



THE CITIZEN'S EFFECT

25 features about the
Europe for Citizens programme

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for Citizens*

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FOREWORD



Our identity as European citizens is being shaped every day. European Union and European citizenship is not an abstract idea but a solid achievement born out of the engagement of European citizens in public life and of numerous projects in which they have invested their emotions and intellectual capacity.

Only by working together – citizens from every Member State and their representatives in the European Union institutions – can we make the best use of the potential that a unified Europe offers and face, side by side, the challenges posed by today's world.

Therefore, we have to work hard to demonstrate the positive contribution which the European Union makes to the life of its citizens and of the precious values that it stands for, such as freedom of expression, respect for human rights, equality, tolerance, rule of law, solidarity and the fight against racism and xenophobia.

The European Union is a democratic undertaking sustained by participation by European citizens in the political process and by the opportunities which it offers them to exercise their rights and defend their values.

As a sign of the EU institutions' drive to give European citizens a greater role, 2013 will be the European Year of Citizens. This will raise awareness about how EU citizens can tangibly benefit from European Union rights and also about the policies and programmes that exist to help people exercise them. It will stimulate and strengthen civic and democratic participation by European Union citizens, notably in civic fora on Union policies and European Parliament elections.

I am therefore delighted to present some of the projects supported by the Europe for Citizens programme, which put the European idea into practice. Since its inception in 2007, Europe for Citizens has provided countless opportunities for European citizens to engage in hundreds of projects. More than 5 500 000 have taken part in the projects funded by the programme to date.

Europe for Citizens is open to all stakeholders, for example non-governmental organisations and local authorities promoting European citizenship.

The 'best practices' presented in this booklet bear testimony to some of the work that has been done so far. They are a sign of the dynamic civil society which exists in the European Union and of citizens' commitment to European integration and hold out promise for the future.

Viviane Reding
Vice-President of the European Commission
Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship

INTRODUCTION



Public forums and shared spaces in which citizens can debate and deliberate have always constituted essential elements of a democratic society. Today, the Europe for Citizens Programme serves to create a modern European agora. Launched in 2007, the programme supports initiatives that bring people together in international and intercultural exchanges.

Every year, about 1000 different organisations from the 30 participating countries (the 27 member states of the European Union, together with Croatia, Macedonia and Albania) have been awarded grants to support their activities and projects. The diversity of eligible applicants – NGOs, local authorities, education institutions, volunteering networks and many more – helps deliver the active citizenship message to people from all walks of life.

The types of funded projects are just as diverse. Town Twinning projects and networks of twinned towns have proven to be highly effective means of bringing together European citizens from different countries, enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding. Whether it is a festival, a conference on the topic of democracy or a study on the well-being of elderly citizens in European rural areas, each project offers opportunities for intercultural dialogue and experience sharing. Civil society organisations and think tanks also play a significant role in promoting European values and fostering action, debate and reflection regarding European identity. Another relevant category of initiatives deals with active remembrance. These projects are striving to keep alive the memory of victims under Nazism and Stalinism. Using creative and appealing methods of interaction and dissemination of information, such as theatre, role-playing games, story-writing and video reports, the funded projects succeed in involving European youth and attracting public attention.

Europe for Citizens is reaching an important milestone. The 2007-2013 cycle draws to a close and a new seven year programme is planned to begin in 2014. In the light of the remarkable results produced so far, the programme is going to be continued and fine tuned to suit the contexts of the changing times. A greater emphasis will be placed on initiatives that stimulate debate, reflection and cooperation that contribute to citizens understanding of the European Union. The aim is to foster European citizenship and encourage civic participation at Union level.

This booklet brings the stories behind 25 selected projects to the fore, showcasing the core elements that define the European Citizenship of the 21st century.

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EUROPEAN CITIZENS TAKE THE FLOOR

TOWN TWINNING MEETINGS



EUROPE IS THE SCENE, WE ARE THE ACTORS

Twinned cities share their heritage
through an annual multi-cultural festival



Known as 'The Garden of Ireland', County Wicklow is one of the country's true scenic treasures with its magnificent hills and mountains, long sandy beaches, rivers and lakes. But the beauty of the natural surroundings is just one of the many delights this part of Ireland has to offer. Thanks to its involvement in a highly active network of twinned towns, Wicklow Town became a hub of multi-cultural events. In July 2011 it was chosen to host the "Europe en Scene" festival.

Europe en Scene is a common project built by eight towns with the goal of sharing their cultural heritage and forging a link between European citizens from different backgrounds. Wicklow Town, Montigny le Bretonneux (France), Tirgu Mures (Romania), Kierspe (Germany), Denton (United Kingdom), Marostica (Italy), San Fernando (Spain) and Eichenzell (Germany) set out to show that regardless of one's birth place, all people share similar ideals, values, problems and purposes. Under the smiling gaze of the July sun, Wicklow welcomed a lively crowd of youngsters eager to participate in the manifestations. Local people of all ages were invited to join in and numerous families hosted the participants in their own homes, turning the event into a warm and personal experience. Many of the townsfolk volunteered to offer sightseeing tours and excursions, and local musicians, artists and sportspeople engaged in entertaining demonstrations of their talents. Daily workshops based around music, dance and drama became true cultural melting pots. The individual and collaborative pieces produced incorporated the artistic flavours of all the participating regions. At the end of the week-long festival, participants returned to their home towns with one thought on their minds: that which brings us together is stronger than whatever divides us. One thought and a lingering smile.

Project title:

Europe en Scène 2011

Promoter:

Wicklow Town Council (Ireland)

Partner countries:

United Kingdom, Germany, France, Romania, Italy

Duration:

01/06/2011 – 20/03/2012

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 9 000

Testimonials



This event was a perfect opportunity to involve all local people, from different age groups, to participate in volunteer duties, through the organisation of sightseeing tours, excursions and demonstrations by local musicians, artists and sportspeople.

The event was a huge success. We all gained a greater understanding of the heritage of the host country and the European cultural diversity. We realised how volunteering may play such an important role in the local communities.

Thanks to Europe en Scene, I enjoyed meeting new people from around the world. I really enjoyed the visits to cultural sights, making new friends and participating in the workshops.



Impact

The festival shows that cultural initiatives, coupled with enthusiastic local involvement, can facilitate dialogue between communities separated by significant geographical distances. Europe en Scene allows visitors to learn more about the history, culture and natural surroundings of the host town and encourages local tourism. It also offers a fresh view of what European integration really means and has provided a clearer understanding of how the European Union affects our lives.



VOLUNTEERING FOR EUROPE

Eight twinned towns make a difference



In the words of famous artist Marjorie Moore, volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. "You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in." 2011, the "European Year of Volunteering", provided the perfect occasion to bring into focus the impact this practice has on a personal level, as well as on a social level.

So did the "Twin towns European Volunteering Conference (EUR-Vol)". At the end of May 2011, the City of Trogir in Croatia welcomed delegates from the partner towns of Hajduboszormeny (HU), Veterstetten (D), Porto San Elpidio (IT), Prague (CZ), Budapest (HU), Montesilvano (IT) and Slupca (PL). The four-day event addressing the value of voluntary action aimed at finding ways to increase public awareness, involvement and understanding of the contribution that volunteering organisations make to society. Several workshops, lectures and presentations provided the participants with the opportunity to discuss critical issues regarding the organisation and management of volunteering initiatives. The most frequent challenges faced by coordinators were identified as prejudices, the lack of proper information dissemination and avoidance of responsibility. This served as a starting point for the participants to develop solutions to overcome such obstacles. The conference paved the way for the creation of new cooperation networks and the planning of future common actions: language camps for students hosted with the aid of volunteer teachers, environmental projects, art exhibitions, common online forums, sport, music and art camps. In addition to that, practical aspects regarding the management of volunteering projects were debated, allowing the participants to share their stories and improve their skills and knowledge of the field.

The project nourished an environment where the promotion of voluntary action in the EU, the empowerment of volunteering organisations and the improvement of the quality of related services can be advanced.

Project title:

Twin Towns European Volunteering conference- EUR-VOL

Promoter:

City of Trogir (Croatia)

Partner countries:

Hungary, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland

Duration:

27/05/2011 – 30/05/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 21 697

Testimonials



The successful realization of this project would not have been possible without the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme. This initiative has been a useful experience and it strengthened the will of the participating towns to cooperate in the area of volunteering.

The participation in this project has been a welcome experience for me and my association (non profit volunteering association working with disadvantaged people). All the project activities were successfully realized and helped us to exchange knowledge and practice with other towns in area of volunteering. We have also made good connections with other towns and associations in this area, which is very useful for us.



Impact

The "EUR- Vol" conference encouraged over 250 participants, including those with disabilities and the unemployed, to make a difference for themselves and for society. At the end of the conference, representatives of the participating towns signed official cooperation memorandums. Each of the towns created an info-desk to act as a connection point between local volunteering organisations. This serves as a network for the future exchange of good volunteering practices, experiences and intercultural cooperation among the participating towns and European citizens at large.



