Post-Covid-19 and EU: Education for what citizenship?\(^1\)

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Abstract

This paper examines the origins of the European COVID19 crisis under the lenses of the EU debt crisis and its neoliberal management. It analyzes how the austerity measures have contributed to the breakdown of the capabilities of national health systems to deal with the Covid19 crisis, with special focus on hard-hit Italy and Spain. It then examines the EU Next Generation Recovery Plan and how national interests have influenced the debate on how this should be shaped. At the end, it considers the challenges for EU citizenship education under these conditions. It concludes that, if there is to be any future of the EU project, the injustices and inequalities that are created by the structure of EU need to be addressed. Education cannot alone overcome the sentiments coming from the broken promises for mutual prosperity.

Keywords: Covid-19, Europe, Neoliberalism, austerity, citizenship education.

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Introduction

Neoliberalism, the current form of capitalism, has had a devastating effect on countries around the world during the coronavirus pandemic. The imposition of neoliberal austerity measures has crippled many basic functions of the states. Austerity measures mean less spending on the social side, which translates to less money for health and education, and more pressure to sell these off into the private sector. As Vijay Prashad (2020) says:

The problem with having health and education in the private sector is that these are designed for profit and not for the social good. Hospitals are run like any rental property. It is a waste of the asset if there is too much spare capacity, so that hospitals — like renters — drive an agenda for maximum occupancy. When there is a pandemic, there is simply no surge capacity in these lean and efficient (in terms of profit maximization) medical institutions.

The EU’s focus on neoliberal structural reform, has been a constant feature of its agenda since Maastricht. Education has been a part of that project. The Lisbon Agenda 2000 originally set out to make the EU “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world” by 2010. It included an economic pillar, a social pillar and an environmental pillar. In 2010 the Lisbon Agenda was relaunched as a new 10-year plan, the Europe 2020 strategy — “an agenda for new skills and jobs: to modernize labor markets by facilitating labor mobility and the development of skills throughout the lifecycle with a view to increasing labor participation and better matching labor supply and demand” (Clancy, 2020b).

In this paper, I examine the origins of the COVID19 crisis under the lenses of the EU debt crisis and its neoliberal management. I analyze how the austerity measures have contributed to the breakdown of the capabilities of national health systems to deal with the Covid19 crisis, with special focus on hard-hit Italy and Spain. I then examine the EU Next Generation Recovery Plan and how national interests have influenced the debate on how this should be shaped. At the end, I consider the challenges for EU citizenship education under these conditions. I
conclude that, if there is to be any future of the EU project, the injustices and inequalities, that are created by the structure of EU, need to be addressed. Education cannot alone overcome the sentiments coming from the broken promises for mutual prosperity.

**EU debt crisis and the Eurozone**

Neoliberal management under Germany’s reign and the creation of the Eurozone has had its severe impact on many nation/states of EU. As Emma Clancy, (2020b) policy advisor for Irish Sinn Féin and the European United Left (GUE/NGL) in the European Parliament explains: “It will come as little surprise that a system designed to promote the mercantilist model of wage suppression, low inflation and export-led growth, propped up by a currency modelled on the Deutschmark, has benefited one country more than all other members of the Eurozone.” In February 2019, the Centre for European Policy published an empirical study of the “winners and losers” from the euro twenty years after its introduction. It found that Germany was the big winner, having benefited by €1.9 trillion from the euro between 1999 and 2017, or around €23,000 per person. The Netherlands was the other state that gained substantial benefits from the common currency. France had lost €3.6 trillion or €56,000 per person; while Italy had lost more than any other state, at €4.3 trillion or €74,000 per person (Gasparotti et al. 2019). One of the main reasons for the drop in prosperity was international competitiveness due to the euro, according to the report. Before the introduction of the euro, countries were able to devalue their currencies to make their exports cheaper on the world market. "The problem of the divergent competitiveness of the Eurozone countries remains unsolved," the researchers Alessandro Gasparotti und Matthias Kullas wrote. As German MP for the European Parliament from De Lienke Martin Schirdewan, (2020) says: “The design of the Eurozone contributes to debt crises, while the debt and deficit rules enshrined in the Stability and Growth Pact enforce anti-worker and anti-growth policies.”

