

# The International Association for Philosophy Teachers at Schools and Universities. A Non-profit Organization for the Promotion of Philosophical Education and its Activities

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## *Abstract*

In this paper three members of the International Association for Philosophy Teachers describe the origins and activities of their society. Firstly, Gabriele Münnix illustrates the origins and history of the Association Internationale des Professeurs de Philosophie, which developed in three phases. Secondly, Werner Busch describes the role of the AIPPh at the FISP World Congress of Philosophy. Finally, Floris Velema gives an account of the COMET project, in which teachers of ethics throughout Europe have worked together.

*Keywords:* Promotion of Philosophical Education, Origin, History and Activities of AIPPh, International Exchange of Experiences and Ideas in Teaching Philosophy.

## **1. Gabriele Münnix: On the Origins of AIPPh and its Regular Activities**

### 1.1. The “Paris Declaration for Philosophy”

It was as early as 1995, that a conference of philosophers on *Philosophy and Democracy in the World* took place in Paris. This conference was

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organized by UNESCO and in the end led to a “Paris Declaration for Philosophy” in which 22 experts from various countries maintained the importance of philosophical education worldwide, because philosophical reflection cannot only «contribute to the understanding and conduct of human affairs», but also provide «knowledge of philosophical thought in different cultures». A culture of free discussion in which concepts have to be clarified and arguments verified would create an atmosphere of respect and lead to capacities of «how to think independently». In consequence philosophy teaching would encourage «open-mindedness, civic responsibility, understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups», so that they become «capable of resisting various forms of propaganda» and prepared «to shoulder their responsibilities in regard to the great questions of the contemporary world, particularly in the field of ethics» (Droit, 1995, pp. 15 f.)<sup>1</sup>.

This declaration could have been ours and was highly welcome to our association, where teachers of philosophy at schools and universities strive for a societal acknowledgement of their subject, share their experiences and problems and have opportunities to learn from each other. Especially the fact that philosophy «should not be subordinated to any overriding economic, technical, religious, political or ideological requirements» seemed and still does seem important, an issue that is important to teachers at schools and universities as well, so that «philosophy teaching should be maintained or expanded where it exists, introduced where it does not yet exist, and designated explicitly as “philosophy”» (*ibid.*).

In order to get qualified students whoever teaches philosophy at universities has to rely on qualified teachers in schools who create not only basic knowledge and a culture of arguing, but also enthusiasm for the history and problems of thought that have occupied philosophers throughout the centuries. And this does not take place in the ivory tower: philosophical thought has moved the world, for instance through the development of democratic ideals, human rights, enlightenment, and it has – in the name of an idea of justice – even led to revolutions that have changed the world. And, moreover, it has to fulfil important tasks for a livable future, for instance in developing guidelines in the field of applied ethics.

But teachers at universities can learn from school teachers as well, and not only what they may presuppose: for instance, in some German federal states in the field of evaluation we can observe that in university exams students get excellent marks whenever they reproduce exactly what their professors have taught them in their lectures and seminars, whereas the

<sup>1</sup> See also <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000104173>.

same students at schools have undergone different criteria: according to the guidelines in some federal states they might not be rated more than “sufficient” if they only reproduce contents. Only efforts in higher levels of analysis and transfer, and, after that, development of own opinions on a basis of rational arguments will lead to excellent marks. And university teachers, as we have seen, can be inspired by didactical and methodological ideas of how to organize teaching in an interest arousing way.

Of course the guidelines differ in different states, and this is another field for fruitful exchange among the countries: whereas in some countries teaching is strictly historical and text-oriented, others choose problem-oriented teaching and do not only concentrate on classical texts, but use other media such as newspaper articles, pictures, thought experiments, mindmapping, fishbowl discussions etc. So we can maintain – and have experienced – that it may be an enrichment to look over the garden fence and see how and by which methods and media philosophy teaching is done in other didactical cultures. And exactly this, besides discussing topical philosophy, has been our target for decades, in which our association has undergone some changes as well.

