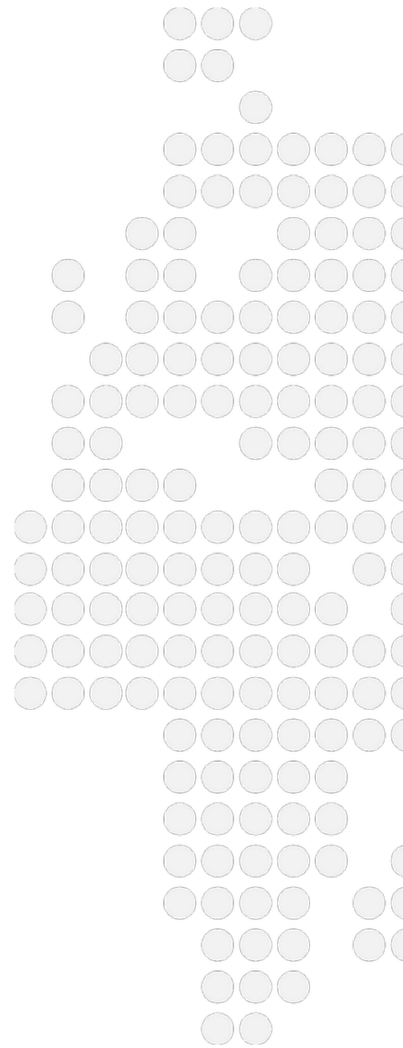




EuComMeet
DELIBERATIVE SPACES FOR DEMOCRACY



D6.4 - Proposal for new protocols on identity construction

WP6 - Strengthen European identity

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Version:	First release
Date:	30.10.2023

Project details and Deliverable information

Project details

Project Title	Developing Participatory Spaces using a Multi-stage, Multi-level, Multi-mode, Multi-lingual, Dynamic Deliberative approach (M4D2)
Project Type	Research and Innovation Action (RIA)
Project Acronym	EuComMeet
Grant Agreement No.	959234
Duration	36 months
Project Start Date	01/03/2021

Deliverable information

Status (F: final; D: draft; RD: revised draft):	Draft
Planned delivery date	30/12/2023(M34)
Actual delivery date	26/10/2023
Dissemination level: (PU = Public; PP = Restricted to other program participants; RE = Restricted to a group specified by the Consortium; CO = Confidential, only for members of the Consortium)	PU

Type: Report, Website, Other, Ethics	Report
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Document history and quality check

Document History

Version	Date (DD/MM/YYYY)	Created/Amended by	Changes
01	26.10.2023	UP8	First draft of the deliverable
02	10.06.2024	UP8	Final revised version after quality check
03		UNISI	Final check

Quality check review

Reviewer (s)	Main changes

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Executive summary

This report explains how empowered deliberations at the level of the European Union could contribute to the construction of European Identities. Before going any further, we should define the terms.

A "deliberation" is a debate oriented toward action. Throughout deliberation, precise options are proposed, compared and submitted to mutual criticisms. Deliberation allows participants to progressively precise and improve those options. At the end of deliberations, participants vote on decisions or recommendations.

"Empowered" deliberation means that the participants are legally guaranteed the power to determine or influence policymaking in the legislative and the executive branch of government, to a degree provided for by law. "Empowered" deliberation means that the decisions and recommendations of the participants have to be taken into account in the decision-making process and can not be legally ignored by the public authorities.

We can imagine many different forms of empowerment. A minimal requirement is that public authorities be mandated to publicly provide justification for their decision not to follow the citizen's recommendations. A further step is to allow the participants to publicly react and the citizens to sanction or reward the reactions of public authorities to these recommendations. Finally, European public authorities could be legally bound to enact decisions made by a deliberative event.

This report entails pragmatic but ambitious proposals and exposes necessary reforms. We recommend three new democratic tools: the European Citizen's Assembly (EUCA), the empowered European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) and the pan-European mandatory and optional referendum. These three tools are necessary for the realization of the European Deliberative Constitutional Patriotism.

The report is structured as follows. In the introduction, we establish how empowered deliberation can contribute to identity construction in the

European Union, drawing from the analysis developed in the report 6.3. In the first part, we list several improvements required for deliberative forums contributing to the formation of a European Identity. In the second part, we discuss three important reforms necessary for the development of empowered deliberation at the European scale. For each new democratic tool, we explain its decisive contribution to the construction of European identity, through “the enhancement of democratic processes of governance at the European not less than at the national scale.” (Pinelli, 2011).