“Countries inside a common currency area cannot engage in competitive devaluations by devaluing their currency to make their exports more competitive. But they can implement policies domestically to bring about an internal devaluation – lowering their real exchange rate vis-à-vis their neighbors. The main way this takes place is by compressing or reducing
wages, which causes prices to fall. Germany has consciously implemented this policy for several decades, at the expense of German workers, millions of who are working but living in poverty.” (Clancy, 2020a, pg.48)

This devaluation of wage costs increased the competitive edge of selling industrial products within the EU. In reality, the European debt-crisis started with a trade deficit crisis within the Eurozone, which included Spain, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and Greece. Within the Eurozone, trade-costs were reduced between countries, to increase overall trade volume. As a result, labor costs increased in peripheral countries relative to core countries (i.e., Germany), without compensating a rise in productivity, and thereby eroding their competitive edge. (Hale, 2013; Lapavitsas, 2018).

The transformation of private debt to public debt has devastated European economies. “The level of public debt in the EU was not caused by reckless government spending, but rather by the socialization of private debt through the rescue of the financial sector, and dramatic increases in the costs of borrowing due to “market discipline” linked to the ECB’s failure to intervene. The pro-cyclical impact of the austerity programs imposed by the Troika not only limited growth but devastated the public services, including healthcare.” (Schirdewan, 2020). The decision to save the banks has also destroyed much of solidarity between nations, since the blame is put between nations instead of the banking system.

For example, in 2009, the Debt-Crisis in Greece was blamed on Greek citizens who were collectively depicted as being ‘lazy’ and ‘corrupt’ (Skarpedas, 2015). Yet, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data show a picture of Greek workers that is far from lazy--declaring, for example, that the Greeks work the longest hours in EU (Coleman, 2015). German citizens can’t explain why they seem to be bailing out the Greek debt while they fail to understand that it is the German and French banks that exploit all this money laundering system imposed on European states.

The Eurozone is creating debtor colonies. “The very concept of a debt colony is a nation-state that is situated at the lowest level of the EU governance chain, which comes with limited sovereignty and direct supervision by outsiders, rather than from
its own domestic decision-making system. Under such circumstances all internal political life/agendas are constantly influenced and co-shaped by powerful actors such as bureaucracy, financial capital and key member states through respective interventions” (Mikelis, 2016: p. 9). EU is leading to a post-democracy. According to Crouch (2016), a post-democratic society is one that continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in a way that they become increasingly a formal shell and into small circles of a politico-economic elite. It is a society marked by pernicious politics that have serious consequence for democracy. Post-democracy’s authoritarianism ferments xenophobic movements claiming to represent those suffering from excessive change are indicative of in most authoritarian forms. While he argues that austerity itself is not evidence of post-democracy, it is the way that the crisis is handled that gives evidence of a drift towards post-democracy. As Crouch (2013) said:

First, the Anglo-American financial model that produced the crisis in the first place was designed by a politico-economic elite that corresponds to my concept, as bankers moved in and out of the revolving doors in Washington, designing policies to suit their firms. Then the management of the crisis itself was primarily a rescue operation for banks at the expense of the rest of the population. The most explicit expression of the post-democratic aspects of crisis management was the framing of the Greek austerity package, designed by international authorities in close collaboration with an association of leading bankers. But that was just the clearest case; less formal, similar groupings will be found in most political centers.

Unless these issues are addressed the divide within EU will only grow bigger. Even if the EU discourse is one based on democracy, it won’t take much more to figure how the impoverishment of states is being created by the existing disparities within EU.

**EU coronavirus response**

Among the more interesting figures of the pandemic is the number of deaths per million inhabitants per country. This number is probably more reliable than the case-fatality rate because deaths are less likely to be missed (ignoring for now the difficulty of defining deaths caused by SARS-CoV-2) and because the denominator, a
country’s population, is known. (Caduff, 2020). According to the numbers for countries in EU as of 1st July 2020 are:

Spain: 606  
Italy: 575  
France: 457  
Germany: 107

“At the outset of the pandemic, Germany had 28,000 intensive care beds, more than most of its neighboring countries. In recent days that has been raised to 40,000, as hospitals braced themselves for a huge influx of patients with Covid-19.” (FT, 4/13/2020). Where medical care is easily accessible, staff sufficient and well-trained, and capacities are flexible, patients are more likely to receive better care and survive. The differences between deaths can be correlated to medical infrastructure. The European Commission had used the Stability and Growth Pact to “order member states to cut spending on, or privatize, healthcare services 63 times between 2011 and 2018. States were told to raise the pension age or cut funding to pensions 105 times over the same period.” (Schirdewan, 2020).

