

# Seminar: European Citizenship in the Digital Age

## La Pedrera

Secretary for Universities and Research, Director of the EC's Barcelona office,

In an essay I highly recommend, the French intellectual George Steiner suggested that The Idea of Europe can be boiled down to two symbolic elements:

- its cafés, where ideals have been forged amid conspiracies and debate; and
- the names of its streets and squares, where its genealogy has been raised.

These two metaphors remain valid:

- our cafés – both physical and online – still give rise to disputes and debates; and
- the naming of our shared spaces continues to say a lot about our societies.

This continuity has been enriched (and made more complex) by the process of European unification. For younger generations today, Europe really is a Union:

- they can feel it in their pockets, with the euro;
- it's part of their outlook on education, in the European Higher Education Area and, perhaps even more, the Erasmus programme; and
- it brings them standardization through the absence of borders, physical or mental.

But despite all this, Europe continues to be underappreciated by certain parts of the population:

- we need to share knowledge, for understanding; and
- we need greater accessibility, for assimilation



*«It is only once we are aware of our rights and obligations that they become revolutionary. This has happened in the most famous revolutions, when people went from subjects to citizens. And it will*

*happen again now if we can make the EU a Europe of citizenship.»*

Being more European doesn't make us any less Catalan, less from one place or another, less atheist or less religious; it doesn't diminish our allegiances or our sense of belonging to our surroundings.

On the contrary, being more European simply strengthens our existing identities, which are nowadays so rich, complex, diverse, and European.  
For younger generations and for the UOC alike (the UOC is, after all, only 25 years old, ie still quite young), Europe and the web are our natural habitats.

The chance to bring together these two matters, Europe and the internet, in an enlightening seminar open to the public, is an honour and a privilege.

Thank you very much.

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