatised immigrants and suggested France's huge numbers of citizens of foreign parentage were somehow a threat to the nation. Was the government in fact seeking to promote national identity by assimilating immigrants in a postulated single French culture? Was the creation of the ministry in contradiction with the very idea of the integration concept characteristic of French liberal republican thinking and Enlightenment tradition? Was the promotion of national identity compatible with multicultural diversity?[5]

In November 2010, Nicholas Sarkozy admitted that he had been wrong to create a ministry responsible for immigration and national identity, and that the nationwide debate on what it meant to be French had led to tensions and misunderstandings. The President said on television that he had personally stopped using the term "national identity". The "national identity" tag was dropped and immigration policy brought back under the auspices of the Interior Ministry. Although support for the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development had been weak from the very beginning, the careful crafting of its discourse followed an historical blueprint playing on the sensibilities of French identity: a strong particularist identity may be at odds with the realities of multicultural modern French society.

Since August 2010, Germany has experienced several waves of political unrest on the issue of national identity, integration, multiculturalism and the importance of the so-called *Leitkultur*. Current debate began with the publication of a few provocative excerpts from a book entitled '*Deutschland schafft sich ab*' ('Germany Is Doing Away With Itself'). The writer, German Social Democrat MEP and SPD member, Thilo Sarrazin, argues that Germany's future is threatened by the wrong kind of immigration, especially from Muslim countries. In his book, Thilo Sarrazin, who is also a former board member of the German central bank, set out a number of proposed initiatives targeting the Muslim population in Germany. As rationale for his proposals aimed against the Muslim minority, Sarrazin made use of intelligence research findings. The book therefore used both biological and genetic arguments to reinforce cultural hostility towards Muslims. The intelligence research findings proved to be false but it took several weeks until the pseudo-scientific interpretations of the applied research statistics were exposed by a sociologist, Armin Nassehi. But this had no effect on a xenophobic debate based on genetic and biological argumentation.

On a national and local level, manifestations of diversity are encouraged within both Germany and France provided that these are in keeping with the overall aims of national identity formation. But both countries fail adequately to represent and involve foreign cultural elements in the national paradigm, an important element of non-communitarian multiculturalism.
The issue of national cultural canons may also be indicative of the new nationalism and identity politics. National cultural canons have been introduced in both Denmark and the Netherlands. Former Danish Culture Minister Brian Mikkelsen, in a speech to the Conservative National Congress in June 2005, just after the start of the "Danish cultural canon" project following reflection about nation, identity and democracy, said: "A medieval Muslim culture will in our homeland never be as valid as Danish culture, which has evolved on ancient Danish soil, between Skagen [in the north of the country] and Gedser [in the south], between Dueoddde [in the east] and Blåvandshug [in the west]… The Danish cultural heritage enriches our lives and intensifies our identity as Danish citizens in a period dominated by globalisation and

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[5] Jessica Reed 2010. France for the (naturalized) French? Multiculturalism and French National Identity. Lund University, Department of Political Science.

migration. Cultural rearmament is the strongest defence against non-democratic movements in society."

The Minister also issued a call for a fight against multicultural ideologies. He made it clear that there were a lot of battles ahead. He argued that the fight at the battle front would be against parallel societies in which minorities were applying medieval standards and thinking non-democratic thoughts.[6]

The government of the Netherlands has launched a "Canon of the Netherlands", casting off many years of a predominantly multiculturalist perspective. This *Canon van Nederland* describes 50 important developments or events in the country's history, put together by the *Commissie Nederlandse canon* (Canon of the Netherlands Committee). One of the members of the committee, with reference to the ideas and values behind the canon, concludes: "The canon was produced to identify the historical and cultural events that have made the Netherlands what it is today, and its purpose is to add this collection of common events, through education and culture, to the separate spiritual baggage of the different groups in Dutch society."