The two EU countries most seriously hit by the Covid-19 are Italy and Spain. Both were among the strongest economies in the world before joining the Eurozone. In these countries, budgetary cuts for austerity reasons have led to substantial loss of life. In Italy, the austerity induced by the fiscal recovery plans has led to cuts that were harmful to health and survival. “The reform led to cuts in especially hospital capacity that reduced utilization which in many cases must have been essential use of services, as indicated by the rise in premature deaths of males and females.” (Arca et al. 2020).) “Soon after the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, Italian health spending relinquished its ten-year positive trend and began a gradual yet consistent decline. In 2012 the Italian government passed a series of decree laws reducing total public health financing by €900 million in 2012, €1.8 billion in 2013, and a further €2 billion in 2014, decreasing resources for essential medicines and the National Health Fund. Moreover, between 2009 and 2010, NSS (hospital) personnel were reduced” (De Falco 2018).
In Spain, EU neoliberal institutions have either steered the government towards policies that were incompatible with Spain’s obligations to fulfil the right to health, or not done enough to mitigate potential human rights impact (Amnesty International, 2018). In the wake of the global financial crisis of 2019, the Spanish government began to cut spending on healthcare. Austerity measures included shifting the costs of certain products onto individuals, limiting the healthcare available to irregular migrants, and cutting spending on health workers, equipment and infrastructure. As UN document E/C.12/ESP/CO/6 (2018) describes:

The Committee urges the State party to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the impact that the application of Royal Decree-Law No. 16/2012 has had on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, in order to make necessary adjustments to ensure the availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability and quality of health-care services, including the repeal of provisions whose effect has been to weaken the protection of the right to health. (United Nations Human Rights 2018)

According to Amnesty International (2018): “Harsh austerity measures implemented by the Spanish government have had a devastating impact on some of the most economically vulnerable and marginalized people in society, resulting in unbearably long waiting lists and forcing patients to ration their medication to save costs.”

During the peak of the coronavirus crisis, EU solidarity went out of the window. Each country looked over its own people, and there was no shared concern or joint care initiatives. Solidarity resources (human and medical equipment) over hard hit areas came from Cuba, China and Russia (Poggoli, 2020). Germany and France imposed limits on the export of protective medical equipment, some of which was badly needed but in short supply. German authorities issued a decree banning export of protective clothing and other medical gear such as gloves and masks. Such products could only be sold abroad in narrowly defined circumstances, such as an international aid effort, the order said. A government crisis team also established a centralized system for allocating scarce protective equipment to doctors, hospitals and federal authorities (NYT, 7/3/2020). Germany lost its opportunity to show leadership and justify its role within the EU.
Meanwhile the debt crisis has lead many Greek doctors searching for work abroad. More than 18,000 Greek doctors have moved abroad since the outbreak of the crisis, according to a study from the Athens Medical Association (ISA) (Bouloutza, 2019). This medical braindrain deprives poorer countries like Greece, Romania, Bulgaria from necessary human resources to deal with the covid-19 crisis. (Gillet, 2020).

That being said, Belgium is the world's worst affected country in terms of the number of deaths per head of population. For example, on 1 June 2020, it was reported that there had been 819 deaths per one million head of population. Steven van Gucht, head of viral diseases at the national health institute Sciensano, described in an interview with DW what he called as “radical transparency”, counting even suspected cases of COVID-19 in the national death toll, regardless of whether the deceased person was tested. Belgian tourism officials have accused Professor Steven van Gucht of ruining their industry (DW, 2/6/2020).

EU’s financial response

When the European Central Bank (ECB) told Eurozone finance ministers that the bloc may need fiscal measures worth up to 1.5 trillion euros to tackle the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 epidemic, there was a big dispute between European states about where this money should come from. Germany, the Netherlands, and other northern European countries were ready to support EU measures worth 500 billion euros, while France, Italy and Spain said the European effort to tackle the crisis should be well above 1 trillion euros. The money announced by Merkel and Macron in April was little more than an extension of the existing European stability mechanism, designed to help individual countries in short-term emergencies. Even then, it was a mere third of what the European Central Bank had said was needed. What was specifically not agreed was any sharing of the economic burden of the pandemic across European treasuries. It was mostly more loans. (Jenkins, 10/4/2020). Southern countries hit harder supported to create Eurobonds, a common debt instrument issued by a European institution to raise funds on the
market, with no sanctions connected to meet the needs of this unprecedented crisis (Guarascio, 8/4/2020). Northern countries, the fiscally conservative ‘Frugals’, wanted to link the loans with austerity measures and disciplinary sanctions.