EVERY EUROPEAN COUNTS

Small towns getting together
to talk about big issues and celebrate diversity



Immigration: a word that is likely to cause a frown on the faces of most Europeans, especially in times of financial uncertainty. The benefits that people from foreign countries and cultures can bring in terms of fresh ideas, different perspectives on problem solving and overall cultural enrichment are quickly dismissed and the whole phenomenon is commonly perceived in a negative light. But why is that?

“Active Citizens in the European Integration”, a project launched by the Spanish municipality of San Fernando de Henares in collaboration with two twinned Romanian municipalities of Vaslui and Campia Turzii, posed this question, along with others related to immigration, social welfare, women’s rights and the roles of the young and the elderly in society.

Currently, Romanians form one of the largest immigrant groups in Spain, constituting just over 14% of the total immigrant population residing in the country. This figure also includes many Spanish born Romanians who sometimes find it hard to integrate into local society without feeling discriminated. The project aims to facilitate integration and understanding of this group, and immigrant populations in general, helping them become more active members of the Spanish society.

A first step in this direction was made through a series of meetings, organized with a broad range of citizens and different institutional actors, in order to maximize the exchange of opinions. The idea was to create an open environment where participants could be encouraged by the sense of belonging to the European Union to talk about topics of common social interest. Through online forums, citizens could make considerations on how to decrease the gap between municipal institutions and the people and on the 9th of May (Europe day) their voices were heard again in an international conference held in San Fernando de Henares. The collected recommendations were brought to the attention of the twinned cities municipalities.

The initiative succeeded at encouraging an active participation of citizens in building a united Europe, based on democracy and human rights, open to the world and enriched by cultural diversity. The questions it raised remain open and the project can serve as inspiration for other institutions fighting against discrimination in Europe and worldwide.

Project title:

Active citizens in the European integration

Promoter:

Ayuntamiento de San Fernando de Henares
(Spain)

Partner country:

Romania

Duration:

1/02/2011 – 01/07/ 2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 6 392

“ This initiative was a continuation of the Todos Europeos (We Are All Europeans) project. The aim was to get to know better the demographic reality, characterized by the coexistence of different nationalities. Carrying out this Europe for Citizens project enabled us to work harder in the construction of a common identity: the European identity. Our approach was based both on shared concepts and the respect for cultural diversity.

Various actions have been undertaken in order to involve the most disadvantaged groups of citizens. By these means, they have found out about the content of EU policies that can help alleviate their social difficulties.

I enjoyed a very interesting debate by taking part in this Europe for Citizens project. Sharing personal experiences on topics of common interest has broadened my horizons in relation to cultural diversity. ”

Impact

The direct participation of the people and open dialogue with the institutions represented an effective measure to strengthen inclusion in the democratic society and promote cultural and linguistic diversity.

The creation of a virtual space (named “Todos europeos”) which includes an online forum, gave participants and the wider public a platform on which they could engage in transnational debate on all matters concerning integration and the EU. Numerous publications of leaflets and booklets helped the whole project to gain greater visibility and a wider social awareness.





NETWORKS OF TWINNED TOWNS



WHAT'S VOLUNTEERING TO A EUROPEAN?

Comparing notes on voluntary activities in different countries



In times of economic difficulty, despite what we may think, we are not just faced with doom and gloom. Often glimmers of positivity shine through the cracks. This is demonstrated by people who may suddenly have a lot of free time on their hands, and who use this to get involved in helping those experiencing hardships in what is universally understood as a volunteering role. Yet the idea of volunteering is not limited to these kinds of actions. Indeed, to a Brit, the concept may be one of spending two hours per week helping in a charity shop, whereas to a Spaniard, it could mean organising a conference of a national NGO. The dedication of those involved is recognised nevertheless, as they are giving up their free time for the benefit of others.

Project title:

Madrid en red

Promoter:

Fundación Voluntarios por Madrid (Spain)

Partner countries:

Portugal, United Kingdom, Germany

Duration:

01/03/2011 – 28/02/2013

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 52 038.60 (ongoing)

For the 'Madrid en Red' project, local councils and organisations from Spain, Portugal, Germany and the United Kingdom came together to share their experiences of volunteering as well as to create closer links between them. Four events were organised in three countries, each dealing with a different theme, from how the economic crisis affects volunteering to the importance of social networks to spreading the message of voluntary activities. Also participating in these events were over 100 NGO representatives as well as more than 500 volunteers and students from across Europe. The opportunity to meet people from different European countries interested in issues related to European citizenship was considered a principal benefit for all of those involved.

“ It is the first time we participate in a European project and we are very glad about this opportunity. We can directly exchange experiences about the actual developments in the field of volunteering in three European countries. We found out by this way that the civil society in Europe has got a very lively infrastructure in many countries. It was very good to include students and staff in these meetings, to spread the ideas and experiences in different ways.

It has been an honour to participate in this “Madrid en Red” project. The debates were enriched by the diversity of experiences and ideas, coming from many volunteering contexts.



Impact

Over 500 participants have been able to understand more fully the volunteering practices of their European partners. Additionally, they have also been able to meet and exchange views on a much wider variety of topics. These activities have led to the creation of new networks of volunteers and have enhanced cooperation and mutual understanding between previously existing networks. Media coverage reinforced the impact of the project and was able to help promote the conclusions and ideas to a large audience. The dedication of the organisation responsible for the project, ‘Fundación Voluntarios por Madrid’, especially in terms of getting information about their work out to the general public, was considered one of the biggest successes of the project. The networks of volunteers created through the project are continuing to contribute to each other’s work through a blog and website.



WELCOME TO THE GLOBAL EU VILLAGE!

27 communities join hands
in creating a colourful European village network



Friendship is built at the kitchen table. No amount of solemn declarations, official commitments or formal meetings can achieve what the simple ritual of welcoming someone in your home can. This is one of the fundamental principles that unite the 27 villages that make up the Charter of European Rural Communities. Since 1989, inhabitants from small villages – one from each member state of the European Union – have come together in annual gatherings. The member villages take turns in organising the diverse cultural and social events. Each time, the guests are hosted by locals in their homes, becoming one big international family.

Project title:

Charter of European Rural Communities

Promoter:

Municipality of Haaren (the Netherlands)

Partner countries:

the 26 other Member States of the European Union

Duration:

01/12/2008 – 30/11/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 128 878.29

2009 and 2010 were sprinkled with a variety of social gatherings on the theme of liveability in European rural communities. From Greece to Finland and from Ireland to Romania, each village contributed in bringing local flavour to the intercultural exchanges, strengthening the bonds between communities and developing new activities together. The spring of 2009 breathed life into youth dedicated workshops. Youngsters had the opportunity to talk to each other about the future of the Charter and of Europe and its values. Summer brought citizen gatherings, where young people discussed education and the integration of people with disabilities in the life of the village. The colder seasons were just as engaging, with a focus on the well-being of the elderly citizens living in rural communities and the concept of democracy. These meetings provided the ideal breeding grounds for ideas and project plans. They fostered multilateral dialogue and exchange of experience that transcended any cultural and geographical borders.



Meeting people and cultures from all over Europe, having fun together, discussing serious topics and making a lot of new friends: that's the strength of the Charter of European Rural Communities!

The Europe for Citizens programme was a big support in achieving our goals: promote the mutual understanding in all possible areas between the inhabitants of our villages and bring Europe closer to the citizens. This way the Charter hopes, on its own scale, to contribute to the unification of Europe.

Testimonials

Impact

The 10 major events organised in 2009 and 2010 enjoyed an enthusiastic response from the 27 Charter members. The discussion themes were of great importance for European rural communities and they produced significant results – publications, guidelines and recommendations etc. – which were then used by all the village municipalities. The sustainable cooperation between members has been ensured for many years to come, as the foundations for several future projects have already been laid.



I AM 70 YEARS YOUNG!

Helping people remain independent
and active as they age



Europeans born nowadays are expected to live about ten years longer than their countrymen born 50 years ago. Better living standards and the improvement in health systems across Europe have led to a continuous increase in life expectancy. With one in five Europeans already in their sixties our take on “old age” might need some reconsidering.

This is exactly what the “European network on forward policies and actions for the seniors in Europe” does. Chaired and coordinated in the region of Skovde - Sweden, the project aimed at creating long term transnational networks of cooperation so that the issue of the need for new policies and services for senior citizens could be raised and debated in the partner countries of Germany, France and Italy.

Empowerment and active citizenship, housing, services and ICT solutions, leisure and social commitment were some of the major topics discussed during the six events organised – one for each municipality taking part. Senior participants and the wider general public could exchange experiences and knowledge in key areas that require updates in policy making. One essential concept that was redefined during the course of the project was that of “active senior”. The participants agreed that it should not just take into account the ability to be physically active but should also refer to the continuing participation of senior citizens in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs. The project pointed out that future policy proposals aimed at tackling the needs of senior citizens should be focused on increasing their influence and responsibility on decision-making processes affecting their daily lives. The initiative also aimed at diversifying public and private services (and products) for the elderly, allowing them to be involved in a wider range of activities. Every step taken in this direction makes the “old continent” feel younger than ever!