Basically the Dutch canon consists of a tableau with 50 "windows" that can be opened to show 50 significant aspects of Dutch history, culture, landscape and society. These are presented next to each other on a poster designed for primary school children aged 10 to 12 as the first target group. As well as the poster, the Dutch canon has been published in the form of two books and as an interactive website for teachers, parents and cultural institutions. Europe, however, also has a presence in the Dutch canon.

Perhaps another example of a move from the Dutch multiculturalist approach of past years is the opening of a new Museum of National History.[7]

The Danish and Dutch canons both illustrate how governments are endeavouring through public cultural policies to implement different paradigms and interpretations of identity in society. But the two approaches differ in various ways. Put bluntly, the Danes have presented a list containing the best quality Danish art works to add a new nationalism and intensify a primordial sense of Danish belonging and Danishness, whereas the Dutch have presented a structural framework for a public constructivist[8] debate on identity and nationality. The Danes intend to teach a national understanding of aesthetic practices, while the Dutch stress a context of creative processes and discourse on history in order to focus on and present the cultural challenges facing Dutch society as a part of European and global society. Most importantly, the Danish canon is limited to the aim of rooting national identity firmly among ethnic Danes and assimilating new Danes into a single national culture conceptualised in static terms.

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[6] Duelund, P. 2009a. *Our Kindred Nations. Paradigms of Nationalism in Nordic Cultural Policy,* in: Miikka Pyykkönen, Niina Simanainen, Sakarias Sokka (ed.). *What about Cultural Policy?* Helsinki/Jyväskylä: Minerva, SoPhi. Duelund, P. 2009b . *A Sense of Belonging. Paradoxes of Identity, Nationalism and Diversity in Europe and Beyond*, in Ineke van Hamarsveld (ed.). *Identifying with Europe*. Amsterdam: Boekmann Foundation. Duelund, P. 2010. *Danish Profile* in *Compendium: Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe*. 13th edition, 2010. Strasbourg/Bonn: Council of Europe/ERICarts (www.culturalpolicies.net).

[7] *Dutch Nationalism: from Contradictions to Matters of Dispute.* Proceedings of the conference on *Identity, Nationalism and Cultural Policy in Europe*, Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, November 2009, by Kees Vuyk, Associate Professor, Department of Media and Cultural Studies, University of Utrecht, and Toine Minnaert, Department of Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University. See also Duelund P. 2010, op. cit.

[8] See footnote 2 above.

Scottish arts policy, especially since the election of the nationalist government in 2007 with a new nationalist agenda, has been a subject of tension. The previous coalition government programme entitled "One Scotland Many Cultures" was in May 2007 superseded by the nationalist party government programme, "One Scotland". The Scottish Arts Council was disbanded and replaced by a new support structure called "Creative Scotland" in 2010. One of the aims is to improve strategies for a new nationalism by promoting Scottish creative industries. Another example of interest is the new nationalism of the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS). The NTS was set up in February 2006 as Scotland's first national theatre. Unlike national theatres established during historical nation-building processes in Europe - as cultural institutions located in monumental buildings as symbols of national power - the National Theatre of Scotland has been organised as a production network co-producing with other theatre companies, including ethnic minority drama groups. The Englishwoman who is the artistic director of the NTS, during a discussion on cultural and national identity in February 2007, said that it was not a national theatre's mission "to provide a 'solution' to the problem of national identity, but instead 'to ask the questions'". In 2009 the government revised the funding agreement with the NTS, which is now considering how its artistic programme corresponds with the new national targets set by "One Scotland".[9]

Although many east and south-east European countries are heterogeneous, indeed cultural mosaics, most of their governments' cultural policies emphasise the dominant national cultures in primordial and essentialist terms, and only to a lesser degree perceive the cultures of minority ethnic groups to be part of the country's national assets. There is a tendency, comparable to that in west European countries, to stigmatise ethnic minorities as representatives of folkloric or ghettoised cultures and distinct from the dominant national culture.

