

# REPORT

## Overcoming Dividing Lines in Europe (Jubel Festival)

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> of September 2019, 18:30 – 20:00  
Parc du Cinquantenaire, Brussels

- **The interactive workshop “Overcoming Dividing Lines in Europe” was organised by the Think Visegrad - V4 Think Tank Platform at the Jubel - European Democracy Festival and took place on 7th September 2019 in Parc du Cinquantenaire, Brussels.**
- **The debate was moderated by Zuzana Stuchlíková (Head of Brussels Office, EUROPEUM) and Jiří Lacina (Communications Coordinator, EUROPEUM) and attracted 15 discussing participants in total.**

The Jubel Festival is the first European Democracy Festival, taking inspiration from the Nordic tradition of democracy festivals. The main theme of the event is the question how to strengthen European democracy. The uniqueness of the festival lies in the informal setting - using the outdoor location in a public park and engaging in a dialogue with citizens. The event aims at building a connection between politics, policymaking and understanding of democracy in its broadest sense, and places the citizens at the heart of the Festival. Several tents hosted debates and workshops, where citizens debated ways to shape the future of Europe.

Therefore, this festival represents a desired bottom-up perspective.

The moderator, **Ms Zuzana Stuchlíková** opened the workshop by introducing the organisers, the goals of the workshop and the concept of the Jubel festival. She then introduced various themes that can be seen behind stereotypical division lines in Europe (such as borders between states and regions, economic differences between centres and peripheries or divisions based on identity), outlined their origins and existing tools and approaches attempting to overcome them. Then the floor opened for contributions of participants.

First topic raised in the discussion was the added value of the Visegrad Group as an extra layer between the EU and countries. It has been asked whether the Visegrad Group contributes to the divided Europe or stimulates regional cooperation - debate continued in comparing models of regional cooperation across Europe (such as Nordic Council, Benelux and the V4).

The discussion followed by questioning the involvement of foreign powers and their impact on the division of Europe. The first mentioned example was Russia, which does not only constitute a polarizing factor due to its activities in the region but also the relationship of various countries towards Russia varies. Additionally, same attitudes apply for Europeans and European countries towards United States.

As the discussion moved forward, the focus of the talk shifted to the question of disinformation in public sphere and how to prevent it. As the solution, mandatory classes on digital education in school curriculums, plus emphasis on training and education of teachers were proposed. As the European Union

does not dispose of exclusive and nor shared competences on education matters, participants debated whether the civil society should take the lead in securing the grounds for tackling disinformation – the question remained unanswered.

Following up to the topic of disinformation, the discussion continued with the communication problem surrounding the European topics. Participants of the event believed negative news about the Union are widespread, but the success stories are lacking. Therefore, having a better PR agency for the Union, to be able to sell success stories, would be welcomed.

To conclude, two main problems have been identified that creates dividing lines in Europe. Firstly, European Union lacks an effective and positive communication strategy to reach out to European public. Secondly, the problem of lacking education on European matters hinders overcoming various divisions of the continent.