Meanwhile, Germany’s constitutional court questioned whether the European Court of Justice (ECJ) should have ruled that the European Central Bank could, in effect, backstop the euro by buying debt. Separately, Poland has disputed the ECJ’s precedence over its own supreme court. “The EU is built on law. If the stresses of the pandemic weaken the ECJ’s foundations, the entire union will shake.” (The Economist, 14/5/2020).

Following the discontent provoked by the unsatisfactory decisions made by Germany and France, in May 27 in what was described as the “Hamilton moment” of EU, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed the creation of a ‘Next Generation’ European Union recovery fund worth €750 billion, to be raised by the Commission. Since ECB had ruled out Quantitative Easing which would be money with a form of a Eurobond, without being attached to austerity measures, the funds announced would be disbursed as €500bn in grants and €250bn in loans. In her Brussels speech, von der Leyen said the Next Generation fund would “sit on top of a revamped long-term EU budget of €1.1 trillion,” bringing the new measures she was announcing to €1.85tn, on top of the earlier package of €540bn. “In sum, this would bring our recovery effort to a total of €2.4 trillion.”


The New Recovery Plan is taking a step towards the European Green Deal (EGD) and Digital Economy to take EU capitalism to its next stage of sustainability. The covid19 breakout has created the opportunity for capitalism to reshape itself. Major corporations have thrown their weight behind green recovery goals. In June, investors managing a combined $12tn called for a green EU recovery plan; in July, major banks including Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan and even fossil fuel majors like BP have agreed to align their portfolio with the New Green Deal. “Frans Timmermans, the EU’s Green Deal chief, specifically cautioned that EU support funds should avoid duplicating the activities of the corporations but encourage private
investment through measures including contracts-for-difference that compensate investors for fluctuations in carbon prices.” (Shrikanth, 2020).

The lockdowns of the economy will increase the debt within the euro-area reaching a new peak of 103%, while the Maastricht fiscal rules mandate this number to be at 60% for every Member State (European Commission, Spring Economic Forecast 2020). For Greece the debt will rise to an extraordinary 200%. A major disagreement point is the debate between the loans or grants form of the Recovery budgets. “Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland strongly persisted on the reduction of the grant balance, while the rest 22 Member States argued that using only loans would completely disregard the disproportionate effect the pandemic has had on health and socioeconomic issues, and would fail any hope of European solidarity.” (Kattami, 2020, p.14).

The funds raised will be repaid after 2027 and by 2058 at the latest, from future EU budgets. The loans will be repaid by the borrowing Member States. The revenue sources of the EU budget have remained the same over the last decades: customs duties, contributions from the Member States based on value added tax (VAT) and those based on gross national income (GNI). Other additional resources include: 1. Extension of the Emissions Trading System-based own resources to the maritime and aviation sectors to generate €10 billion per year 2. Carbon border adjustment mechanism to raise €5 billion to €14 billion per year 3. Own resource based on operations of companies, that draw huge benefits from the EU single market, which, depending on its design, could yield around €10 billion per year 4. Digital tax on companies with a global annual turnover of above €750 million to generate up to €1.3 billion per year. (EU budget: Funding the Recovery plan, 2020).

A breakdown of the numbers shows this is a serious distortion of reality. According to the Commission, “NEXT GENERATION EU” will raise money by temporarily lifting the own resources ceiling to 2.00% of EU Gross National Income, allowing the Commission to use its strong credit rating to borrow €750 billion on the financial markets. As Emma Clancy, (2020b) explains: “The von der Leyen proposal
for a budget of €1.1tn is slightly higher than what is currently on the table at the Council but still represents a retreat from the Commission’s original proposal. If we remove all the spin, the amount of real new funds from the EU for this recovery plan is €310bn. It is not an insignificant sum, and it has been welcomed by countries such as Italy and Spain. But it is nowhere near the €2.4 trillion touted by von der Leyen in her speech. Even the proposed €750bn in borrowing is in reality less than what was put forward in the German-French plan for €500bn in grants. Crunching the numbers, Eurointelligence estimates that the recovery element of the package amounts to an annual 0.56% of the EU’s 2019 GDP, for four years.”