Two or three examples will suffice to illustrate this. Public cultural policy in Serbia after the civil war was geared to revitalising national myths and honouring those who fell during the civil war. An official policy of "forgetting" and "not knowing" has been pursued by all governments subsequently. In opposition to official government cultural policy, alternative movements have been started by some young artists, one example being the new trans-border "Monument" movement in the western Balkans. With the help of symbolic artefacts and methods, this alternative movement is trying to exorcise the ghost of neo-nationalism, well aware that the multicultural dream cannot be realised until genocide, massacres and ethnic cleansing have been discussed openly.[10]

Meanwhile in Greece the state has systematically attempted to impose an official culture based on a nationalist identity, religious belief and the ancient Greek heritage.[11.] Poland is witnessing the shaping of a new national self-awareness based on the Catholic faith.

Resurgent nationalism and identity politics are also in evidence in Turkey, a country today that is like a chariot drawn by the four horses of the apocalypse, all pulling in different directions. The Turkish writer, Asli Erdoğan, introduces some of the paradoxes of a Turkish canon in the

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[9]*National Culture, Identity and Arts Policy: the Case of Scotland*. Proceedings of the conference on *Identity, Nationalism and Cultural Policy in Europe*, Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, November 2009, by Susan Galloway, Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow.
[10]*The Potentials of Art in Serbia.* Proceedings of the conference on *Identity, Nationalism and Cultural Policy in Europe*, Department of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen, November 2009 by Milena Dragićević Šešic, Professor, Centre of Art and Cultural Policy, University of the Arts, Belgrade. See also: Dragićević Šešić Milena 2006. *Shared policies: future of cultural development,* in Biserka Cveticamin (ed.). *Dynamics of communication: new ways and new actors*. Culturelink,Zagreb,pp.103-111. Dragićević Šešić Milena, Dragojević Sanjin 2008. *Imagined Divides*, in *Transcultural Europe,* ed. by Ulrike Meinhof and Anna Triandafilidoy. Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 43-57.
[11] Zorba, Myrzini (2008). *Conceptualizing Greek Cultural Policy*. Paper, ICCPR2008.

following terms: "The Kemalist idea was to build a sort of Turkish canon... The idea of a Republic of Turkey was constructed by saying: 'We are one nation', 'we speak one language', 'we have one common idea', and these thoughts represented a very restricted and selective view of history. Even now, almost a century after the founding of the Turkish Republic, Turkey still refuses to face the issues that are related to the Ottoman past…This is illustrated, for example, in the Armenian issue, which is either qualified or completely rejected. Until very recently, when this debate was almost forced upon them, many people didn't to hear or talk about it … Another example which cannot be discussed publicly is the treatment of Muslim minorities, Kurds and Sirkasjem.This Kemalist Turkey was created at the expense of these people losing their identities."[12]

Huge paradoxes have emerged in recent years in Turkey. The controversial paragraph 301 of the Turkish criminal code, under which insulting "Turkishness" was an offence, was subjected to a cosmetic change by the Turkish Parliament in April 2008. Now the prohibition is of insults to "the Turkish nation". The Turkish Court of Laws has been instructed to define the differences between the two formulations and the consequences for anyone who breaks that law. Arguments relating to a secular or a religion-based public cultural policy have given rise to much debate and to "culture wars" between the different traditions underlying the modern Turkish Constitution. In 2008 the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled that the government had breached the spirit of the secularised constitutional paradigm of Kemalism, following a proposal to allow Islamic women to wear headscarves in universities and other public institutions. Charges of anti-secular activities are still lurking in the constitutional debate in Turkey. Turkish membership of the EU is also turning out to be a highly paradoxical scenario. It is quite ironic that a political party (the JDP) with so-called "Islamist" roots has steered Turkey closest to the prospect of EU membership. Equally ironic is the central role played by the EU in assisting Turkey's transformation while at the same time many people in Europe are using the religious argument as a reason for keeping Turkish membership at bay. Another paradox concerns the broadening gap between what might be conceptualised as secular fundamentalism and Muslim fundamentalism.