## 1.2. Twenty years earlier

In 1974 Dutchman Marcel Fresco (1925-2011) had founded an Association Internationale des Professeurs de Philosophie (AIPPh), which was listed in the register of associations in Brussels, according to Belgian law. (The notion of “professeur” in French means teacher at high schools or universities, and we address both circles). He came from a half-Jewish family in Düsseldorf and had emigrated to the Netherlands in 1933. After having taught at the European School in Brussels, he got a professorship at Leiden university<sup>2</sup>, but still occupied himself with Philosophizing for Children (P4C), and he became the first president of AIPPh, at a time when the countries of the European Community tried to move towards each other and to establish ties in order to prevent any war in the future. Fresco, as I remember him, was – even in his old age – a warm-hearted and vivid thinker who liked to move things for the better, and we want to follow his example. In order to create a feeling of community (Jacques Delors required: «donnez une âme à l’Europe») it seemed necessary to become aware of the common roots in Europe, for instance in Greek philosophy, and in the history of thought which has caused fruitful development also between the countries, for there have been many interdependencies. So for instance the first formulation of human rights took place in France,

<sup>2</sup> For more details concerning our history see Busch (2020) and Schüppen (2010).

after the Valladolid-controversy in Spain (whether or not the inhabitants of the New World would have certain innate rights or should be regarded as natural born slaves), but both events would not have been possible without the Italian Renaissance movement, re-animating Greek culture and thought, and Pico della Mirandola's *De dignitate hominis*. So we can observe throughout the times a European concert of thought which helped to develop common values (more detailed in Münnix, 2020).

But AIPPh could not have been founded, had not a German teacher of philosophy, Eduard Fey, who later became school inspector in Münster, called together, as early as 1959, a meeting of philosophy teachers from France, Italy, Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Conferences in Milan, Sèvres, Vienna and Brussels followed (Busch, 2020) and led to the foundation of the above mentioned society according to Belgian law, at a time when many of us expected Brussels to become the capital of Europe. So at that time the focus was on Europe, and consequently Eduard Fey used his contacts to edit a book about teaching philosophy in European countries (Fey, 1978). Of course Europe at that time comprised fewer countries than nowadays; the book contains reports from Austria, Germany, the Netherlands (author Marcel Fresco), France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, England, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Luxemburg, Denmark, Belgium ("morals"), and Greece. It would be worthwhile undertaking this synopsis again today, because of course many things have changed, whereas others remained. But it was the merit of former treasurer Luise Dreyer (1929-2018), to open our society towards the countries of Eastern Europe. After the fall of the wall she was lucky to obtain massive financial support from the German Ministry of Science and Education, and they supplied contacts to the ministries of education in the countries formerly not accessible, behind the so-called "iron curtain". The target behind it was of course to spread liberal and democratic thinking traditions. But for us the main aspect was the abolition of prejudices on both sides. We could talk freely about our common subject and the frame conditions in various countries, and exchange ideas about better teaching and better curricula. And many of us can exert influence.

### 1.3. Conferences and publications

In our conferences we have cultivated the use of three conference languages: English, French and German. My first AIPPh conference took place at the university of Aix-en-Provence in France in the early Eighties. (Today I organize conferences myself, in order to give something back). But really exciting was a conference near Leipzig (formerly in the German Democratic Republic) shortly after the fall of the wall in 1989, where every small village had its own video shop and travel agency,

because travelling and seeing foreign films were no longer forbidden. Our conference location was a Catholic academy (nobody of us had believed that such an academy could exist in the time of the GDR, and the director of this academy even showed us a library in which American journals of philosophy – normally strictly forbidden – were present). We met Prof. Flonta from Romania who had translated Popper (not his critical rationalism, but his less dangerous *Logic of Scientific Research*), as well as Prof. Marek Siemek and Prof. Barbara Markievich from Poland who were fond of Heidegger, and Tomas Sodeika who is now professor in Lithuania. We surprisingly met Kant experts from Belarus, and philosophy teachers from Croatia who reported nearly unbearable conditions of teaching quite near the front lines of war. In this time Luise Dreyer started to edit “Europa Forum Philosophie”, a periodical for our members who could not travel, to inform them of the activities of our association. The biggest event of all was a congress in the conference centre of Kloster Banz in 1994, in the North of Bavaria (I was among the simultaneous interpreters in a glass box and could overlook the scene). About 200 participants had come from 20 countries, because generous funding could provide free lodging and travel costs for all philosophers from formerly socialistic countries. I remember also philosophers from Scandinavia, and some from the Baltic countries. It then emerged that after a conference on the philosophy of language at Helsinki university, organized by the late Pekka Elo (1949-2013), who was responsible for philosophy in the Finnish Ministry of Education<sup>3</sup>, we were invited to visit (by ship) Tallin/Estonia, where the philosophical department wanted our advice which topical philosophical standard works should be purchased, after for a long time works of Marxist and socialistic philosophy had to dominate.