Project title:

**European network on forward policies
and actions for the seniors in Europe**

Promoter:

Municipality of Skovde (Sweden)

Partner countries:

Germany, France, Italy

Duration:

15/09/2009 – 2/12/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 73 959,95



“The funding allowed us to involve people who are connected to the topic and the field both from inside the administration as well as from the social sector, NGOs and seniors themselves. Thus - apart from the building of a fruitful European network - we could improve the co-operation locally, constructing new connections and establishing a regional network.

The project affects my job and the activities in the Norrköping Municipality in all kinds of ways – new knowledge, sharing experiences, promoting innovations bench-marking, forming new alliances for new projects or new applications. Moreover, the participation shows the urge to know more about many other topics linked with the 60+ with European partners and to interact in the future.

The project proposed a new point of view to see the seniors' issue thanks to the comparison of different European experiences. It was really useful for my daily work with elderly and above all, with care service providers.



Impact

This project made it possible for the municipalities involved to create a much needed common ground, paving the way for the development of a systematic approach - a long-term European framework of cooperation. In turn, this framework accelerates the exchange of good practices and the transfer of knowledge related to local and national policies in this field. The project benefited from the involvement of a wide variety of actors (for example universities, NGOs, economic actors and citizens). It had good online exposure and consistent local press coverage.



ENABLING THE DISABLED OF EUROPE

Finding innovative ways to improve the daily lives
of disadvantaged people



It is estimated that around 40 million people (about 11% of the EU population) have some form of disability. In today's Europe, having a disability should not equal marginalisation. This idea sits at the foundation of projects such as the "Comprehensive integration of disabled and differently abled people". Its goal has been to show how disabled people can find employment and thus be better integrated into society.

Organised during the "2010 European Year for Combating poverty and social exclusion" by the Hungarian city of Varpalota, in collaboration with three other municipalities from Romania, Austria and Italy, the project aimed to reduce the number of people who rely on social welfare, to tackle the sense of redundancy and alienation from society many disabled people feel, and to facilitate those with disabilities in living and working independently.

The proposal raised awareness at national level about people with different working abilities and their everyday difficulties. During the organised conference, the participating countries presented their individual models, which took into account local labour market specifics on one hand, and the legal context on the other. They also presented ways in which disadvantaged people could be helped to promote their competences and play their role in the labour market. Participants proposed social inclusion projects, such as the "social farm", where integration of disabled people into work environments could be encouraged through agricultural activities. They also discussed the importance of tackling mobility and access difficulties faced by disabled people by rethinking architectural infrastructure.

The project encouraged practical exchanges and mutual help. A participating organisation provided a disabled group from Varpalota with housing; the Italian and Austrian partners offered study trips for the Hungarian and Romanian Experts; the towns of Wolfsberg and Varpalota made donations to charities in Petrosani.

Through its activities the project contributed to finding solutions to improve the quality of life of the disabled in Europe.

Project title:

Comprehensive integration of disabled and differently abled people

Promoter:

City of Varpalota (Hungary)

Partner countries:

Austria, Italy, Romania

Duration:

1/03/2010 – 28/02/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 32 391.47

Testimonials



“The international project “Comprehensive Integration of disabled and differently abled people” funded by the European Union has given us the opportunity to know in detail the models of social care for the disabled adopted in partner countries. The meetings have enriched our experience both as administrators and as individual citizens.

We believe that this project should be the beginning of a long term international collaboration focused on creating a European reference model of best practices for the employment of disadvantaged people.



Impact

Thanks to the project, participants got to know the practices of other countries, strengthening their bonds through solidarity and a mutual willingness to help. Political decision makers had an opportunity to witness firsthand the challenges that the disabled face in daily life. The conference signalled the beginning of an international collaboration capable of presenting unified solutions for the integration of people with disabilities on a European level. A Website, multimedia DVD and brochure were published and local newspaper and television reports were issued.





SUPPORT MEASURES: PEER TO PEER ACTIVITIES



WHAT MAKES A TWIN?

An opportunity to examine the connections
between European towns



The stereotypical differences between northern and southern Europe are well known. The laid-back Mediterranean, the organised German and the chic Swede are often portrayed as being miles apart in their attitudes towards life. For this reason, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions rightly assumed that there would be benefits from having meetings between citizens from towns throughout Europe. It is in this spirit that the project “Which twinning for which Europe?” was organised, with a series of meetings and discussions in three different cities representing countries in Northern and Eastern Europe (Estonia), Central and Western Europe (Germany), and Southern Europe (Malta). The focus of these meetings was wide ranging, from technical issues, to more general topics such as the benefits of the Europe for Citizens programme for twinned towns.

Project title:

Which twinning for which Europe?

Promoter:

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (France)

Partner countries:

Malta, Germany, Estonia

Duration:

01/12/2010 – 31/12/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 65 372.74

Peer to Peer activities funded under the Europe for Citizens programme are essential to allow the successful development of European partnerships and networks. The “Which twinning for which Europe?” project examines the approaches to town-twinning across Europe, and allows those from each corner of the continent to compare their practices and to decide on common approaches to make the most of their partnerships.



“These rich and constructive exchanges demonstrate that Town Twinning represents a unique way of involving citizens in the development of Europe. It is also an instrument that allows local authorities to share their experience and expertise in different fields. The discussions held in the framework of the project were very important in preparing for “European Citizens!”, the European Congress of Citizenship and Town Twinning organized by CEMR in Poland under the Polish Presidency of the EU.



Impact

“Which twinning for which Europe?” has a strong vision for the future. By taking into account the possible enlargement of the EU to include some Balkan countries, it has dedicated time to supporting and informing countries from this region on the benefits of town-twinning and of the funding opportunities available through the Europe for Citizens programme. Another principal impact of the project is the connection and sense of belonging it instils in those who may be new to the idea of European integration.



NORTH MEETS SOUTH: BEYOND TWINNING

How to harness the potential of twinned towns



Some might claim Northern and Southern Europe are too different to be able to understand each other, let alone work together! Well, here is a partnership that proves the contrary. The regions of Norrbotten in Sweden and Emilia-Romagna in Italy networked with the Finnish Association of Municipalities and the Spanish 'Diputación de A Coruña' with the purpose of exchanging opinions on how to enhance the relationships between existing twinned towns. Why? Because, the twinning of municipalities is about more than just organizing a few one off "getting to know each other" events, rather, it is about maintaining a constant flow of communication to enable

friendship and solidarity building relationships between twinned regions. Hence, the activities proposed by participants addressed the common need to increase local commitment at a political level for the "Europe for Citizens" projects and, more in general, draw attention to the European cause.

The partners involved worked together to strengthen a set of shared principles and create innovative web-based tools like, for example, an *e-platform* able to simplify the coordination between actors working all over Europe. The project arose from the challenges that local authorities, and more specifically civil servants, faced in the creation of stable and beneficial Networks. Stakeholders met during three sessions and engaged in training seminars involving about 50 civil servants and 30 political representatives of the same municipalities and exchanged their ideas and project experiences on a number of EU issues.

Project title:

Facing the challenges of the implementation of Networks of Twinned Towns

Promoter:

Sweden Emilia Romagna Network (Italy)

Partner countries:

Spain, Sweden, Finland, Croatia

Duration:

01/01/2011 – 31/12/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 60 402



“ Networks of Twinned Towns have a great potential: in order to deliver the results promised, you need to design an effective management strategy.

As elected political representatives we have to increase our commitment to the European integration process by fostering and supporting more consistently our civil servants in the context of networking of Twinned Towns projects.

I learnt a lot in the seminars, in particular about how challenging it is to turn concepts into effective activities and good results. ”

Impact

One of the main outcomes of the meetings between civil servants and Programme experts was the creation of a set of practical guidelines designed to facilitate and improve the management of networks of twinned towns.

The project helped civil servants to strengthen their managerial skills and increase their awareness about key aspects of project realisation like the importance of establishing mutual agreements and an efficient communication flow amongst partners as well as effective planning and management of Twinned Town networks. Moreover, it was an occasion to discuss current EU affairs and to exchange points of view on former implemented projects.

Through the intercultural meetings the participants also gained fresh perspectives on how to be more active in a democratic European society





CITIZENS' PROJECTS



HUNGRY FOR INNOVATION

Exploring a different side to the economy



How do you change a bicycle into a soup maker? Not sure it's possible? Well, this is one of many innovations of the Micronomics project, which was conceived with the idea of giving creative individuals the opportunity to showcase their abilities while promoting ideas such as sustainable consumption and healthy eating. The benefits of small initiatives such as bicycle repair and web design, referred to as 'micro initiatives', are highlighted with the quirky demonstration of a bicycle transformed into a machine that can produce hot soup in 7 minutes.

A variety of innovations were used to make the most of this project, with work sessions, debates and presentations being supplemented by exhibitions and film screenings. On the first three Saturdays of May 2010, Micronomics brought people out onto the streets of Brussels to demonstrate the use of urban spaces as places of expression, including a creative arts market and a debate on the concept of 'public space'. The aim was not just to present the initiatives of the creative minds associated with the project, but also to examine the social and economic added value of such micro enterprises. A key message emanating from this project is that a use can be found for anything, and through creativity and innovation we can contribute, if only in a small way, to the development of the economy.