What is discussed above provides some evidence of the resurgent nationalism and collective identity politics penetrating cultural policy-making in several countries. The examples, by no means exhaustive, are such as to indicate a trend. This trend can be seen in greater focus or a clearer perspective if one takes into account the fact that it is unclear how many countries in recent years have in reality shifted their cultural identity strategies towards a more diverse, open and modern understanding of "multiple identities". The Council of Europe "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe" does not give a clear-cut answer to the latter while at the same time there is current evidence in the "Compendium" of national and regional governments in Europe, in addition to those mentioned above, giving priority to revitalising the national dimension of their cultural policy by, for example, putting greater emphasis on the protection of national heritage, the export of national cultural products, cultural tourism and, last but not least, support for the creative industries as a means of promoting a nationally-centred profile for the country in European and global contexts. [13]

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[12]*Horses of the Apocalypse. Present Turkish (Cultural) Identity Ignoring the Ottoman Past*. Interview by Michael Zeeman with Asli Erdogan in Inke van Hamarsveld. *Identifying with Europe*. Amsterdam: Boekmann Foundation p.p. 63-64.

[13]Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe: *Monitoring Changes in the National Cultural Policy Priorities* and relevant chapters in the national profiles (www.culturalpolicies.net).

Identifying core values in current national identity policies and cultural policy-making

As mentioned above, existing tools such as the "Compendium" and current published research do not give a clear picture of the core values underlying a lot of current identity policies and cultural policy-making and the need for qualitative comparative studies and discussion is quite evident. The fact is that we simply do not have a comprehensive view of what is going on and of the different paradigms of identity that exist in the various Council of Europe member countries.

Until such studies and discussion are properly undertaken, the review here of indications from some countries of a new nationalism impacting on cultural policy-making must remain tentative. The existing evidence however does seem to suggest a possible trend towards a more primordial approach to national identity formation[14].

The new nationalism seems to be manifesting itself in various ways including

- Interconnection of national identity politics and immigration policy;
- Revitalisation of national unity in cultures with clear distinctions between us and others;
- A move from integration to assimilation, despite political rhetoric to the contrary;
- Improvement of heritage at the expense of contemporary culture and art forms open to the world;
- Primordial transformation of culture and identity and of the narratives of cultural institutions, at the expense of the cosmopolitan view of identity formation;
- A human rights emphasis on individual citizenship and the protection of rights is being overshadowed by collective stigmatisation and identity protection;
- Anthropological concepts of shared traditions, lifestyles and values are receiving priority;
- Classical liberal republicanism, with individual citizens at the centre of an inclusive democracy, is being replaced by particularism, tribalism and inward-looking parallel societies;
- Culturalism is replacing equal social and political rights and opportunities;
- The human rights-based view that all human beings should be treated equally regardless of their differences is being superseded by political multiculturalism, i.e. the view that people should be treated differently because of their differences.

Concepts of identity – a new Council of Europe challenge?

The CoE has no explicitly formulated "identity policies". They can however be found implicitly, through extrapolation of the latent identity concepts in the different CoE conventions and documents, such as the Human Rights Convention, the Warsaw Declaration and the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, as well as in the functions and activities of CultureWatchEurope (CWE).

The Council of Europe has, especially in recent years, elaborated paradigms offering alternatives to static practices and reflections on identity and nationhood. The core values, priorities and activities resulting from the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of Council of Europe member states (Warsaw, 2005), the spirit of the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, the CWE initiative and the ongoing Council of Europe reform

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[14] See footnote 2 above.

have been dominated by constructivism[15], non-communitarian multiculturalism and constitutional patriotism, based on the principles of the Human Rights Convention and the fundamental text in the cultural field, the European Cultural Convention of 1954. Its *leitmotiv* is integration rather than assimilation, with a focus on the protection of individuals as well as collective identity and human rights.