In Prague we celebrated Descartes’ 400th birthday with a congress – organized by Dr. Jaroslava Schlegelova<sup>4</sup> – that took place in the National Academy of Science, a highly impressive building near the Moldova, just beside the Opera House. And in Leusden near Utrecht (NL) – with the help of Miriam van Reijen – we got to know a philosophy hotel where each of the rooms was dedicated to a different philosopher. All these conferences were – and still are – possibilities to present ideas and lectures and conduct workshops, or as a normal participant take part in discussions and critical thinking. Or during the meals and in the evenings exchange experiences and ideas and establish further contacts.

Nowadays we can observe a third period: in times of globalization we have grown beyond Europe. For example we are now – thanks to

<sup>3</sup> Documentation in Elo, Savolainen (1995).

<sup>4</sup> Documentation in Univerzita Karlova/Akademie věd České republiky (1998).

our honorary president Werner Busch – a member AIPPh of the FISP (Fédération Internationale des Sociétés Philosophiques) and can establish new contacts at the World Congress of Philosophy, which takes place every five years (Busch, 2019). My international connections in the Society for Intercultural Philosophy were helpful as well, and our General Secretary of many years, Prof. Riccardo Sirello, could establish contacts to the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris.

My first world congress took place at Athens, where in the first evening more than 3.000 philosophers from all over the world were invited into the ancient theatre of Herodes Atticos just beside the Acropolis and were welcomed by the Greek prime minister and the FISP world president, before ballet dancers and the Athens Symphony Orchestra began their open-air performance with increasing darkness, and everything ended up in a wild *sirtaki*. But the main thing of course were most inspiring lectures and workshops on topical research and current problems of philosophy in 8 languages.

On the occasion of our 40th birthday a conference took place near Bonn, in which we wanted to reflect on our difficulties of communicating in three languages. This big conference on the topical philosophy of translation was enriched by speakers from Japan, Tunisia and New York and led to two publications: the more practical ones came out in our yearbook “Europa Forum Philosophie”, and in addition to that a book was published presenting the current positions in the philosophy of translation in order to gain more public attention for our association (Münnix, 2017). Our board members today come from Poland, Russia, Bulgaria, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italy, Tunisia and Germany, and the last General Assembly decided unanimously that we change the title of our yearbook from “Europa Forum Philosophie” to “Forum Philosophie International”, while maintaining the numbering. It is now published at LIT Zürich and can be obtained on the book market as well (whereas it is free for members), and we hope for presence in university libraries. The forthcoming number 70 on *Peace* contains most of the contributions of a conference *Peace and Citizenship* that should have taken place at Utrecht university last May, but unfortunately had to be cancelled due to the Corona virus. But we do hope that our conference in autumn 2021 (*Nature and Ethics*) can and will take place in Switzerland.

#### 1.4. A new development

And there is still another development: after our registration in Belgium had expired, our association changed its legal form and is now registered as a non-profit society at a German court. We had to deliver new statutes,

oriented at our old statutes of course, but we included the reference to the above mentioned “Paris Declaration for Philosophy” which was decisive in order to get the non-profit status. Now we are allowed to accept donations for the support of our work. The 17 founding members of our new/old association who signed these new statutes come from 10 countries: Finland, Poland, Norway, Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Russia, Croatia, and Slovenia. And we always look for new members who will help us carry on our work into the future, though the frame conditions in many countries have changed: in some German federal states, for instance, in the golden age of philosophy teaching in the Eighties and Nineties, students could choose a course of 5-6 philosophy lessons per week in the final three high school years (comparable to A(dvanced)-level-subjects in former English grammar schools). But the increase of more obligatory subjects and of central exams leave less space for philosophy, other subjects are regarded as more important, which means that we have to go on fighting for the importance of our subject thus spreading the importance of philosophical education. It is part of our cultural heritage and may contribute to a better future, not only in Europe.

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## **2. Werner Busch: AIPPh and some World Congresses of Philosophy**

What is the function of didactics of philosophy? It was in February 2011, during the High Level Regional Meeting on Teaching of Philosophy in Europe and North America, organized by the UNESCO in Milan, when Riccardo Sirello, General Secretary of AIPPh and I, standing in front of the paintings of Giuseppe Archimboldo, reflected on the didactics of philosophy. Always looking for means to explain the human condition we agreed that the Archimboldo faces formed by fruit and vegetables demonstrate exactly the natural basis of human beings. As an introduction into a lesson of philosophy a painting of this Italian painter would be able to stimulate a lot of questions about the relation of a human body and human conscience to its material roots. Thus – in our conception – didactics of philosophy is the permanent search for visible examples of essential facts of human life. And the World Congresses do have sections in several languages on “Teaching Philosophy” where good ideas and methods for appropriate transformations into teaching are being discussed.

