

Welcome to the United States of Europe!

Do you feel European? Does Mr O’Keeffe in Ireland feel more or less European than Mrs Stylianou in Cyprus? And if so, why? What is the idea behind Europe and do Europeans feel included? Do Europeans trust their leaders? Maybe there are as many different answers on these questions as there are citizens in Europe.

The United States of Europe (U.S.E) project presents various reflections on those questions through four dimensions:

1. Artists interpretations. Curators and artists have been invited to give their interpretations on European identity through photos, multimedia, video and other installations.

2. Sociological studies. 50 people from 10 different countries have been interviewed. The result is video-recorded interviews that give comparable results of a potential belonging to a European entity.

3. An interactive laboratory. This is a place at the exhibition where the artistic and sociological parts are combined. It is a creative environment for real-time exchange about Europe today.

4. A series of debates. Several aspects will be discussed, for example “What does it mean to be European and how is contemporary art dealing or not with that question?” and “Europe, its politicians and the people – about confidence and commitment today”.

The concept of the U.S.E exhibition project is to play with the notion of identity, cultural borders and political militancy in order to provoke and wake up people’s minds. U.S.E aims to make us listen to others, interact with each other and give the vast European public a voice.

Between November 14 2011 and April 30 2013 the exhibition will take place in Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Portugal, Cyprus, Germany, Belgium, France and Ireland.

The Partner Consortium

Ideas behind the project



JOHANNA SUO,
Initiator, concept creator
and project manager
Goethe-Institut, Paris

I am very grateful for the potential that the Goethe-Institut Paris, the partner consortium and the EU Culture Programme have given this project as it required a major platform.

The idea of the U.S.E project was born out of the low turnout rate in the 2009 European Parliament elections, which I thought must be symptomatic of the low confidence that many Europeans have in the EU...Or was it? Why do people not care about European citizenship? I have myself always felt a strong tie to Europe as a geographical entity and I have always found common denominators with many cultures in Europe.

U.S.E aims not only to debate European citizenship but also to disseminate the discussion as broadly as possible. It is done through bridge building debates and also through the laboratory and the website where we would like to connect

different views.

This is why it was very important to ask Europeans with contrasting life situations to participate in our interviews. In the exhibition, these interviews are confronted with the works of 14 artists (videos, photos, installations) and a multimedia laboratory; documentation is mixed with artistic interpretations. I wanted to present to the visitor an exhibition that offers assorted visual dimensions on Europe and European identity through diverse disciplines and angles.

The laboratory is the very heart of the exhibition and except from being an artwork itself, it is present to function as a communication platform for you visitors. Go there and you can for example answer a touch screen Europe quiz and give us feedback via the visitors log book. These elements are connected to the U.S.E website: www.go-use.eu

U.S.E is not designed to be propaganda for a federal Europe. The project has been created out of a need to present a cultural project that adds new, diverse, artistic perspectives to the debate about the Europe we live in. With today's severe economical crisis it is more important than ever to present art and culture projects that can play important roles for the functioning of our society.

The curators

Three curators from the international art scene have been chosen to work with one group of artists each. Here Anna, Ryszard and Sinziana have their say about U.S.E.



ANNA BITKINA,
Curator, St Petersburg, Russia

The issue of identity has long been important to contemporary art. Nowadays the question of identity has become particularly crucial due to globalization and intense migration processes that have changed the profile of most nations, including European ones. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus, forms of national identity are relatively stable but they should not be considered natural or given. Only encouraging interactions with other citizens and the notion of "other" can often help to develop forms of habitus and identity.

The exhibition serves both as a platform for an open discussion about contemporary Europe and as a great tool to strengthen the sense of

European identity among people in the EU. According to Bice Curiger, curator of the 54th Venice Biennale, artists are known as “cultural tourists and keenly perceptive migrants” therefore their voices are particularly important.

In her photo series “Estonian Race” the Estonian artist **Tanja Muravskaya** draws our attention towards an increase in nationalistic movements in present-day Europe. In a video installation named “Risk Society”, the German art collective **REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT** reveals the mentality of young Europeans by interviewing students from a German high school. The main characters in the video piece “How Capital Moves”, by the Irish artist-duo, **Kennedy Browne**, are disappointed with the concept of free market within the EU and denounce economic inequality. The public art installation by Finnish artist **Kaarina Kaikkonen** could be seen as the romantic image of a united Europe where states support each other. But her work could also remind us of some historical events like wars, revolutions or economical struggles that frequently separated Europe in the past.