Project title:

Micronomics

Promoter:

VZW City Mine(d) (Belgium)

Partner countries:

Austria, Slovenia, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Spain, United Kingdom and Italy. Moreover, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Switzerland, participated as non co-financed partners.

Duration:

01/01/2010 – 15/03/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 86 829.26

Impact

By sharing its project with citizens of cities in Europe Micronomics was able to reach out to a large scale audience, intriguing and informing them with its unique approach to urban problems. At a time when economic fundamentals have been shaken drastically worldwide, Micronomics was able to bring out not just optimism in the face of difficulties, but also true alternatives combining entrepreneurship, social responsibility and sustainable development .



“ Collaborations such as Micronomics allow local actors like 'Im Aus-land' from Vienna to up-scale their strategies and make them accessible to similar initiatives in other European cities. At the same time they can learn from other grass-roots initiatives how to empower groups like Roma, homeless people or other disenfranchised groups. They are building Europe from the bottom-up. ”

Testimonials

CULTURE IN THE CITIZENS' SPOTLIGHT

A pan-European survey brings to light citizens' opinions on the role of culture



Is culture just a waste of money or is it one of the driving forces that can help us move forward? The EUROMEDINCULTURE(s) Network embarked on the difficult journey of identifying the role culture could play in the construction of Europe.

The belief that one of the essential elements of European identity is our common cultural heritage was at the root of the two-year effort. In 2009 and 2010 more than twenty regional public forums were organised in different European countries, through which over twenty thousand questionnaires were distributed to citizens. The collective reflection dealt with various aspects concerning the celebration and protection of humankind's creativity and traditions. Thousands of people agreed to take part, and to help shape the basic outline of a policy that would give culture pride of place at the heart of a shared Europe. Historical heritage, the diversity of European cultures and languages, democracy and human rights were frequently evoked to define European culture. Artists and cultural professionals, policy-makers and youngsters alike made enthusiastic contributions to defining the way culture affects every dimension of our daily life, from education and self-expression to social dialogue and professional development. The exercise revealed that many Europeans believe culture is not an end in itself but the cement of a harmonious and egalitarian society at a social and economic level. It is the foundation of creative thinking, a place for experimentation, the results of which can be transposed to other areas of society and the economy.

Project title:
EUROMEDINCULTURE(s)

Promoter:
Association pour le développement culturel européen et international (France)

Partner countries:
United Kingdom, Belgium, Slovenia, Malta, Spain, Germany, Finland, Italy, Poland, Portugal

Duration:
01/01/2010 – 31/12/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:
€ 123 871.32

Impact

The project revealed that the vast majority of participants see culture as a vital factor in social cohesion, a tool for dialogue and a means of mobilising citizens. These ideas were reflected in a set of recommendations entitled "The right to culture in tomorrow's Europe", written in eleven languages. The Euromed in culture website made the wide dissemination of the results possible, including a film realised in the framework of the project. The success of the exercise encouraged its organisers to propose complementary activities in the coming years, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the initiative.



“ Culture makes people better citizens!

Culture is a bridge between past, current and future time, as well it connects people from different «cultures».

The world of economics has a lot to learn from the cultural world, especially when it comes to creativity and team spirit. At the same time, the cultural world also needs to integrate some aspects of economics: a sense of responsibility, making projects more realistic by demonstrating their marketability.

”

Testimonials

ONCE UPON A TIME IN EUROPE

A citizens' anthology



Stories of a Possible Europe" is an initiative whose philosophy is best expressed in the words of Ira Glass – "Great stories happen to those who can tell them". Cultural and educational associations from Italy, Germany, Portugal, United Kingdom, Spain, Slovakia and Slovenia, united their efforts in bringing to light the thousands of experiences and faces that make up our Europe. Together they laid the foundation for what was to become a colourful, inspiring and heart-warming expedition into the various cultures of the old continent.

Project title:

Stories of a Possible Europe

Promoter:

Universita Popolare di Roma (Italy)

Partner countries:

Germany, Spain, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, United Kingdom

Duration:

30/01/2009 - 31/01/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 123 871.10 €

Men and women of every age and cultural origin were invited to participate in a cooperative and autobiographical storytelling contest on the theme of intercultural dialogue. Tales of the past and present, but also dreams, desires and utopian fantasies that can help us imagine and bring into being another possible Europe. Citizen panels were organized in each of the six countries, as a form of participation and interaction in "constructing an ever closer Europe" through storytelling. The stories were produced in the first person by panel participants, through autobiographical writing workshops, or collected by the same participants in the form of interviews and life stories. Tales, research articles and studies were also collected through the European "Another Europe is Possible" competition. The authors were given freedom to use any means of expression they saw fit, resulting in an eclectic collection of written texts, photo, video and audio narrations, comic strips, poetry and theatre. The stories offered an image of a vibrant, multifaceted Europe, recounting experiences of commitment to human rights and democracy, different ways of working together, new ways of living, and new visions of the world.

Testimonials



“ My experience in Slovenia with groups of Roma showed how strong stereotypes can be broken through direct contact. For example, by organizing occasions where the Roma can teach their arts and their culture, and at the same time learn from non-Romas. Intercultural dialogue is a mutual learning experience which needs place, time, opportunity...

Dialogue and rights are two sides of the same coin.

From this event on I have been convinced that stereotypes about these people are not formed on the basis of facts but rather in the minds of those who fear some who is unknown.

Now we have become a little more open minded, we have become more integrated in society, now we socialize more... If I had had this opportunity before, I would have changed a lot of things. ”

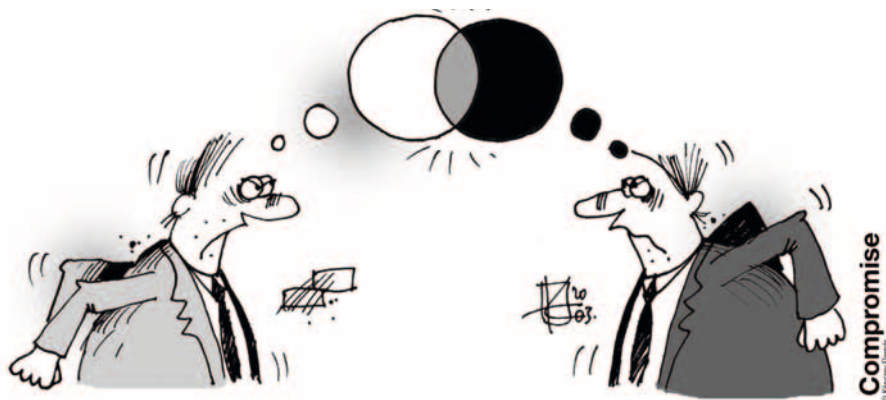
Impact

The stories contribute to the knowledge of the values and representations which are the basis for building a sense of European identity. The stories were compiled into micro-anthologies, photo calendars and brochures, ensuring that the gathered experiences can be used to improve intercultural dialogue in Europe. Through these materials the organisers involved citizens and institutional representatives, both at local and European level. The online competition allowed for wide diffusion and participation.



ROUTING TOWARDS EUROPE

Local communities take charge in building
an inclusive Europe



Unfortunately, we still live in a world where many lack basic material goods or fair opportunities to advance in life, a world lacking proper care for those who need it most, lacking in basic human dignity and filled with intolerance. While the EU embodies the notions of human rights, diversity and inclusion, many of our societies are still faced with the threats posed by racism, intolerance, social exclusion, poor education and social injustice. This is why, for vulnerable Europeans, organised solidarity, practical assistance and a celebration of diversity will make a huge difference.

Project title:

Grassroots Europe for Local Wellbeing

Promoter:

Open Society Institute (Hungary)

Partner countries:

Latvia, Czech Republic, Romania, Austria

Duration:

01/01/2011 – 31/12/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 250 000

Grassroots organisations can be largely defined as groups of self-organized individuals pursuing common interests through a volunteer based non profit organisation. “Grassroots Europe for Local Wellbeing” brought together more than 120 volunteers who have dedicated their lives towards caring for the needs of others and who work towards the welfare of their communities. Their everyday work encompasses various types of stimulating and community building activities such as: after-school classes for children with special needs; multicultural camps to teach tolerance; art and sport classes to nurture and encourage self-expression of the marginalised; seminars to involve disinterested youth in community issues; social services for deprived families; music therapy for the mentally disabled and, last but not least, neighbourhood assistance to asylum-seekers and migrants.

Participants engaged in a series of national and international events over a period of one year to discuss the opportunities and challenges they face in their everyday work as members of grassroots organisations. By the end participants felt more prepared and empowered to bring forward their most important concerns with local, national and EU-level stakeholders.



The wellbeing concept reflects what we have always known about our work but could never put into words.

I regained my trust in us and the power of grassroots civil society. We need to take this collaboration forward.