### **2.1. How to evaluate submitted papers?**

During the Seoul World Congress 2008 I presented a paper with the title *The Great Philosophers as Teachers of Mankind – Philosophy Teaching in*

*the Schools of the World* (Busch, 2008). I tried to demonstrate that the examples of problem solving that Plato, René Descartes, John Locke and Immanuel Kant gave us could be helpful for students to develop their own capacity of understanding the world and to create solutions adequate to their actual condition of life.

For the World Congress of Philosophy in Athens in 2013 I was nominated as co-chair of the section for submitted papers "Teaching Philosophy" and in 2018 for the World Congress in Beijing. First I had to evaluate submitted papers, then during the congress to be chair of a section. But according to which criteria or measures should I judge the offered ideas? In academic philosophy we often find severe struggles between the different traditional schools: as we saw, rationalists fight against intuitionists, Kantians against Hegelians, Phenomenologists against Constructivists and Analytical Philosophers and so on. This academic procedure is not convenient for teaching philosophy because to take only one species or one method of philosophy for the lessons in schools would produce a unilateral dogmatic attitude for the students. On the contrary, a pluralistic conception of teaching philosophy must be acknowledged if we consider worldwide education.

The great UNESCO publication on teaching philosophy in the world *Philosophy – A School of Freedom* from 2007 remarks that generally there are two major approaches to teaching of philosophy, the theoretical or logical and the historical one (Vv. AA., 2007, p. 50). Widening this twofold aspect, in Germany a pluralistic view on philosophical didactics was developed by Ekkehard Martens (Hamburg). He analyzed five methods for teaching philosophy. Amongst these was the phenomenal approach, whereby the everyday world is minutely observed, described in detail and on the basis of this explained. A second method is the hermeneutic, which consists of understanding different philosophical teaching opinions and using the explanations which they provide to understand one's own everyday world anew. Speech being the universal instrument of thought the analytical method helps us, through its deep understanding of speech itself, to comprehend the world. The dialectic method is a very old one whereby different standpoints are brought together and compared one with another with regard to the strength of their statement. Lastly the speculative method opens up the possibility to outline one's own interpretations of existential life conditions, to playfully try them out and throw them open for discussion (Martens, 2003, esp. pp. 54 ff.).

Furthermore in teaching philosophy all disciplines and fields of philosophizing as e.g. regional or national philosophy or the different species of philosophy of religion have to be accepted, a variety which is represented by the series of hundred sections of contributed papers of the



WCP. In this context it is good to stress the importance of the philosophy of picture and image because of its intercultural relevance, a field where the current president of AIPPH Gabriele Münnix has great merits (Münnix, 2019).

Only one criterion among all shapes of philosophy seems to be irrevocable for teaching philosophy, the right of every human being to live peacefully on our little earth.

In fact, all papers I got to read corresponded to this idea and I enjoyed the wonderful variety which was offered. Out of the numbers of papers I had to evaluate now I will sketch six, the first three for Athens, the last ones for Beijing.

In his *The Narrative of Philosophy* Kenneth L. Anderson from the Emory University describes his narrative techniques for an introductory course using the Platonic dialogues and the doubt reflections of René Descartes for a personal approach of his students.

María Liliana Delgado (Buenos Aires) explains her experience in teaching philosophy in a prison. By transmitting different forms of philosophy into the situation of the penitentiaries she produces a paradox. Within this interdisciplinary process the prisoners feel to be free by philosophizing although in reality they are not free. By this paradox they were prepared for their life in future, a truly astonishing result.

Gisela Raupach-Strey (Berlin, Halle/Saale) presents the basic principles of Socratic didactics. This method was initiated against the historical way of philosophizing. So in a discussion community truth is searched by Socratic maieutics on the basis of personal experience.

For Beijing, Perry James gives a report of his way to teach children to be human. He discerns three levels of acting: random, routine and reflection. Children have to learn how destructive and even diabolical it is to decide all actions according to random. Routine is predictable and therefore helpful, but it must be adapted to all new conditions by creative reflections. In this third area philosophy always has a vital role for new solutions.

