



Eurozine News Item

Public debate: Memory and European citizenship

"To forget is to try not to remember what I already know", said Danuta Glondys at the second in the Eurozine debate series "Europe talks to Europe" held in Warsaw. Arne Ruth instead pleaded for remembering, and showed how cross-border journalism can help build an element of real universality into the European project.



The second in the Eurozine debate series "Europe talks to Europe" took place at the University of Warsaw on 27 October in collaboration with Eurozine partner **Res Publica Nowa**. Swedish editor and journalist **Arne Ruth** met **Danuta Glondys**, director of the Polish Villa Decius Association to discuss politics of memory and how cross-border journalism can help build an element of real universality into the European project.

Using the examples of Sweden and Norway, Arne Ruth showed criticism from the outside can help nations to break with myths of neutrality and resistance and instead pave the way for admissions of responsibility for injustices committed in the past.

In 1997, the Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* ran an investigation into a matter that had, until then, attracted very little public attention: the forced sterilization of some sixty thousand Swedes — most of them poverty-stricken women — between the 1930s and the mid-1970s. However, the story did not really break until foreign media picked up on it. Sweden was invaded by journalists from all over the world and the minister in charge of the issue was confronted with the question of compensating the victims on a live CNN news programme: now the minister had to apologize before an international audience.

While Arne Ruth stressed the importance of remembering — and the role that civil society has to play when it comes to dealing with the past — Danuta Glondys instead argued that "The important thing is life, not who is right." In order to find a way to peaceful co-existence it is sometimes necessary to forget the atrocities of the past, she said, referring to the Polish-German conflict around the forced migration of ethnic Germans after the Second World War.

Confronted with critical questions from the audience, Glondys went on to define the concept of forgetting: "To forget", she said, "is to try not to remember what I already know", thus stressing that the truth-finding process has to come first.

A full text based on the discussion will appear in Eurozine soon.

More on the series **Europe talks to Europe**, a collaboration with the ERSTE Foundation

Published 2009-11-02
Original in English
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