Impact

The project achieved its main aim of strengthening the voice of community-based civil society organisations by involving hard-to-reach communities in the democratic, deliberative processes of the European Union. Participants agreed that it also contributed to the development of strong professional ties amongst active citizens in Europe. They developed a common voice in policy debates on education and social inclusion. Furthermore, awareness was raised on the significant role of grassroots initiatives in the wellbeing of communities among local, national and EU-level policy-makers. Finally, an exhibition of cartoons was organised as a side-event in Cluj-Napoca, Budapest and Brussels which acted as a powerful tool in drawing attention to significant social issues concerning communities all over Europe.

The recommendations of the volunteers were presented to EU decision makers and civil society organisations in Brussels. This event contributed to bringing Europe closer to its citizens by building greater trust and solidarity between those who work towards a tighter-knit Europe.





CIVIL SOCIETY IN ACTION



CITIZEN SHIP

A boat ride to Palermo in support of crime prevention activities



On 23 May 1992, judge Giovanni Falcone, a preeminent figure in the fight against organised crime in Sicily, was killed, together with his wife and three of his bodyguards, on a motorway near Palermo. His assassination was a turning point in Italy's fight against the mafia. Two decades after his death, his legacy lives on. In 2011, the Foundation "Giovanni e Francesca Falcone", together with partners from France, Spain, Estonia and Bulgaria organized two international events aimed at reinforcing the role of organized civil society in combating and preventing crime.

Project title:

Waves of legality, waves of citizenship

Promoter:

Fondazione Giovanni e Francesca Falcone
(Italy)

Partner countries:

Spain, Estonia, France, Bulgaria

Duration:

01/01/2011 – 30/09/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 46 274.68

In February 2011 dozens of young Europeans gathered in Paris to explore the role they can play in preventing organized criminality. The diversity of the participants' education and experience made this exchange particularly valuable: some came from disadvantaged backgrounds or had a delinquency record; some were experts in the mafia or professionals involved in the fight against crime. Three months later, the project culminated with a series of special events. The "Boat of legality" is maybe the most emblematic one. More than two thousand youngsters embarked in Naples and Civitavecchia to reach Palermo. The "Boat of legality" was organised in the past only for Italian participants; but the 2011 edition welcomed a colourful mix of international passengers. For these crusaders of a new sort, the 13 to 16 hours of the crossing will be hardly forgettable. Shared emotion can be a driving force towards action and active prevention. After this initiation journey, they landed in Palermo and participated in various celebrations, hand in hand with the Sicilian population, in memory of Judge Falcone and all victims of organised crime and in support of a culture of legality.

Testimonials



The Europe for Citizens programme gave us the possibility to create a structured activity with members of associations and organizations in other countries, bringing our work a step forward at European level to disseminate culture of legality and lawfulness. The experience of the "Waves of Legality encourages us to promote new projects in network with other European associations.

The project helped me understand the importance and the role of civil society in the fight for legality and against organized crime. I gained a global perspective over the mafia phenomenon and I could participate in a lasting process of intercultural exchange.

Now I am more convinced than ever that we the youngsters, the youth workers, the simple people, have so much power; and using it for good we can fight against illegality. This project was a living example on how this power can be used to promote legality, active and responsible citizenship among everyone.



Impact

The boat rides to Palermo and the ensuing city rallies have always had a strong impact on participants, some of them returning year after year to take part in the manifestations. The 2011 "Boat of legality" had excellent media coverage, with more than 800 accredited journalists from all over the world ensuring that the message it carried reached a wide audience in Italy and abroad.



EUROPE AT AGE 20

The Declaration “Generation ‘89”: hopes and expectations of today’s youth for the future of Europe



They were born in 1989. As they were taking their first clumsy steps and learning to form their first words, countries in Central and Eastern Europe were beginning their own journeys towards freedom and re-learning to speak of democracy, in the wake of the Autumn of Nations revolutions which overthrew the existing communist regimes. Over the past two decades, the newborns of '89 developed and matured into creative, involved and broad-minded individuals, shaped by the collective experience of their own nations. In the spring of 2010, youngsters from nine European countries – Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, the United Kingdom, Poland, Romania and Hungary – were brought together to take part in the pan-European project “Generation ‘89”. They had the chance to speak about what happened in their homelands in the past and to express and share ideas about their future as European citizens.

Project title:

Generation ‘89

Promoter:

Institutul Cultural Român / Romanian Cultural Institute (Romania), EUNIC network

Partner countries:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, United Kingdom, Poland and Hungary

Duration:

12/10/2009 – 11/10/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 24 875.79

The young people involved in the project worked together in four simultaneous meetings in Bucharest, Brussels, Prague and Warsaw to draft the declaration of their generation – the new citizens of a free Europe. In preparation for the exchange, they interviewed hundreds of people aged between 25 and 85 years old who lived through the events that led to the collapse of the communist systems in Europe. The resulting videos offered a starting point for the discussions that led to the creation of the Declaration “Generation ‘89”, text that condenses the hopes and fears of today’s youth for the future of Europe. Coming from countries with very different experiences concerning the year 1989 and distinct development in terms of European integration, status and citizenship, the participants offered in their manifesto a clear image of what it means to be “united in diversity”.

The project “Generation ‘89” succeeded in offering a glimpse of the impact the revolutions of 1989 had on shaping the way today’s youth envisages the future of Europe. The imaginary journey into the past was an emotional and inspiring experience, forging bonds that still remain strong, years after.



“ The project “Generation ‘89” was the first EU funded project that the Romanian Cultural Institute coordinated. It was a challenging and demanding project. During almost two years, people from different institutions shared their knowledge and used their enthusiasm in order to have the extraordinary experience of meeting Generation ‘89 and to make known their statement about European future. The financial support provided by the Europe for Citizens Programme enabled us to develop our idea into a pan-European project, involving more than 250 participants from 9 European countries.

Knowledge, friends, answers to many questions that I had in my mind and more questions to be solved in the future. This was the most fruitful experience in my life until 21.



Impact

In addition to writing essays on the theme “What can I do for Europe and what can Europe do for me?” each participant prepared a 3-5 minute video in which they interviewed relatives and unknown people on the events of the year 1989. The hundreds of texts, videos and photos illustrate the process through which the participants distilled the essential elements of their diverse experiences into a common declaration.

The project was held under the auspices of Mr. Václav Havel and in June 2010, the Declaration „Generation ‘89” was presented to EU representatives, including the President of the European Parliament, Mr. Jerzy Buzek. The events enjoyed widespread media coverage and placed another brick in the bridge that links the nations of the European Union.



AN INSPIRATIONAL LEGACY

Giving a voice to “forgotten” urban areas



Being a journalist takes more than an inquisitive mind and a gift for storytelling. One needs, perhaps above all, courage. Ilaria Alpi, a rising star in the world of journalism, had it all. Her desire to uncover some unpleasant dealings took her from her native Italy to Somalia, where she investigated reports of toxic waste disposal and illegal weapon transporting. These investigations led to her brutal murder in Mogadishu in March 1994. Today, her name and the spirit of her work live on through the Ilaria Alpi-Open Community Association (Associazione Ilaria Alpi-Comunità Aperta).

The Association encourages aspiring young journalists to take inspiration from the dedication and commitment Ms Alpi showed to her work, and to stretch investigative journalism boundaries in the pursuit of truth. Successful examples of such journalism were highlighted through the CITYLAB project.

The journalist's apprentices in this project focused mainly on life in disadvantaged areas of cities in Italy and France, with the aim of making people aware of the problems faced by those living here. Strikingly, many similarities were found between the situations and predominant views in both countries. What effect does immigration have in these areas? Is it desirable? How do we balance the issue of security with that of human rights? These modern problems are universal, and the CITYLAB project goes to the heart of the issue, with interviews from those people directly affected by them. Through these series of interviews, we get a true sense of the emotions, opinions and sometimes prejudice behind questions such as whether women should be able to wear the burka in public.

These reports help open windows of opportunity for those who feel forgotten or let down by the systems in which they live, and it is now up to everyone, from members of governments to those affected deeply by issues of immigration, security, and welfare, to ensure that the legacy of the interviews is a positive development of the issues.

Project title:
City Lab

Promoter:
Associazione Ilaria Alpi (Italy)

Partner country:
France

Duration:
01/08/2009 – 31/07/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:
€ 25 359

Testimonials

“ I have worked with one of the Citylab journalists on migration issues, with the aim of raising awareness regarding the people struggling to work and live in our country. Migrants in such a situation are more likely to face discrimination, exclusion, exploitation and abuse at all stages of the migration process. They are often denied even the most basic labour protections, due process guarantees, personal security, and healthcare. To attract attention to this situation we have shown in our video the story of the massacre of migrants in Castelvoturno that happened in September 2008.

The videos have been a precious tool used to show the reality as seen by the citizens. By organizing meetings and conferences open to wider participation, we have put the selected topics at the centre of public debate. The project provided an opportunity to bring



together politicians, administrators, experts and social workers as well as citizens. This was a very good way to rediscover the meaning of democracy at national and European level.