Introduction

The EuComMeet event, and the European deliberative forums that have preceded it, have been great experimental grounds to observe the effects of deliberation on the group identity of participants. At the conclusion of our analyses (see the report 6.3), we can list the ways in which empowered deliberation can contribute to the construction of European group identity.

First, deliberation among European citizens brings the participants to recognize each other as valuable interlocutors, beyond national and cultural differences, and to build links of friendship and alliances across national borders, a first step in the formation of a European public sphere. Previous research has shown the positive effects of deliberation on the formation of collective identity (Hartz-Karp et al., 2010; Jacquet et al., 2021), the deliberative group (or the group engaged in collective action) itself becoming a new object of social identification (Myers, 2022; Drury et al., 2000).

Second, deliberation allows the participants to identify common values and common goals. In itself, the acknowledgment of those common values and goals forms a basis for the construction of a group identity. Further and more importantly, those shared goals will motivate joint actions and efforts, which will in turn become a source of pride and collective identity, creating narratives of trials and efforts carried out together.

Third, deliberation brings the discussants to approach problems, as Europeans, through the prism of the interests and objectives of the community, rather than as representative of their exclusive national interests. It also enables the participants to take into account other point of view, informed by different cultures and environments. In this way, deliberation participates in the europeanization of public national debates (see report 6.2).

In order to build a European identity, we should organize empowered deliberations at the EU level, both through deliberative assemblies and

through the European public conversations which would be aroused by direct democracy mechanisms.

The deliberation and direct participation mechanisms currently in place in Europe are very insufficient to foster the formation of European identity (Kumm, 2017). And as recalled the report 6.2, in the absence of mechanisms enabling for the creation of a European public sphere, most political parties approach European affairs through the prism of domestic interests and political competition. The formation of European identity calls on important reforms and development of deliberative practices.

The first section will make practical recommendations for successful deliberative forums that can contribute to the construction of European identity. The second section will expose necessary reforms for the development of deliberation and European identity beyond the confined space of the deliberative forums, and on a continental scale.

I. How should deliberative forums be improved?

This section comes mainly from the observation of certain difficulties in the EuComMeet experiment, as related in the first part of the report 6.3. We present practical improvements to overcome these difficulties and to conceive successful deliberative forums that can fully contribute to the formation of a European identity. Most of these improvements demand changes in organization and in execution. The last, however, to issue binding decisions and clearly link the deliberative forums to public decision-making (p.98, report 6.3) requires a significant commitment from public authorities and public officials.

1. Improving participation in deliberative forums and reinforcing descriptive representation

Future deliberative events should assure a high participation rate, close to 100 %, among the participants recruited. Once citizens have committed to taking part, they should attend as many sessions as possible until the end of the process. A high participation rate is necessary to ensure both the diversity and the descriptive representativeness of the panel.

From the EuComMeet experiment and from other Citizens Assemblies to which it can be compared, we can induct useful ways to increase participation in deliberative forums.

The formal discussions and group work should be scheduled on the weekends (or possibly on three-days weekends) rather than during the week, in order to avoid a conflict with work obligations and to avoid problems due to cultural differences (Europeans tends to eat at different hours according to the countries they live in). Discussions, whether asynchronous or synchronous, during working days and the evening of working days should be avoided. The calendar should be announced to the participants well in advance, to allow them to plan. The salary of missed workdays should be compensated for by the organizers.

Further, it is not certain, after the EuComMeet experience, whether high quality deliberations and participation can be produced in an exclusively online event, as opposed to a face-to-face event. Future deliberative forums should be held face-to-face in priority. The European Union should also explore the possibility of hybrid events, using both physical meetings and online meetings and discussions. All the logistics of the participants' displacement and the hosting will then have to be taken care of by the organizers.

In the next sections, we will discuss three additional factors that will contribute to the participation rate: a clear link to public decision, that is, the possibility of issuing binding decisions (6), improvements in the translation system (2) and in the deliberative informatic platform (3).

2. Improving the automatic translation system

The automatic translation system has an important potential for multilingual deliberations. It should be enhanced in three directions.