**RYSZARD W.
KLUSZCZYŃSKI**

The development of the EU brings up the subject of social-cultural integrity of all European societies. Traditionally we used to talk about identity in such a context. But the notion of identity nowadays, both individual and collective, creates many doubts, regarding processes of globalization, migrations, the merging of cultures, hybridization of traditions. European identity is not a serious issue even among EU citizens. When identifying themselves, they most often talk about nationality, gender, profession, religion, but not about being European.

In such a situation, we may try to develop a socially attractive concept of “Europeaness”, or, following the theory of Giorgio Agamben, reconsider the concept of “community without identity”, in which participants do not share the same essential identity, but play roles of different examples of such a community.

The exhibition sets the stage for a deliberation of various aspects of this issue. Works of the invited artists discuss its different, important

issues.

examines the question of historical components of national identities.

draws our attention to the consequences of poverty, homelessness, and marginalization. addresses the problem of power relations among European nation-states. analyses the question of homeland and asks what makes a place feel like home. The issue of home and its role in the process of identity formation is at the very heart of the works of both Konik and Lusitano-Santos. extends the field undertaking problems of ethnicity and migration. The artists do not provide us with any final answers. Instead they simply make us aware of the complexity and the scope of these questions.



SINZIANA RAVINI,
Curator, Paris, France

What is Europe today? Is it a geographic region? A concept? A state of mind? Europe has eliminated many borders, but it has also created new ones. There are tensions everywhere. The gap between “being” and “becoming” European, “having rights” and “fighting for ones rights” is growing bigger and bigger. France is struggling with unemployment, Holland with the new “Cultural Meltdown”, London with violent riots, Norway with right wing extremists, not to mention the economic crisis in Greece and the other East-European countries.

Europe seems, more than ever, to be torn between nihilists and optimists, people that fight for a better world and those that gave up hope a long, long time ago. Democracy is threatened everywhere, and politicians and the public are - according to Chantal Mouffe - caught up in “antagonistic” power relations instead of looking for “agonistic”, fruitful ones.

In “Democracies” (2009) **Artur Żmijewski** explores the possibility of “free expression in public space” by filming both staged and “real” demonstrations.

Through the video film “Ausgeträumt” (2010) **Deimantas Narkevičius** speculates on the horizons of a new generation through a music video depicting his teenage son’s emo band in Lithuania and a mysterious car drive through a snowy landscape.

In “Lord’s Ride” (2010), **Jean-Charles Hue** investigates the social community of a Roma family in the north of France, turning upside down all our expectations of what their life must be.

Apostolis Polymeris digs into his grandfather’s memories about his migration from Greece to Belgium and **Kyriaki Costa** plays with both dystopian and utopian visions of a Europe to come.

The sociological studies

EUROPEAN IDENTITY: Europeans’ biographical experiences and images of the present day Europe

How do people perceive united Europe? Do they feel represented, included, respected, heard? Are they interested in what politicians decide in Brussels? Do they feel European? This study examines whether people living in Europe today feel European, and what Europe means to them.

Sociological teams conducted biographical interviews in ten countries. The interviewees were a diverse group: people well known by the public (politicians, philosophers, authors), people living in rural areas, and young people who have encountered Europe as immigrants or through programmes such as Erasmus and other cultural exchanges. The final group of interviewees consisted of the artists who are presenting their works in the exhibition.

Interviewees were asked about their travel experiences and how these influenced their attitude towards Europe, their evaluation of the status of European economic, socio-political and

cultural integration, and their personal feelings and hopes regarding the sense of belonging to Europe.

For this particular project both biographical methods and structured questions were used, as the objective was to produce comparable results in the laboratory.

The study will continue in another form during the exhibition period through the call “This is my Europe”, where people will be asked to contribute with photos and stories that can be sent to the project team (please see more information on page 36). In this way, people have the opportunity to participate and recount their own experience of Europe and their feeling of belonging to it.

Parts of the interviews are available on www.go-use.eu

The sociological core team for U.S.E:
DR LYUDMILA NURSE from Oxford XXI, UK,
PROF. ANDRZEJ PIOTROWSKI and
DR TOMASZ FERENC from the University of Lodz, Poland

The laboratory



JĀNIS GARANČS,
Multimedia artist and
researcher, Riga, Latvia

As Europe can mean so many different things from the perspective of political powers, business “markets”, large and small countries, nationalities, as well as families and individuals, the approach is to explore to the complexity of European identities as an interplay of historical, demographic, geopolitical, economic and cultural concepts.