These forced agreements cannot save EU from its internal contradictions. The European Council (EUCO) agreement of the 21st of July for the New Recovery Plan was realized under “the record-breaking negotiation duration of five days; came after a failed attempt at a political agreement in June; and was followed by a European Parliament resolution on the 23rd of July which did not accept the political agreement as it stands. Even though the latter is not legally binding, the Parliament has a veto right over the final EU long term budget, and its resolution has set the mood and the context for the upcoming trilogue negotiations between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission.” (Kattami, 2020: p.12).

The COVID-19 crisis has brought an unprecedented challenge to the world and, in our examination, this also goes for EU. During the crisis each country tried to survive on its own means. They EU solidarity fell short to give any answers to national problems that in a big percentage came from the austerity measures and the lack of the monetary tools due to EU regulations, in order for each country to respond adequately to the crisis.

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2 Which as proposed by Junker in 2018: “Overall, the Commission proposes a long-term budget of €1,135 billion in commitments (expressed in 2018 prices) over the period from 2021 to 2027, equivalent to 1.11% of the EU27’s gross national income (GNI)” https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_3570. The €1.1tn figure is the EU’s long-term budget and it is false economics to be included in examining the specific responses to the coronavirus pandemic and related lockdowns. In addition to that, the EU’s budget consists almost entirely of contributions from member states based on their GNI.
Education for what kind of citizenship?

Education has always been a key instrument of nation-building in new states. National education systems have typically been used to assimilate people of different origin; to promote established religious doctrines; to spread the standard form of national languages; and to forge national identities and national cultures. They helped construct the very subjectivities of citizenship, justifying the ways of the state to the people and the duties of the people to the state. (Green, 2013).

European educational systems have been charged with the responsibility of training European citizens about the European identity. European citizenship appears for the first time in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) among the main objectives of the Union: ‘The Union shall set itself the following objectives: [...] to strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its Member States through the introduction of a citizenship of the Union’ (Title I, art. B). Title II Part two establishes the ‘Citizenship of the Union’ stating that: ‘Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union’ (art. 8, 2). This identity formation of a member state becomes then the **conditio sine qua non** for European education. From Maastricht onwards, EU citizenship would be an accepted prerequisite in the design of policies of education. In 1992 in a document entitled New Prospects for Community Cultural Action the Commission stated the policy concisely:

> “Economic and social cohesion has been identified as a fundamental condition for the balanced development of the Community, and education and training have been identified as a crucial factor in achieving balanced social and economic development in all the Member States” (EC Commission, 1992: Pg 11-12).

Through Maastricht to the current arrangements, education policy for citizenship in practice in the EU would come to mean education exchanges, vocational training and language studies through a European dimension. (McCann, 2006). This generic definition of citizenship is stated in the European Commission’s 2005 review of ‘Citizenship Education at School in Europe’ and offers a comprehensive summary of the subject:

> “Citizenship involves enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in various
types of community. This way of seeing citizenship encompasses the specific idea of political participation by members of a democratic state. It also includes the more general notion that citizenship embraces a range of participatory activities, not all overtly political, that affect the welfare of communities… Citizenship is about making informed choices and decisions, and about taking action, individually and as part of collective processes” (EC, 2005: pg.14).

McCann, G & P. Finn (2006) observe that: “Across the European Union the principle of ‘responsible citizenship’ has moved towards a consensus on not only the individual’s role in society, but also the role that education has to play in establishing a value for citizen participation.”

The injustices and the hardship put on several countries have consequences on the trust that EU shares among EU citizens. According to the Eurobarometer (spring 2018) the trust in EU is going through significant changes. Out of 28 countries, majority in trust in EU is in 15 EU Member States (down from 18 in autumn 2017), led by Lithuania (66%), Portugal and Denmark (both 57%). Conversely, a majority of respondents tend not to trust the EU in 13 countries, most strikingly in Greece (69%), the United Kingdom (57%) and Czech Republic (56%). Even though the trust in even the 15 countries is above the average, the mistrust is on high levels. According to European Commission’s (2018) working paper: “Over the last decade, political parties opposed to EU integration have almost doubled their votes. The general opinion of the EU has also deteriorated, revealing a growing number of people who distrust the Union.” Brexit can be understood under this prism.