Markus Tiedemann (Dresden) shows the ambiguity of teaching tolerance with the title *Philosophical Education and Transcendental Tolerance*. The problem is that tolerance teaching cannot consist of training to accept all facts or affairs students see around them. As tolerance should not defend political correctness, Tiedemann pleads for a form of essential philosophy teaching which enables the students to check all arguments by investigating whether they are compatible with human dignity and human rights.

Rolf Roew (Weilheim/Germany) communicates his experience as teacher trainer that teachers of philosophy must be excellent examples

for intellectual virtues. The teacher of philosophy has to prove by his manner of giving lessons that he himself is a philosophical personality. He needs a high level of awareness because he is often confronted with very complicated kinds of communication.

My conclusion considering the colourful variety of the reported papers is that the openness of the accesses and methods shown above are a wonderful recommendation for a global concept of teaching philosophy according to the UNESCO program. But the surrounding conditions are not so favorable.

## 2.2. The dangers of teaching philosophy

Generally I see some external and some internal dangers teaching philosophy.

External dangers are those which are combined with the structure of national states and societies. In many states of our planet free philosophizing and critique deriving from there are threatened by capital punishment. During the General Assembly of FISP in Athens in 2013 there was a harsh debate among the delegates whether the next World Congress could be given to China where human rights are violated so much. But the Chinese representative was able to convince the majority of the assembly by his invitation to demonstrate the value of open philosophizing in Beijing too. Consequently FISP made a treaty with the Chinese government that during the World Congress in China all speech should be free. The philosophical discussions in Beijing really were open and free, but there was a feeling of a vague uneasiness.

In a session for contributed papers when a Chinese colleague had presented his book about traditional Chinese education by sincerity and respect after Confucian philosophy, I asked as chair during the following discussion that I did not understand the educational situation in China. Which could be the place of Confucian education in a state which calls itself Marxist? Suddenly there was an incredible silence in the room. Hesitating the speaker answered that the situation in China were twofold. Generally teachers educate following Chinese tradition, only in the lessons for politics Marxism were subject and just president Xi Jinping argued for combining Chinese tradition with Marxism. Is this free philosophizing?

This was an external example of China. But in other states too responsible politicians often think that religious or civil education is a better fundament for everybody's behavior, because philosophy with its elaborated texts seems so complicated.

But there are also some internal dangers teaching philosophy. First it is the attitude of philosophers themselves who only practice lonely

meditation with the consequence of becoming a solipsist dogmatic without liberal and pluralistic communication interest.

Secondly there is a certain danger in the structure of academic philosophy. Actually on the internet Oscar Brenifier from the Institute of Philosophical Practices (Paris) makes propaganda for an online meeting under the motto: «Is academia corrupting?». In the invitation text he writes: «Any outsider who encounters members of academia, generally teachers, professors or others, confronts certain types of behavior that hinder communication. That is because almost by nature, academia defines itself primarily as an institution of knowledge, clearly distinguishing the initiated persons from the vulgar». This internal danger is that academic philosophy often despises philosophy teaching in schools so that there isn't any progress in spreading philosophy as a culture for all.

### 2.3. AIPPh strongly goes on

After the international congress on wisdom in 2012, cited above, AIPPh as a bridge between academic philosophy and philosophy in schools continued the work for international philosophy and teaching philosophy with further international conferences and publications on violence, on translating, on ethical education, on resistance, on identity and finally on the problems of digitalization. All these conferences and publications with their contributions to philosophy itself and teaching philosophy could be an important source for a global curriculum of philosophy for schools<sup>5</sup>. The work of AIPPh will go on with another international congress on the subject of *Nature and Ethics* in the World Nature Forum in Naters/Switzerland in September 2021. The materials for global philosophy teaching are prepared. It should be done implementing the program of UNESCO.

During the WCP Beijing I presented a paper on Kant and Epicurus. Kant was strongly influenced by Epicurus and especially by his idea of a hilarious virtuous and liberal philosophical life without fear of divine power. By the modern possibilities of surveillance our planet has become a kind of garden: shouldn't we make an Epicurean peaceful philosophical area out of our little earth by teaching philosophy for philosophizing in the garden?