Impact

The clips were presented and debated at the annual ‘Premio Ilaria Alpi’, a ceremony recognising the achievements of reporters focusing on investigative journalism. The European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malström contributed to the debate on the issues raised by the clips. They also featured on the Italian news channel ‘RAI News 24’, highlighting the strong interest of the public in such questions.



LEAD TO CHANGE

How professional exchanges can influence your work



Have you ever wondered how somebody in the same job as you works on a day to day basis in another European country? Do their priorities within their job differ from yours? Through the 'Active Citizens in the Driving Seat' project, people working in professional civil society organisations - from a sector which exists to meet social needs - were given the opportunity to shadow their counterparts in other European countries for a week.

Participants included CEOs of major charities, who often returned from exchange with a new perspective on their sector and new ideas which could maximise the impact of their charity in their own country. Take the example of Jim Baker, the CEO of Age Concern in Brighton, United Kingdom, who participated in an exchange with a counterpart in Italy. Mr Baker emphasises that through this exchange he was reminded of why he came into the charity sector in the first place. He realised that his priority should be the people who the charity aims to help, rather than the concept of raising money and modernizing.

Project title:

**Active Citizens in the driving seat:
leaders for the 21st century Europe**

Promoter:

Euclid Network (United Kingdom)

Partner countries:

Germany, Estonia, Slovenia, Bulgaria,
United Kingdom, Italy

Duration:

01/08/2009 – 31/07/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 32 441.33

Testimonials



I learned a lot in five days; the customs, traditions and, above all, about the people in Estonia who are building civil society and the relationship with the government structure. I also had the opportunity to start building good relations with organisations and wonderful people.

The third sector in the United Kingdom is so built into the nature of the 'system' that we can often end up thinking like central or local government rather than who we are. The Italian concept is much more of a welfare and family model, which is one that is also central to our traditions, but one possibly we lose sight of.



Impact

Not only did the Active Citizens in the Driving seat project set the scene for learning how civil society NGOs work in various countries, but it also led to follow up projects in which what was learnt was put into practice. Examples range from raising awareness on developmental issues in Africa to support for equal opportunities in the Slovenian labour market. Through the 'Leadership and beyond' publication, of which there were 200 hard copies as well as downloadable copies, active European citizenship was emphasised, with the focus on leadership development throughout Europe. Information was also spread through social networks, civil society networks and newsletters, all of which reached over 5,000 people.

In addition to the exchanges, the project led to the release of a research publication 'Leadership and beyond: how civil society can lead the future'. This publication examined how NGOs are led across Europe, comparing the similarities and differences in terms of goals, practices and opinions on how organisations in this sector can work most efficiently.



COOKING AWAY PREJUDICES

Creative ways of breaking down racist and xenophobic stereotypes



Seeing the world as black and white and echoing prejudices, even without knowing they are prejudices, may sometimes be a tempting way of escaping social isolation. This is where creative initiatives like “Travelling Social Cuisine” can make a difference. Travelling Social Cuisine is connecting human rights defenders from the Baltic countries and the organisation “UNITED for Intercultural Action”. The objective: enabling the post-Soviet countries of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to become active in reducing xenophobia and racism and to strengthen their ties with Western European human rights networks.

Project title:

Travelling Social Cuisine

Promoter:

National Institute for Social Integration
(Lithuania)

Partner countries:

Latvia, Estonia, the Netherlands

Duration:

1/10/2010 – 30/9/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 25 000

The project developed a 3 steps approach. The first step consisted of an international brainstorming meeting organised by the Lithuanian “National Institute for Social Integration”. The participants in the project were joined by international experts in order to come up with an anti-racism action plan that would include innovative methods like the “Cultural Kitchen” or “The Human Library”. The second step was turning the ideas into actions. “Human Libraries” were set up, where participants and casual passersby could enjoy a collection of diverse and colourful “Human Books”. In other words, they could have conversations with people from different vulnerable social groups that they usually wouldn’t have contact with. The “readers” were then encouraged to “throw away their stereotypes” in a big symbolic waste bin.

The “Cultural Kitchen” was the setting in which people would “cook away prejudices” through the preparation and sharing of different foods, all the while discussing about human rights and exchanging experiences on how to overcome xenophobia. The “Uncomfortable Cinema” featured anti-racist films followed by panel discussions and the Roma culture was presented to school children through lectures and concerts performed by Roma kids. The third step of the project implied evaluating the results and impact of the actions on the participants and their communities. Of course the journey doesn’t end here. But “Travelling social cuisine” has demonstrated to be an efficient and innovative vehicle to hit the road against racism and xenophobia.

“The European for Citizens programme provided us with an opportunity to implement a long-term project to take actions against racism and xenophobia in our local communities. The project was the needed impetus to further work on these issues and served as a space to find out about the best practices and instruments used by other organisations. New initiatives have been born, new partnerships and networks have been started - the impact of the funding has been significant not only to the partner organisations and participants, but to the society at large as well.

The project allowed us not only to identify similar challenges in the three participating countries, but also to discuss the possible ways of tackling them. We had Roma participants, as well as participants of Russian speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia, so we have practically applied the principle “Nothing about us - without us”. Although the project is over, we still feel its impact - strengthening the ties with local and international partners and experts and birth of new initiatives and even organizations.

I have gained a lot of experience by cooperating with international partners and since then I have continued to improve my knowledge in the field. The employed methods (such as the Social Cuisine) have stimulated change and action.”

Impact

The project was successful in facilitating new connections between participating networks on local, national and international level, making the problems of racism and xenophobia in the Baltic region better known in Western Europe. It has made a useful contribution towards the creation of a European civic society and a strengthened mutual understanding. The Lithuanian National Institute for Social Integration has joined the UNITED network and now hosts international events on the issues of anti-racism.

NGOs got to know different methods of working in the Human Rights field and a DVD and website were created which serve as educational (and inspirational) tools for different organisations and individual activists.

The project has involved more than 50 people from socially vulnerable groups. The workshops managed to raise awareness on Human Rights and to change attitudes towards the different discriminated social groups.

The Roma Integration House was established in Lithuania in February 2012, as an outcome of this project.



LIGHT ON THE RIGHTS

European school students on a bus tour to discuss their rights



Defining “quality education” isn’t an easy task. Neither is engaging in lively debates about school student rights. The idea behind the Light on the Rights Bus Tour project is to ask those who form the target group of education to have their say and commit themselves. In September 2010, a team of students of different nationalities embarked on a ten thousand kilometres bus trip to talk about school rights and wider social issues. The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (OBESSU) arranged the tour that would empower them to fulfill this mission and take them through 15 countries in 45 days. The young travellers encouraged fellow students to be more interested in political issues that directly affect students and their rights, inspiring them to be more active in the democratic processes.

Project title:

Light on the Rights

Promoter:

OBESSU – Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions (Belgium)

Partner countries:

Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, United Kingdom, France, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Romania.

Duration:

01/08/2010 – 31/07/2011 (BUS trip :
7th September – 23rd October)

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 35 000

During their travels the multicultural team visited numerous schools, taking part in a wide variety of events and activities. They debated on patriotism and tolerance in Lithuania, advocated for free school meals in Estonia and fought for more investment in education in Austria. They participated in discussions for a new concept of transportation for young people in Slovenia and demonstrated in Italy. Many other proceedings benefited from the enthusiasm and passion of this dedicated group of youngsters. By getting involved with local students and communities in each country and participating proactively in these events, the Light on the Rights team helped create a transnational flow of information and ideas on education and school rights. The project contributed to connecting school student organisations across Europe and to empowering young people to stand up for their rights. This experience forms a precious contribution to the establishment of citizens’ fora of discussion on Education at European level.

“ This was the first project that OBESSU realised thanks to the support of the measure for projects initiated by civil society organisations of the Europe for Citizens programme. For us it was a great help to implement a very ambitious and unusual project.

Being organised gives a stronger voice to school students, who very often are not taken into consideration in the decision-making processes. In addition, it offers them the opportunity to share experiences, find common points and support each other.

The Light on the Rights Bus Tour showed us that, even though we might have a different approach, our main struggle for good education for everybody is the same all over Europe. It was great to show people what our organisation is currently working on and share the experiences with school students all over Europe. Also, the documentary gave school student activists a better picture of the situation in other countries and a European perspective on education.

Being part of this extraordinary project gave me much creativity and strength for fighting for our rights.



Impact

On the 7th of December 2011 OBESSU was awarded the 3rd Civil Society Prize during the plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee, acknowledging the value and results of this initiative.

The final documentary produced showcases the activity and ideas of students around Europe and offers a unique insight into the school student organisations movement. The documentary is a useful tool to support the work of organisations, showing education stakeholders what can be achieved.

The Light on the Rights project has motivated organisations to start or to continue working on school student rights. It has given a boost to already existing campaigns, supporting their claims with a stronger European voice and giving visibility to their activities. The project has also created a consistent network among the participating organisations fostering future cooperation on topics of common interest.



WOMEN INCLUDED

An online project to encourage the participation of women in European matters



Today, Europe is the leading continent in terms of the number of women who participate in the governance of their countries. This is the result of almost two hundred years of sustained efforts directed at changing social attitudes, encouraging the adoption of anti-discrimination laws and promoting equal opportunities. And the movement towards gender equality doesn't stop here. Projects such as the "Women for Europe and Citizens' Initiative" aim at increasing awareness and they inform people about the progress achieved.