While earlier CoE documents explicitly focused on culture, boldly using the terms "European culture" or "national culture" in the singular, there is now a new spirit increasingly focusing on progressive alternatives to static ideas of collective forms of identity, such as national identity, and on communitarian interpretations of multiculturalism and exclusive regionalism, influenced by developments and thinking in the human and social sciences.

For instance, the Faro Convention (2005) and, in particular, the European Manifesto for Multiple Cultural Affiliations (2007) mark a change from primordial, static conceptualisations of cultural heritage and ideas of identity towards a modern conceptualisation of identity in terms of cultural dynamics, "multiple identities" and social change, on the basis of the individual rights of human beings.[i]

Surely in the European Manifesto for Multiple Cultural Affiliations is found the first explicit contribution to the formulation of a coherent Council of Europe identity policy?[16] The Manifesto seems to be inspired by more than just the classic republican individual cultural rights protection worked out by German social philosopher Jürgen Habermas in his concept of "constitutional patriotism".[17] The aim is to elaborate a valid reflective alternative to static culturalism. The Manifesto goes beyond the approach associated with fixed cultural identities and discussion of recognition for minorities, whether defined on the basis of ethnicity, religion or territory. It sets out to show how the feeling among certain individuals or groups belonging to several cultural traditions at the same time can be reconciled with a European citizenship now in the making, based on mutual recognition of different cultures and an attachment to shared values.

But there are however unanswered questions. Which paradigms of identity are implied by phrases like "recognition of different cultures" or "attachment to shared values"? Fundamental political questions and intellectual challenges need to be addressed as a precondition for future action.

Future action such as monitoring the impact of the new nationalism and developing counter-strategies to prevent its harmful effects on cultural and identity policies in Europe will require the Council of Europe, as a first stage, to respond to the need for greater theoretical and conceptual clarification, combined with qualitative empirical studies.

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[15]See footnote 2 above.
[16]http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/identities/Manifeste_europeen_pour_appartenance_culturelle_EN.pdf
[17] Habermas, J., 1996. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy.* Translated by William Regh. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

Proposals for future action

Current processes producing a new nationalism in national states, large or small, and in nations without a state, such as Scotland and Catalonia, indicate that the importance of cultural policy conceptualised as identity policy is unlikely to decline in the next few decades. Globalisation and the process of economic de-territorialisation will stimulate demand for a re-socialisation of identities through, for example, the forging of closer links between identity and nation. These changes will only increase the already strong need for political and alternatives to be developed to compete with the present processes through which a new nationalism is appearing in cultural policies and practices.

If, as is argued here, there is a need for new thinking and specific action, then the following general issues will need to receive attention in the development of the Council of Europe's work in the years ahead:

- Which paradigm of identity comes down to us through the concepts of recognition of different cultures, shared values, intercultural dialogue, multiculturalism, cultural diversity, multiple identities and European cultural identity and as these are reflected in the cultural programmes and activities of the Council of Europe and its member states?
- How can the abstract concepts of human rights, multiculturalism, cultural diversity, unity in diversity and "multiple identities" be brought into operation in relation to cultural practices and to forward-looking views about European developments and possible CoE activities in the cultural field?
- Do collective forms of identity policies, like multiculturalism or the non-culturalist paradigm of constitutional patriotism, seem to offer valid alternative means of counteracting the harmful trends of the new nationalism in Europe?
- What are the implications of giving preference to one paradigm and cultural practice over the others?

A specific starting point for new thinking and discussion could be:

- to identify, analyse and discuss the threats posed by the different policies affected by the new nationalism - this paper only mentions a few examples as a starting point for such a discussion;
- to identify those national and regional cultural policy practices which seem problematic according to the core values of the Council of Europe;
- to discuss practical steps the Council of Europe can take to monitor ways of rectifying mistakes and minimising the unfortunate effects of the new nationalism on present-day policies in Europe.