First, the quality of translation in certain languages – German, Polish, in the case of EuComMeet – shall be improved. Never should the embedded automatic translation system be less efficient than an external translation system, such as DeepL or Google Translate, as switching to those tools divert the time and the attention of the participants.

Second, we should explore the possibility of voice-to-text or voice-to-voice translation, to realize oral multilingual deliberations. The rapid progress of artificial intelligence should allow this setting to be experimented in the coming decade.

Third, to insure a free-flowing conversation, it would be better for the translation to be fully automatic and spontaneous as a default option, as it would nudge the participant to read and pay attention to all the messages. We could imagine that, by default, both the original message and its translation in the user's language automatically appear, to strike a balance between inter-understanding and authenticity of the exchanges.

3. Improving the deliberation online platform

Whenever an online platform is used again for deliberation, it should be made easier to use and navigate. The platform should be tested on new users before being implemented.

Beyond the importance of an efficient platform to facilitate deliberations, there is an issue of identity and pride in the productions of Europe. In the two first decades of the XXIth century, almost all major Internet platforms have been developed in the United States of America. That Europe gives the image of a continent not capable of producing quality digital tools, easy to use, is absolutely disastrous for its image. This is why special attention must be paid to the user experience, the robustness and the aesthetics of any future European deliberations platforms.

As it has been observed in the french Citizen's Convention for the Climate (2019-2020) and Citizen's Convention on the End of Life, the ability of participants to pursue informal discussions between the formal face-to-face sessions allowed them to work better and more thoroughly. In addition, the participants were free to form different group chat (on WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, etc.), according to their affinities and opinions.

It is not mandatory to use an online platform for deliberation. However, the participants should always be given the possibility to access the relevant documents in a cloud at all times and be authorized to form informal group chat to discuss freely.

4. Deliberating on precise measures

Future deliberative forums should be oriented towards the production of recommendations or decisions, written in documents to be handed to other public authorities and to the public. The participants should be able to progressively identify, debate and specify precise measures to be recommended.

A deliberative event should encompass a succession of meetings in which public problems are progressively identified through auditions and discussions, options are formulated, subjected to deliberation and adopted

by the group, in increasingly precise and actionable terms (Lê Quan Phong, 2023).

During this process, multi-member proportional votes should be used to decide the sub-themes of deliberation, the organizations and persons auditioned, and to divide the panel's working time among them fairly (Lackner et al., 2023). The Usual Judgment (also known as "graduated majority judgment" or "median judgment") should be used to decide between competing options, and simple majority voting should be used to adopt a decision or recommendation formally (Fabre, 2021; Balinski et al., 2010).

This process allows for the creation of a set of decisions on recommendations legitimately attributable to the group, which can be communicated to public authorities and the population. In addition, minorities in the panel could write and endorse different dissenting opinions, giving a quantified panorama of citizens' preferences at the end of the deliberation (Ruth, 2009).

As we have seen in report 6.3, a desirable secondary effect of deliberation is enabling the participants to identify common objectives and commit to joint actions that will, in turn, provide a source of pride and identification for the community.

5. Establishing a dialogue with the experts and with the officials interviewed

The participants of the deliberative forums should be able to investigate by themselves and to question and challenge the declaration of the experts and public officials interviewed.

The recommendations of deliberative forums can only bear legitimacy if they come from a rigorous process of acquisition and processing of information. This requires not blindly trusting a few experts, but exercising critical thinking and comparing a diverse set of testimonies. We recommend that the citizens be able to decide, at least in part, about the experts and organizations that will be auditioned.

6. Linking clearly to public decision-making

Deliberative and participative events should be clearly linked to public decision-making. The participants and the public alike should be able to correctly anticipate the impact of a deliberative event on future decisions.

A deliberative event should have a clear influence on public decision-making to motivate the invited citizens to attend and participate and the public to pay serious attention to its results. Deliberation only meaningfully occurs to its full potential when participants are motivated by the expectation of concrete results from their work.