I encourage the project’s title to be interpreted not only through its politically-coloured meaning (a state as a country), but also through its more abstract meaning - at least in English -, i.e. a state as a condition/status.

The workshop participants, on-site as well as online, can submit their reflections as text messages, images, and even video sequences. The laboratory will feature several interactive screens and projections, webcams and computer

terminals for short text input. It will act as a temporary virtual embassy of the United States of Europe, connecting U.S.E exhibition venues with satellite events and locations.

Thus, the laboratory works as a “processing device” - that travels from place to place and adapts accordingly - that will collate the co-creators’ and visitors’ input, and manifest itself as a self-organizing map or overview, offering multiple layers for exploration, and becoming - through immersive 3D visualisations and sonifications (featuring also computer generated stereoscopic projection and multi channel audio) - an evolving multimedia artwork itself.



The artists

Fourteen artists have been invited to contribute with their art works to U.S.E. They have been chosen because of their past experience of exploring identity and art in the public space.



born 1957,
Bulgaria.

LUCHEZAR BOYADJIEV

On vacation

Luchezar's work deals with a private interpretation of public processes in the fields of politics, culture, urban planning and history. His contribution to the United States of Europe exhibition is a cycle of prints based on digitally manipulated photographs. Images from "On Vacation" (in progress since 2004) represent equestrian monuments from various cities in Europe and the world with figures of the leaders removed and sent "On vacation". This is a symbolic unification by liberating public space from its past.



born 1971,
Cyprus.

KYRIAKI COSTA

Near-Far

The brand new embroidery from the autumn 2011 depicts a spider woman symbolising the networking of culture and identity. This correlation produces interchangeably positive or negative consequences. "Near-Far" signifies an attempt to capture, within the boundaries of a single artwork, a number of different layers of association with an array of contemporary Western social values, such as democracy, freedom, history, respect, justice and ecology. In 2009 Kyriaki's work "Presence in absence" received first prize at the PAD international awards in Italy, for the "Mediterranean between present and future" competition.

www.kyriakicosta.net



**born 1968,
France.**

JEAN-CHARLES HUE

The Lord's Ride

"The Lord's Ride" is about the life of a Romani/Yenniche family in Northern France. The film, from 2010, recounts the search for origins in marginalized worlds that prefer to remain apart rather than integrate.

The film shows the events of a nomadic life in caravans, like poaching, a strange conversation or a quest for redemption. Jean-Charles Hue is an artist and video filmmaker. He is a trained fashion designer and winner of many awards. Jean-Charles's grandfather was Yenniche giving him a blood tie to this people.



**born 1952,
Finland.**

KAARINA KAIKKONEN

A Connection

For the U.S.E exhibition, Kaarina creates a series of outdoor site-specific installations made from various jackets and shirts attached to one another. Her work represents connections between people and nations. Kaarina Kaikkonen is known for her large installation made from men's jackets, ladies' shoes, shirts and found objects exhibited in different spaces both in and outside. She has participated in numerous international exhibitions, most recently in the Cairo Biennale 2009, the Liverpool Biennale 2010 and in the Venice Biennale collateral event, 2011.

www.sculptors.fi/kuvanveistajat/kaarina/kaarina/teoksia.htm



**(KB) artist duo,
Gareth Kennedy b 1979
& Sarah Browne b 1981,
Ireland.**

KENNEDY BROWNE — **How Capital Moves**

We regret to inform you that this work is not presented in Portugal.

www.kennedybrowne.com



Culture Ireland
Cultúr Éireann

Kennedy Browne's participation in the United States of Europe exhibition has received generous support from Culture Ireland



**born 1974,
Poland.**

ANNA KONIK — **In the Middle of the Way**

“The Middle of the Way” (work in progress 2001-2007) relates to my encounter with homeless people. The mobility of Tadeusz, Herman, Svetlana, Gerard, Hans-Dieter, Jana & Pele and Anna opens up a dialogue in which geographical boundaries and nationality are not important. Rather, their individual stories, experiences and dreams build their unique identity and confirms their differentness in a world where nationalities are fluid. Every person I met dreams of a better life, of respect and freedom, they are all trying to find their way in the new reality of the EU.

www.annakonik.art.pl



GERDA LAMPALZER

Die Gedanken sind frei Thoughts are free

The video, from 2011, addresses the lack of linguistic exchange between Austria and its so-called “former eastern European” neighbours. The borders have been open for years, but even now hardly any Austrians speak these languages. In the video the texts of four people speaking Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, and Slovenian are cut apart and reconstructed into the German phrase “Die Gedanken sind frei.” This technical trick is an ironic comment on the situation, especially because “Thoughts Are Free” is often associated to liberation movements - which reuniting Europe was considered to be.

www.lampalzer-oppermann.at

born 1959,
Austria.