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<sup>5</sup> The German federal state Schleswig-Holstein has developed a full curriculum of philosophy for all degrees of its schools. Implementing my article in the AIPPh publication *Wisdom* I examined whether the Heideggerian notion of "Schicksalsfähigkeit" – capability to sustain fate – could be a part of a global curriculum of philosophy: 17. *Dahlemer Gespräch zum Ethikunterricht* ([https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/ethik/aktuelles/17\\_Dahlemer-Gespraech1.pdf?1390905123](https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/ethik/aktuelles/17_Dahlemer-Gespraech1.pdf?1390905123)).

### 3. Floris Velema: A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe (COMET)

#### 3.1. The initial COMET project (2017-20)

Ethics is studied in European secondary schools within a wide variety of curricula, ranging from ethics as an independent curriculum (such as in Slovakia and parts of Germany), to ethics as a part of the philosophy curriculum (such as in The Netherlands, Slovenia and other parts of Germany), to ethics as a part of civics (as is also the case in Slovakia). These different approaches to teaching ethics, along with differences in pedagogical methods and goals, inhibit the opportunities for exchanges of best practices and mutual learning. The Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe (COMET)<sup>6</sup> aims at overcoming these difficulties through digital innovation, in order to promote the acquisition of skills and competences of European ethics teachers.

The COMET project was initiated by dr. Natascha Kienstra and Floris Velema, and funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. During the AIPPh conference of 2016, organized by prof. dr. Andrzej Kaniowski from the University of Łódź on the topic of *Ethical education in Europe*, the COMET project received the status of Special Interest Group (SIG) of the AIPPh. Since then, the project has been very successful: several research papers on the status of ethics education in Europe have been published (Kienstra, Velema, 2018; Kienstra, Velema, 2019; Roew, 2019; Kienstra, 2020) and the project has been presented at various conferences, such as the 2018 World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing<sup>7</sup> and the 2019 edition of the International Philosophy Olympiad in Rome<sup>8</sup>.

Central to the COMET project is the establishment of a network of ethics teachers by means of an online platform, which can be visited at <https://ethics.community>. So far, there are 11 countries with 50+ unique visitors to the ethics.community platform<sup>9</sup>: Netherlands, United States, India, Germany, Philippines, Croatia, United Arab Emirates, Belgium, United Kingdom, Canada, and China; with a total of 2.380 unique visitors

<sup>6</sup> Erasmus+ KA201 Strategic Partnership: *A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe (COMET)*. Identifier 2017-1-NL01-KA201-035219. Start date: Sept. 1, 2017. End date: Aug. 31, 2020 (<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/7213ba12-efea-42f5-9e68-7a83f19052e7>).

<sup>7</sup> See <http://wcp2018.pku.edu.cn/yw/Programme/RoundTables/index.htm> (Round Table number 83). Accessed 19 November 2020.

<sup>8</sup> See <http://ip02019.sfi.it>. Accessed 19 November 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Google Analytics data retrieved from <https://ethics.community>, accessed 19 November 2020.

since the launch of the platform in spring 2019. There is no data available on the profession of these visitors, but as the platform was presented at various international philosophical conferences, we have reason to believe that we are reaching our target audience substantially.

The platform is structured in such a way that the ethics curriculum of each participating region<sup>10</sup> is presented by a designated “curator”<sup>11</sup>, who is responsible for uploading only those educational materials that are representative for the ethics curriculum of that specific region. This structure guarantees that all materials on the platform meet a qualitative standard, as all curators are experts in the field of ethics education. The ethics.community platform has the following benefits: all participating regions can actively contribute to the collection of educational materials in the field of ethics, the networked information that is presented online stays up to date, and the information is easily accessible to all ethics teachers in Europe.

### 3.2. COMET II (2020-23)

After the completion of the COMET project in 2020, the Erasmus+ programme accepted the application for the continuation of the project under the title *A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe II*<sup>12</sup>. The COMET II consortium consists of five universities (Tilburg University, The Netherlands; Sofia University, Bulgaria; Alcalá University, Spain; Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway; Matej Bel University, Slovakia), three secondary schools (Wolfert Bilingual School Rotterdam, The Netherlands; Gymnasium Weilheim, Germany; Lycée Classique de Diekirch, Luxembourg), and three associations (Za in Proti, National Debate Organisation of Slovenia; Udruga Mala Filozofija, Philosophical Association of Croatia; Institute of Educational Policy in Athens, Greece).