Conversely, a deliberative event not linked to public decision-making, demotivates the participants to attend and produce sophisticated reasoning and arguments and pushes the public to ignore the event altogether. This has been observed in previous events such as “D plan” (2005), “Meetings of Mind” (2005-2006), “Tomorrow’s Europe” (2007) and “European Citizen’s Consultation” (2007)(Wojcik, 2011; Boucher, 2009), “Europolis” (2009), the “European Citizens’ Consultation” (2018-2019) and the “Conference on the Future of Europe” (2021-2022) (Kies et al. (eds.), 2013; Boucher, 2009). Therefore, an important link to decision-making is necessary to have European deliberation.

Deliberative forums can only meaningfully contribute to the formation of European identity if their results and byproducts are guaranteed a certain impact on decision-making of the European Union institutions, on its legislative and executive branch.

Deliberation enables the Europeans to identify common values and to resolve common actions that can form a basis for collective identity. This can only be possible if the deliberation frequently leads to real and identifiable public policies.

Deliberations deprived of political power will go unnoticed by the public or will be assimilated to manipulation (Arnstein, 1969; Fung, 2006). In the long run, it will not contribute to the formation of European identity.

A minimal requirement is that public authorities be mandated to publicly provide justification for their decision not to follow the citizen’s recommendations. A further step is to allow the participants to publicly react

and the citizens to sanction or reward the reactions of public authorities to these recommendations. Finally, European public authorities could be legally bound to enact decisions made by a deliberative event.

In other words, “empowerment” can mean things as different as executive accountability (citizens can hold the executive to account and perhaps vote on its removal), citizen’s initiative (citizens can trigger a referendum), legislative proposal (citizens can introduce bills in the parliament), veto (citizens can block the adoption of a bill) or direct legislation (citizens can directly make laws).

Although there are many possibilities, we have identified – particularly from messages from EuCoMeet participants and those from the Conference on the Future of Europe – three ambitious and realistic priority reforms to develop empowered deliberation in Europe.

II. What important reforms are necessary for empowered deliberation and the construction of a European identity?

This section will present important reforms of the European Union to realize empowered deliberation at the scale of the EU. We will detail how each reform will contribute decisively to the formation of a European identity.

1. Institutionalizing European Citizens' Assemblies

Participants in the EuComMeet experiment (2023) and in the Conference on the Future of Europe (2019-2022) asked for the institutionalization of Citizens' Assemblies. We will recall here the Conference on the Future of Europe's Citizen panel on Democracy and the Rule of Law proposition 39 (2021):

“Holding Citizens' Assemblies periodically, on the basis of legally binding EU law. Participants must be selected randomly, with representativeness criteria, and participation should be incentivized. If needed, there will be support of experts so that assembly members have enough information for deliberation. If the outcomes are not taken on board by the institutions, this should be duly justified”

In EuComMeet, participants called either for the institutionalization of a permanent European citizen's assembly tasked to send propositions and reports to the elected European Parliament or for the creation of a citizen's assembly in each country member of the UE (see report 6.3).

We previously have explained that deliberative events had to be representative, deliberate toward precise measures and able to take binding decisions, if they are to contribute to the formation of a European identity. As the participants themselves came to the conclusion, these

features are excessively difficult to accomplish in ad hoc events, organized in an irregular manner and not enshrined in European Law. These events lack any guarantee in their operation and in their results. Accordingly, the public pays little attention to them.

To contribute to European identity, empowered deliberation in the European Union shall be assured by deliberative forums which display the following features:

Permanent. The construction of European identity is a relentless and long work. It can only be assured by a persistent forum, whose effect on the public will increase over time. Consistent to what has been written in the Conference on the Future of Europe and by EuComMeet participants, we affirm that Citizens' Assemblies should be organized regularly, and become a habit embedded in European political life. Going a step further, we recommend that these assemblies operate continuously and be able to simultaneously cover all aspects of European affairs.

Visible. The deliberative forum can only contribute to European identity if the public is aware of its existence and activities.

Authoritative. The deliberative forum can only contribute to European identity if its decisions are clearly linked to public decision, as we have previously seen.

Protected by EU law. The deliberative forum can only be authoritative if its rules of operations and influence of its results are protected by the EU law.

To ensure the contribution of empowered deliberation to the formation of European identity and the satisfaction of the above-mentioned criteria, we recommend the creation of a "new branch of the EU", the European Citizen's Assembly, operating continuously along the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Court of Justices and all EU agencies.