MARIA LUSITANO-SANTOS

Scattered Cartographies

(Moving away from home, 2010; Now it was just make believe, 2008)

The project reflects the experiences migrating to Sweden. The films intertwine my own and my son's stories with those of other Portuguese emigrants. In these films we engage in conversations that aim to depict our dreams and experiences. To contemplate the challenges of migration through art, makes one articulate the differences that exist in a Europe that is struggling to build a European identity. This subject matter is highly pertinent to the U.S.E. exhibition.

www.marialusitano.org

born 1971,
Portugal.

TANJA MURAVSKAJA

— Estonian Race



born 1978,
Estonia.

The photo series addresses one of the “elementary particles” of nationalism as an ideology - race. Muravskaja is using encyclopedic thoroughness to find the most typical, the “purest Estonians” among Estonian people, turning to academic authorities for help and portraying the young men who have no names or social security numbers, let alone life stories or identities in the exhibition hall, but who obviously have a nationality, at least within the framework of this visual story. This artistic search could also lead us to a question about a “pure European identity”. Can we possibly define it? What does it mean to be a European nowadays?

www.tanjamuravskaja.com



born 1964,
Lithuania.

DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS

— Ausgeträumt

“Ausgeträumt” could be explained in English by a state between dream and reality on the cusp of waking up or simply it could mean that the dream is over. “Ausgeträumt” is about a small group of young boys who just started a band in Vilnius. It is about their vision of their future, their reflections on their political, or more importantly, unsatisfying cultural environment.

Narkevičius is one of the most consistent and widely recognised Lithuanian artists on the international art scene. He represented his country at the 49th Venice Biennale in 2001 and exhibited at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003 in “Utopia Station”.



born 1975,
Finland.

ANU PENNANEN

Clean Air

Helsinki: The capital with the cleanest air in Europe? My immediate intention with the 2004 video installation "Clean Air" was to make the presence of 30 immigrants living in the city suddenly tangible, visible and audible through the sound of their breath. Nobody wants to be nameless; nobody should dissolve into something nameless. "Clean Air" represents the repressed presence of outsiders coming back to haunt us.

Anu Pennanen, a Berlin based artist, works on urban public space and its relation to cinema and media.

www.anupennanen.com



born 1984,
Belgium

APOSTOLIS POLYMERIS

Uprooting: The story of our grandfathers.

The video, from 2011, takes place in the building of the archives in Brussels. There, in a small room with hundreds of lists with names of foreigners who had moved to Brussels until the middle of the 1970's, I found my grandfathers name. He and his family immigrated to Belgium in 1972. The video illustrates the difficulties that they faced in Istanbul and how they decided to move to a new country, hoping for a better life. Apostolis is a student at the Royal Academy of Art in Brussels.

www.apolymeris.com



**(RG) artist duo,
Henrik Mayer b 1971
& Martin Keil b 1968,
Germany.**

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT

— Risk society

We regret to inform you that this work is not presented in Portugal.

www.reinigungsgesellschaft.de



**born 1966,
Poland.**

ARTUR ŻMIJEWSKI

— Democracies

We regret to inform you that this work is not presented in Portugal.

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Stories from Europe on www.go-use.eu

We would like you to participate actively in the exhibition and send us your contributions on the theme “This is my Europe”. The contributions could consist of photos and written stories (short or long) based on your personal ideas, thoughts and points of view on your life in today's Europe and what Europe means to you.

On the website www.go-use.eu, you will find the headline “Stories from Europe”, where more information is available and you can submit your contributions. You can also access the website from the laboratory at the exhibition site. Your contributions will be published on the website. You have the right to be anonymous of course, only tell us when you send your contribution.

There will also be a competition; the ten best contributions will be selected. The price is a travel to the opening at the last exhibition in Brussels. The website visitors will be the voters!