Several of the partners in the COMET II project were also involved in the first COMET project. These experienced curators (Miha Andrič, Slovenia; Dr. Barbora Baďurová, Slovakia; Dr. Zoran Kojčić, Croatia and Rolf Roew, Germany) will function in COMET II as coaches to the new curators (Dr. Torbjørn Gundersen, Norway; Dr. Ricardo Gutiérrez Aguilar, Spain; Dr. Ivan Kolev, Bulgaria; Jean-Luc Thill, Luxembourg and Prof. Dr. Stelios Virvidakis, Greece). As such, the online platform will be expanded with the ethics curricula of five new partner countries.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://ethics.community/regions/>.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://ethics.community/curators/>.

<sup>12</sup> Erasmus+ KA201 Strategic Partnership: *A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe II (COMET II)*. Identifier 2020-1-NL01-KA201-064702. Start date: Sept. 1, 2020. End date: Aug. 31, 2023 (<https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/eplu-project-details/#project/2020-1-NL01-KA201-064702>).

### 3.3 Teaching Ethics Through Debate

One of the remarkable findings of the COMET project was that none of the participating countries employed a comprehensive methodology towards oracy in the ethics classroom: even though classroom discussions on ethical topics were common, a more systematic approach to debating moral dilemmas remained absent. This is noteworthy, as many studies have shown the positive impact of debate on the development of skills that are at the core of every ethics curriculum, such as critical thinking, empathy and respect for different viewpoints<sup>13</sup>.

In order to respond to this lacuna in European ethics education, the COMET II project aims at the development of a teacher's guide with the provisional title *Teaching Ethics Through Debate*. The teacher's guide will consist of a systematic approach to debating ethical topics, supplemented with a collection of moral dilemmas that can be used as a starting point for classroom debates.

In order to make sure that the moral dilemmas that are discussed in the teacher's guide are pressing and current issues, we have sought a collaboration with the Médecins Sans Frontières Holland Association. MSF associations consist of members, who are all present or former MSF employees or volunteers, that voice their opinions and contribute to the definition and guidance of MSF's social mission. The associations bring together individuals in formal and informal debates and activities – in the field, in associative gatherings at national and regional levels and in an annual international general assembly<sup>14</sup>.

The contribution of the MSF Holland Association to the teacher's guide will consist of descriptions of moral dilemmas, ranging from medical to geopolitical issues that were encountered in recent MSF projects. The MSF Holland association has installed a dedicated committee that has taken up the responsibility of collecting suitable moral dilemmas, by drawing on the expertise from other MSF departments, such as Public Communications and Operations. Open Book Publishers (Cambridge, UK) will publish the intended teacher's manual in free-to-read editions (downloadable PDF, PDF Reader, XML and HTML editions), as well as in inexpensive ebook (epub, mobi), paperback and hardback editions.

With this publication, we intend to contribute to the development of those abilities that Martha Nussbaum sees as crucial for the promotion of a humane, people-sensitive democracy:

<sup>13</sup> Valkering, Nemčok, Matu (2017), supported by Erasmus+, 24; Kienstra, Van der Heijden (2018).

<sup>14</sup> See <http://association.msf.org/>. Accessed 19 November 2020.

- a) the ability to think well about political issues affecting the nation, to examine, reflect, argue, and debate, deferring to neither tradition nor authority;
- b) the ability to recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights, even though they may be different in race, religion, gender, and sexuality: to look at them with respect, as ends, not just as tools to be manipulated for one's own profit;
- c) the ability to have concern for the lives of others, to grasp what policies of many types mean for the opportunities and experiences of one's fellow citizens, of many types, and for people outside one's own nation;
- d) the ability to imagine well a variety of complex issues affecting the story of a human life as it unfolds: to think about childhood, adolescence, family relationships, illness, death, and much more in a way informed by an understanding of a wide range of human stories, not just by aggregate data;
- e) the ability to judge political leaders critically, but with an informed and realistic sense of the possibilities available to them;
- f) the ability to think about the good of the nation as a whole, not just that of one's own local group;
- g) the ability to see one's own nation, in turn, as a part of a complicated world order in which issues of many kinds require intelligent transnational deliberation for their resolution (Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 25-6).

With its development into a pan-European platform, the COMET II project adds a new chapter to the long history of the Association Internationale des Professeurs de Philosophie. It is beyond doubt that the need for those capacities described in the above mentioned "Paris Declaration for Philosophy", to think independently and to be prepared to shoulder the responsibilities in regard to the great questions of the contemporary world, remain as urgent as in 1995.

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