The riddle of EU’s future lays within a balanced distribution of economic gains and education. It is the elder and the wealthier who trust more EU. It is those with expectations that distrust their future on the European Union. “Hence, anti-EU voting reflects long-term economic trajectories; once this is controlled for, only education, density, and lack of employment go along with expectations” (EC, 2018:35). The need for a renewed social contract for through education in EU is an assignment of constructing the European identity. Unless this is created on economic justice, the EU project remains undemocratic in essence. As Thomas Fazi (2019) says: “EU’s undemocratic architecture; rather, has to do with the very nature of
democracy itself. As the term suggests, and as history illustrates, democracy presupposes the existence of an underlying *demos* — a political community, usually (though not exclusively) defined by a shared and relatively homogenous language, culture, history, normative system, etc. — ‘the majority of [whose members] feel sufficiently connected to each other to voluntarily commit to a democratic discourse and to a related decision-making process,’ and therefore to accept the legitimacy of government and majority rule.”. The challenges lay ahead of us and the future lies in uncertainty.

EU’s citizenship education can only succeed if citizens of nation states within the EU feel that there is justice and there is no exploitation of smaller and weaker countries from larger ones within the EU. The divide between North and South that has been created, has to be abolished. The consistent refusal of “Frugal” states to provide needed assistance to the EU South has provided the necessary justification for the bigger countries of EU, mainly Germany and France to avoid compensations. EU identity without solidarity between EU nations is a construction of a myth that is bound to fail.

**Conclusions**

Yet the future debt differences between EU countries over the coronavirus crisis will be big. The International Monetary Fund sees Greek debt rocketing almost 22 points to 200 percent of GDP this year, Italian almost 21 points to 156 percent and Spanish 18 points to more than 113 percent. France, Portugal and Belgium will also be badly hit. By contrast, Germany is expected to increase its debt by only 9 points to 69 percent and the Netherlands by 10 points to 58 percent. Austria, Finland, Slovakia and the Baltics will see similar or slightly bigger increases, but to much lower levels than southern states (Strupczewski, 2020).

Germany shows it has the upper hand in the EU and gains the most, while Merkel has often been announced by the media as “leader of the free world”. According to The Economist “The single market is governed by strict rules limiting subsidies, but they have been suspended as governments pour €2trn ($2.2trn) into saving businesses from collapse from the Covid-19 crisis.
Half of this money is spent in Germany: this is a problem if you are a producer based in a country that cannot afford to be so generous, but which must accept German-made goods” (The Economist 2020). Meanwhile, there is a conflict of interest between EU states in general. EU’s economy is second strongest in the world, after USA. Making the euro weaker helps Germany sell its products cheaper in the competitive markets. Weakened EU economies make the euro softer and the German industrialists stronger (Ivanovich, 2019).

While the working class in EU is being deprived the necessary means for its survival despite country of origin, this is creating a North/South divide while it is strengthening the power of German ruling class. Germany has been the country benefiting from the Eurozone (which started with 1 DM=1 euro). European countries surrendering their monetary policies to ECB has been a huge failure leading to loss of sovereignty. Italy and Spain cannot print their own money and will now be exposed to a debt-neocolonialism like Greece, if the Eurozone and the ECB remain as is. It seems Greece, who has put all its public property on mortgage for 99 years and has its taxes collected by an institution directed by the Troika (AADE), was the neocolonial experiment to which other countries will follow. “Neocolonialism differs from standard globalization and development aid in that it typically results in a relationship of dependence, subservience, or financial obligation towards the neocolonialist nation. This may result in an undue degree of political control or spiraling debt obligations, functionally imitating the relationship of traditional colonialism” (Prashad, 2007).

If Education for European Identity is to succeed, it is essential for the EU to challenge injustices created within its structure, starting with the Eurozone. The COVID-19 crisis has put light to these, since it became a matter of life or death in different countries within the EU. Otherwise it would be another lost opportunity for creating a common European continent for peace. Can this European common space be achieved under capitalism? Lenin (1918) was not very optimistic when he said: ‘From the standpoint of the economic conditions of imperialism—i.e., the export of capital and the division of the world by the “advanced” and “civilized” colonial powers—a United States of Europe, under capitalism, is either impossible or reactionary.’
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