The project focused on the new "European Citizens' Initiative" and how it could be used in connection with women's rights. The European Citizens' Initiative is a means of citizen participation in the elaboration of European Union policies. For the very first time, and as of April 1st 2012, European citizens are able to ask the Commission to put forward legislative proposals to the Council and Parliament, on condition that the initiative has the support of a minimum of one million signatures that come from at least one quarter of the Member States in the Union.

By spreading information regarding the new legislation, the project intends to encourage people, and in particular women, to use this tool in order to take part actively in the debate on major issues that affect their daily lives. The topics discussed included reconciliation between private and professional life, access to positions of responsibility, wage inequality, education, social integration, persistent stereotypes and other matters concerning women in Europe and worldwide.

The project proved that, when provided with access to information and suitable legal instruments, EU citizens are eager to get involved in actions that further reduce gender imbalances and discrimination. It acted as a space for women to express their ideas, debate on change and make a contribution to the fight against social injustice.

Project title:

**L'initiative citoyenne: un nouvel instrument pour l'inclusion politique, économique et sociale des femmes.
«Women for Europe and Citizens' Initiative»**

Promoter:

Fondation Robert Schuman (France)

Partner countries:

Poland, Greece, Belgium

Duration:

15/09/2010 – 14/11/2011

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 91 055.80

Testimonials



“ With the support of the Commission, we have created - eighteen months before the citizens’ initiative came into force - a bilingual website in which we present the project. It explains the workings of the citizens’ initiative and offers a platform for debate on which to prepare draft initiatives for the promotion of women’s rights in Europe.

Our work has shown that women were motivated to get things done and make their voices heard. I wanted to attend the conference to learn more about the role of women in Europe but also worldwide. This conference showed me that, even if important steps have been advanced in promoting the rights of women in society, there is still some way to go. ”

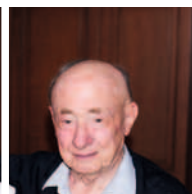
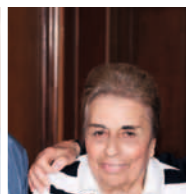
Impact

An online survey on Women, Europe and the Citizens’ Initiative was produced in the context of the project. The questionnaire, conducted in eight different languages, was answered by almost 3500 people, echoing the sustained interest in the topic. The results of the project, as well as the conclusions of the international events organised in Belgium, Poland and Greece, were published on the project website. The website became a meeting place for all Europeans who want to launch a proposal through the “European Citizens’ Initiative”, especially on issues concerning the representation of women in society.





REMEMBRANCE



EXPLAINING THE PRESENT BY REVISITING THE PAST

Two Erasmus students trace the footsteps of a young deportee



Convoy" is a film project inspired by the life and writings of Etty Hillesum, a young Jewish woman from Amsterdam who was deported to Auschwitz where she died in 1943 at the age of 29. However, "Convoy" is much more than a commemoration. Firmly set in the present, the film tells the story of Alexandra (Polish) and Florian (French), two Erasmus students who, inspired by reading the Journal of Etty Hillesum, decide to retrace her footsteps across Europe. During this "road movie", which begins in Holland and ends in Poland, crossing through Germany and Belgium, the two "citizen reporters" meet fifteen people of different ages and backgrounds, who provide them with stories that challenge their own prejudices.

Project title:
Le Convoi

Promoter:
MEDIEL (Belgium)

Partner countries:
Poland, France, Germany, Ireland, Belgium

Duration:
01/10/2008 – 30/09/2009

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:
€ 55 000

These exchanges reinforce the links between past and present. The unearthing of the fascinating historical accounts from the survivors of the concentration camps provide themes and topics of discussion very relevant to present day society; such as the origins of fear, which can lead to consider the "other" as bad, impure and to be rejected. Each stop of the journey is also an opportunity to become better acquainted with Etty Hillesum. Her thoughts, fiery and free, punctuate the narrative with conviction: "listen to the essence and depth of the other", without ever yielding to hatred and despite the horrors witnessed. The story of "Convoy" ends in Auschwitz, but the experience, knowledge gathered and shared emotions pave the way towards another trip, one that is within.

Testimonials



“When I discovered the European funding “Active European Remembrance”, I immediately wanted to make a film about the life of this victim of Nazism. This is a truly European production in seven languages, with the participation of students, actors, artists and partners from ten countries of the European Union. Its diffusion generated debates and conferences. We realised how much past events impact on our present and stimulate questions regarding values of our European society.

The message of this film – through the writings of Etty – is a bandage for the soul and makes me stronger and more humble. My way of thinking, of perceiving the world, of speaking to others, were deeply affected after filming this movie.

I learned that the history of Europe is really a mosaic of the stories of each individual. By participating in this international project, I was very touched by the fact that there are also many young people full of hope and motivation to create a better future.



Impact

The movie “Convoy” was broadcast on television in France, Germany, Belgium and Czech Republic. Important additional exposure is given by the websites of the project partners and the associated Internet broadcasters. Public and private screenings have continued to allow the film to find an audience, especially amongst young Europeans.



GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE

A place to reflect on bravery in the face of adversity



Gardens are places of peace and tranquillity where we often go to ponder decisions and problems. Yet the Gardens of the Righteous have a deeper meaning to those who visit them. Within these gardens lie dedications to exceptionally brave individuals who had the courage to stand up to oppression and denial of rights. They were men and women who risked their lives to make the lives of others better. On entering the Gardens of the Righteous, we may see our problems dwarfed by the scale of suffering and injustice that those in years before us have had to endure in order to help make the Europe we live in today a better and safer place. Yet these are also gardens with a difference, transcending the real and the virtual. There are physical gardens in Milan, Sarajevo and Yerevan. The gardens of Thessaloniki, Sofia and Warsaw are set in the virtual world, where those who wish to remember can do so from the comfort of their own homes, leaving messages and thoughts on the website.

Project title:

The righteous against the forms of totalitarianism

Promoter:

Comitato per la foresta dei Giusti (Italy)

Partner countries:

Poland, France, Bulgaria and Italy. Moreover, participants from Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have also taken part to certain activities.

Duration:

01/10/2009 – 30/09/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 55 000

The Web European Forest of the Righteous (W.E.Fo.R) project recognises the bravery of those men and women who stood up to Nazism and Stalinism in various forms during the early 20th century, defending human rights, tolerance, freedom and democracy in Europe. Take the example of Irena Sendler, who clandestinely assisted in the escape of around 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto, keeping their personal details in a jar buried in her garden. Despite torture at the hands of the Gestapo, she survived the war and lived until 2008. She is commemorated with a tree in the virtual Warsaw garden of W.E.Fo.R, where people who visit the website can post a message or comment related to her work.

Testimonials



“ European funding to the WEFOR project has enabled us to accomplish the main goal of our project: the creation of the Gardens of the Righteous for all genocides and crimes against humanity everywhere.

We provided WEFOR users with the opportunity to become actively aware of our common belonging to a history deeply related to European identity, based on the founding values of the defence of human rights, freedom and democracy.

We used the Web to create a powerful tool enabling the younger generations interested in learning about their History to communicate with the elderly who are aware of the importance of passing on their experience. This contributes to the collective construction of a memory that shows the road to be travelled to avoid the mistakes of the past.

This tool has enabled me to explore the world of the Righteous and show them to my pupils as positive role models. I am happy about taking part in a project with such a European breadth.”

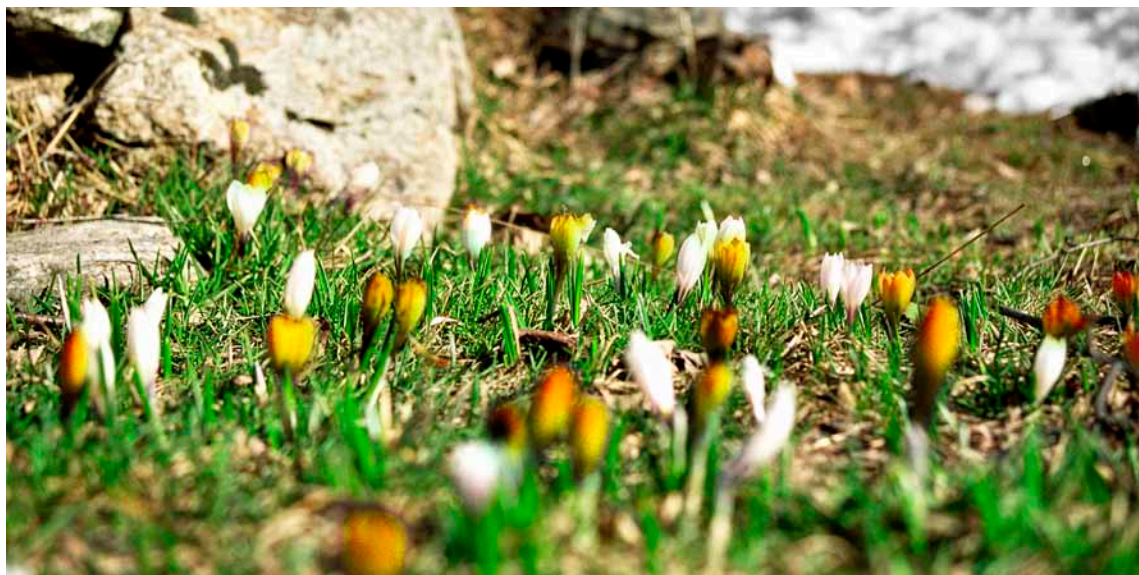
Impact

The legacy of the project is the combination of virtual and real gardens, so no matter where those affected may be in the world, there is a place for them to share their thoughts or simply remember the hardships faced by so many people during times of totalitarianism and repression. These initiatives ensure the continued memory of the righteous, who have contributed in no small way to making Europe a better place. The originality of this project and the attractive website ensured a wide impact throughout Europe.