The structure of a European Citizen's Assembly

How might the European Citizen's Assembly be structured? To ensure its competence and effectiveness, we recommend that it be composed of permanent *specialized Citizen's Assemblies*. Consider, for example, a division in nine assemblies: *Ecology* including Food & Agriculture, Forest & Land management and Seas, *Economy* including Employment & Work, Finance and Trade, *Infrastructures* including Energy, Transportation, Telecommunication & Digital and Industry, *Solidarity* including Health, Retirement and Sports, *Education* including Research and Culture, *Interior* including peacekeeping, population protection and public function, *Foreign* including Diplomacy, National Defense, International Cooperation and Intelligence, *Territories* including Housing and Urbanism and, *Justice* including Human Rights and equality promotion. The specialized Citizen's Assemblies would contribute to European legislation in their respective domains and participate in the control of the activities of the European Commissions and of the EU agencies.

Each specialized Citizens' Assembly would be composed of between one hundred and two hundred members, renewed progressively. The panels would be selected by lot in the population of the European Union, with a system of quotas (Flanigan et al., 2021) to ensure its representativeness in age structure, gender, socio-economic class and country of origin. Periodically, the specialized Citizen's Assemblies would coalesce in a *Plenary*, counting between one thousand to one thousand and eight hundred members, to coordinate, adopt its legislative proposals and discuss the budget of the European Union.

While the specialized Citizen's Assemblies and the Plenary would form the main body of the European Citizen's Assemblies, they would be complemented by smaller assemblies (Berg et al., 2023). Namely, the European Citizen's Assembly could also organize temporary *ad hoc Citizens' Assemblies*, to address specific issues. In addition, it could also include Monitoring Citizen's to monitor the actions of the EU agencies and *Citizens'*

Panel at the local, regional, and national levels to influence and monitor the decisions concerning EU funds.

The contribution of the European Citizens' Assembly to European identity

The European Citizens' Assembly will allow ordinary citizens to participate in European affairs as citizens of Europe. As a body representing the social diversity in Europe, it will bring a precious contribution to forge compromises and recommendations that can unite the Europeans. As we have seen in EuComMeet and in the Conference on the Future of Europe, when reunited, European citizens recognize themselves as worthy interlocutors and can formulate ambitious joint resolutions. A European Citizens' Assembly would play an important role in the formation of European identity by multiplying the progresses that citizens can attribute to their belonging to the community of Europeans.

2. Empowering European Citizens' Initiative

As of today, the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) allows collectives to call on the European Commission to propose a new law. Given the high constraints – a collective has to collect one million signatures in seven EU countries in 12 months – this tool has not empowered ordinary citizens, but rather already organized Non-Governmental Organizations and enterprises (Aldrin et al., 2016). In addition, the initiative can be flatly refused by the European Commission, which retains the exclusivity of the initiative of laws in the European Parliament, making the current ECI a “weak and unconvincing procedure” (Longo, 2019).

An empowered European Citizens' Initiative should be able to directly put a proposition to the deliberative agenda of either a European Citizens' Assembly and of the European Parliament, without requiring the agreement of the European Commission. Further, the European Citizens' Initiative should be empowered to call for a referendum on a law examined by the European Citizens' Assembly or by the European Parliament.

In this way, the European Citizens' initiative would increase considerably the direct power of European citizens over public policy. European citizens would gain in ability to determine the institutional agenda and to weigh on the final legislative decisions. These new devices, constantly mobilized by diverse transnational interest groups, would significantly augment public mobilization in Europe over Europeans affairs. Crucially, the European Citizens' Initiative can only be successful if it takes ground in different countries, which encourage transnational cooperation and mobilizations. The mobilization raising to exercise the enlarged powers of the European Citizens' Initiative would augment the public debate on European politics. It would encourage citizens of all member-States to approach Europeans affairs as Europeans, as a member of a community (Crum, 2022).

The empowered ECI would also be an excellent way to put on the agenda subject and issues that move and can potentially unite the Europeans. It will allow issues ignored by political parties to rise to prominence in the European public sphere. Petitions will become one way by which Europeans will look for, and find, the values, goals and efforts that will come to define them.