THE CROCUS, A FLOWER OF LIGHT AND HOPE

Acts of remembrance to educate the young



Around Europe and the world, as the arrival of spring heralds new life, new beginnings and new opportunities, the crocus blooms. The explosion of yellow instantly brightens up the garden which has been starved of colour throughout the winter. At this time we not only look forward to the brighter days, but we also remember the bleak and seemingly never-ending dreariness of the previous season. What better imagery to use to commemorate one of the darkest moments in the history of Europe? One and a half million Jewish children, wearing a yellow star to mark their race, died during the Holocaust. The colour of this star is reflected in the crocus, which in Ireland flowers at the end of January, coinciding with international Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Crocus Project preserves the memory of the victims of the Holocaust, inviting school pupils of the age of 11 to 18 to plant bulbs during the autumn. When the flowers bloom, the same pupils explain what they represent to those who come to admire them, thus learning in a tangible way about the horrific events that occurred 70 years ago. This not only serves as a memory of the victims, but also as a way to raise awareness about prejudices, bigotry and the effects they can have. Learning such lessons at a young age can be instrumental in the development and outlook of these pupils as they mature into young adults. They are also in the early spring of their lives, and as they grow, they can remember the flowering of the crocus and how it helped teach them that not everyone had the opportunity to grow up.

Project title:

The Crocus Project

Promoter:

HETI - Holocaust Education Trust (Ireland)

Partner countries:

Poland, United Kingdom, Malta, Croatia

Duration:

01/10/2009 – 30/05/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 24 021

Testimonials



Under the Europe for Citizens Programme, it was essential to find partner organisations. This has been invaluable for HETI and we have gained immensely from forging new links and fostering new relationships with EU citizens and partner organisations. As a small organisation, we are mindful of the support which we received under the Europe for Citizens Programme to develop this project in a way that would not have been possible otherwise.

Croatia has greatly benefited from this project because a lot of schools from The Crocus Project have visited our museum and taken part in our educational workshops.

The Crocus Project is of great importance to local communities, particularly in small towns in Poland where the school is at the heart of everyday life.



Impact

This project originated in Ireland in 2005, conceived by the Holocaust Education Trust Ireland (HETI), and has since spread across Europe. In January 2012, the Irish President, Michael D Higgins, presented the keynote address at the National Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration in Dublin. Audience members included students who took part in the Crocus Project, as well as a group of 4 survivors of the Holocaust. His message highlighted the importance of continuing to educate young people about the past and he quoted the philosopher and writer George Santanya 'He who does not learn from history, is doomed to repeat it.' The impact this project has on those who take part is to ensure the continuing memory of Holocaust victims from one generation to the next. The Crocus project is, in short, a concrete way to learn from history.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Young Europeans from ex-communist countries experiment life behind the Iron Curtain



Born and raised in a Europe where the freedoms of opinion, movement and expression are as natural as breathing, today's youth sometimes finds it difficult to imagine what it means to live under a totalitarian regime. In May and June 2010, students from Prague, Bratislava, Budapest, Krakow and Berlin were "teleported" from democracy to totalitarianism. The project "Futurama" offered the young participants a taste of the life people had in their countries around thirty years ago.

The students were familiarised with the atmosphere of the time through film screenings and an exhibition. The films were part of the "Wonderful Years without the Curtain" series and included 32 portraits of people who at the birth of democracy stood on the threshold of adulthood. This way the youngsters discovered what it was like to be a student during a time of repression. The documentaries were followed by captivating discussions about the controversial moments of the previous regimes. The central part of the project was the "Totalitarian Times in a Nutshell" interactive game, in which the students themselves went back in time and faced the decisions their parents may have had to face. They could pick a role out of five available ones: students, potential emigrants, artists, scientists and secret police agents. In their new persona, they walked through seven rounds simulating situations common under totalitarian regimes, such as dealing with the secret police, participating in organized forms of leisure, experiencing limited freedom of expression and movement, enduring a shortage of goods or undergoing constant pressure to adapt to the value system of the official political doctrine. The students experienced hands-on what it meant to be a dissident, an accomplice to an undercover agent or an emigrant.

The project fostered action, debate and reflection on European citizenship and democracy, shared values, history and culture and it allowed youngsters to gain a special kind of insight into a historical period that has had a profound impact on what Europe is today.

Project title:

Futurama

Promoter:

OPONA o.p.s. (Czech Republic)

Partner countries:

participants from Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia

Duration:

01/10/2009 – 30/09/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 44 500

Testimonials



“ We had an opportunity to observe how necessary is to transmit the historical knowledge to young people in an interesting and original way.

Young participants found out that the life of their parents and grandparents was not at all easy and that the choices and way people were living in those times cannot be subject to easy assessment.

The Futurama project was very inspiring for us. It was a pleasure to see people of different age and sometimes also nationality playing together in a modern history game that is completely different to how is history taught in schools today.

The core of FUTURAMA, the COM-COM game was great. There were no right and wrong results which was also very good because no one had to be ashamed. ”

Impact

The hands-on nature and international character of FUTURAMA contribute to making this a truly special project. It enabled a comparison between the recent past and the present of teenagers in five former communist countries, now members of the European Union. The project involved more than 800 students, aged 15 to 17, through an innovative multidisciplinary approach – film, exhibition, interactive workshop. The method and tools developed for the programme are available online to serve as inspiration for future educational school activities.



“- WHO ARE YOU? - I AM MY OWN STORY....”

Holocaust survivors share their experiences
with the younger generations



Soft piano notes were the background on which Lithuanian survivors of the Holocaust recounted moving stories of destiny and tales of kindness and humanity. The project “SHARE: Sense of our History Activates Responsibility of Europeans” brought these stories to life through Playback Theatre – a unique form of collaboration between performers and audience. Members of the audience tell stories from their lives, choose actors to play the different roles and watch as their stories are immediately recreated, being given artistic shape and coherence.

Project title:

**Sense of our history activates
responsibility of Europeans**

Promoter:

SAVES Pazinimo ir realizavimo studija
(Lithuania)

Duration:

15/10/2009 – 14/10/2010

Funding from Europe for Citizens Programme:

€ 16 194.54

A series of cultural events scattered over a period of six months warmed up the winter of 2009 and spring of 2010. The city of Vilnius and the historical town of Telšiai, where the Jewish Ghetto was established during the Second World War, provided the settings for theatrical performances, emotional autobiographic narrations, group workshops and film screenings. They brought together victims of Nazi persecution and young students from Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Italy, Latvia, Belgium, France, Romania, Spain and Turkey. It was a meaningful and edifying experience for all those involved, fostering dialogue between generations and promoting tolerance and intercultural communication. For the elderly it was very important to feel they are significant members of society, who can take active part in promoting the common human values for younger generation. The youngsters were impressed by the strength of character and positive attitudes of the survivors that got through the horrors of Nazism. This rich and stimulating exchange shaped a sense of belonging to a community of aware and responsible Europeans.

Testimonials

“The Europe for Citizens Programme attracted our attention by its intention to help people to keep memories alive and to share experiences and stories. Playback theatre fosters the possibility to share between young and old, women and men, ordinary people and state representatives... The European funding allowed implementing the foreseen project widely, reaching results of commemorating the history related to the Jew-baiting in Lithuania. Sharing experiences of ghetto survivors to European students and youth through the specific drama art completed our idea and motto: “Forgetting history forces to repeat it”.

Arriving to the project event I prepared myself to talk for students, who will be bored by listening to me. Though, I was pleasantly surprised to find a warm atmosphere of Playback theatre and an audience eager to listen (Holocaust survivor)

I have been interested in the Europe history, but I have never met a Holocaust survivor before. I am grateful for the authenticity and real emotions I have experienced in the project event.



Impact

The strong involvement of the local community turned the project into an unforgettable experience. Playback Theatre provided a unique opportunity to tune into the experience of others and feel connected to their stories. The project has collected the shared tales and experiences into a multi-media gallery available online. Texts, photos and videos serve as a reminder of what can be achieved through creativity and communication and as inspiration for others who are seeking to honour the lessons of the past.



The citizen's effect

25 features about the Europe for Citizens programme

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