3. Institutionalizing Pan-European referendums

Pan-European referendums, uniting all Europeans voters in a single constituency to vote on legislation, has been a regular demand of European citizens throughout the last decades. It has been demanded by EuComMeet participants (2023), by a majority of members of the Convention on the Future of Europe (2002-2003) and by a majority of members of the Conference on the Future of Europe (2019-2022). What would be the objects of these referendums? To begin, there would be mandatory referendums on extraordinarily important decisions of the European Union, such as the ratification of a treaty with a foreign power, the modification of European treaties – which effectively play the role of a European constitution – and the admission of new members in the Union. In addition, there would be

optional referendums on EU legislation (directives and regulations), called on by the European Citizens' Initiative. These referendums would allow the European voters, reunited in a single constituency, to have a final say on a legal act adopted by the European Parliament and/or by a European Citizen's Assembly.

European voting days

If we take Switzerland, where these two kinds of referendum are used, as a reference, we should expect up to a dozen European referendums each year. These could be reunited in one or two European, non-working, voting days. These days ought to be unified for the entire European Union, since all voters would vote in the same constituency. The date of the 9th May, Europe Day and day after the surrender of the Third Reich, and the Sunday following the 11th November, Armistice Day marking the end of the First World War, would be interesting options for Europeans voting days charged with a strong symbolic force. These would represent the strength of European democracy, emerging after past confrontations and vanquished horrors.

The contribution of European referendums to European identity

The impact of regular European referendums on European identity would be profound. For the first time, Europeans would be called to vote, not as members of their nations – in 2023, the European Parliament is still elected on the basis of national and regional constituencies – but exclusively as European citizens (*ibid.*). As we already wrote in report 6.3, “a single-constituency pan-European referendums would create political identifications, alliances and oppositions across the national frontiers. The voters, partisans and opponents of each proposition submitted to the referendum, would be brought to confront each other peacefully and support each other from one end of the Old Continent to the other. One could identify with the other voters, who, elsewhere in Europe, has voted like them, on the exact same question. The media would also be

encouraged to identify those cross-national coalitions of voters, becoming the new actors of this new European public sphere. Rivaling European political identities, in the plural, would appear and contribute to the importance of European identity, in the singular. In this light, the regular organization of pan-European referendums could both contribute to the formation of a European public sphere and to the Europeanisation of the national public sphere - by which we mean deliberation, within the national public space, about European issues – and, thus, to the reinforcement of European identity”. Note that it is also possible to imagine European referendums based on smaller transnational constituencies. For example, on either side of a border, in the eurozone exclusively, or in the watershed of a river crossing several countries.

Conclusion – European *demoi* and European *demos*

This essay has explained how empowered deliberations at the level of the European Union could contribute to the construction of European identities. We have shown, in its first part, that deliberation makes it possible, through several mechanisms, to strengthen the identity of a group.

To be effective at the level of the European Union, this deliberation must take place within the framework of visible institutions, established in European law and endowed with a certain authority over public decision-making. Today there are no such institutions of empowered citizen's deliberation in Europe (Kumm, 2017). Thus, we proposed both principles to improve the functioning of deliberative forum (in part one of this essay) and paths of reforms for the European Union (in part two of this essay). In the long run, the continuous activity of these new protocols of empowered citizen's deliberation will strengthen the European identity among EU citizens, thus realizing a project and an ideal in the making for more than twenty years (Eriksen et al., 2000).

From time to time, we hear the hackneyed argument that declares that there is no such thing as a European people. There are certainly peoples of Europe, *demoi*, but no European *demos*, no European nation or identity (Spector, 2021). We recognize here a fallacy according to which group identities are fixed, eternal and exclusive. This fallacy is annihilated by the knowledge of human history.

Nations and people evolve and emerge. Identity does not run in our blood, nor in race. It is born in our speeches and in our eyes. A community appears when humans, living together, confronting common issues and hardships, come to see each other as members of the same particular group.

We recommended three new democratic tools – the European Citizen's Assembly (EUCA), the empowered European Citizen's Initiative (ECI) and the pan-European referendum – who will bring Europeans to look

each other in the eyes, as valuable interlocutors, to identify together common values and goals.

The peoples of Europe will commit themselves to joint effort and will learn to look upon their affairs as members of one united community. From a long and painful history of brotherly massacre, they will come to form a people, eyes fixed on the future. We, Europeans, will recognize each other in the progress we will do together.

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