



Education and Culture DG

“Europe for Citizens” Programme



ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP Golden Stars Awards 2009

The brochure of the awarded projects
Town Twinning, Civil Society and Remembrance Projects

Europe for citizens Forum – Participation through volunteering – 16 December 2009

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Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009

ISBN 978-92-79-14401-1

DOI 10.2766/60800

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PRINTED ON WHITE CHLORINE-FREE PAPER

Foreword

People are at the heart of the European project and it is only with the full involvement of citizens that progress in European integration can move forward. The future of Europe is linked to their participation.

A healthy democratic system is one where citizens not only exercise their right to vote but express their commitment to the common good through involvement in community life, political life and in the economic and social spheres. This is particularly challenging at European level because of the distance from citizens and the complexity of the Institutions, not to mention the sheer scale of the challenge in mobilising nearly 500 million people.

Opportunities for participation still need to be further developed. The low turnout for the recent European Parliament elections and the far from smooth ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty in some Member States have shown this need in a clear way and the economic crisis further underscores it. During difficult times everybody can understand the significance of mutual trust and solidarity. And they are constructed through active participation and social engagement.

The new Treaty will give European citizens, their organisations and associations a stronger, more direct and more systematic involvement in the democratic life of the EU. For the first time, citizens will have the opportunity to come together and act as a partner alongside the Institutions and invite the Commission to make a proposal where they consider a legal act of the Union is required. This is all the more important as the new generation of Europeans born after the fall of the Iron Curtain is entering into public life of the European Union.

The “Europe for Citizens” Programme, which supplied the funding for the projects presented in this brochure, provides a concrete answer to the challenge of responding to citizens’ desire to be actively engaged in the exciting undertaking of constructing an ever closer Europe. The programme offers possibilities for civil society organizations of various sizes and types, including local authorities, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, schools and museums, to hold events directly involving citizens, form partnerships, implement projects, organise debates and reflect on Europe’s past and future.

The projects in this brochure testify to the strong potential of civil society to engage European citizens and reinforce participatory democracy and a stronger sense of shared identity and belonging together in the European Union. Voluntary engagement of citizens played an essential role in most of the projects selected for the Golden Stars Award this year. Such engagement is one of the most important elements of active citizenship, solidarity and cohesion at local, national and European level.

By awarding the projects presented in this brochure we are celebrating the crucial role of active citizenship for Europe and its future. I would therefore like to extend my warmest congratulations to the winners of the 2009 Golden Stars Award for furthering the cause of active European citizenship.



Odile Quintin
Director General,
Directorate General for
Education and Culture

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'O. Quintin', located at the bottom left of the page.

Golden Stars Award 2009

The European Commission awards the Golden Stars in order to give a special recognition to projects which have been particularly successful in the field of Active European Citizenship. The selected projects encourage and inspire other organisations and European citizens to engage and to develop similarly interesting projects in the future.

The selection of the winners

The European Commission evaluated a considerable sample of high quality projects funded by the Europe for Citizens programme in 2008. These projects represent the main actions and measures of the Europe for Citizens Programme. The evaluators analysed the projects, taking into account the permanent and annual priorities of the Programme.

A shortlist of 14 projects that best corresponded to the priorities of the Europe for Citizens Programme was presented to a jury. The jury was composed of the following members:

- As Chair of the Jury, Mr. Staffan Nilsson, European Economic and Social Committee – President of Group III “Various interests”.
- Mr. Anton Rombouts, Member of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Mayor of Den Bosch, Netherlands.
- Mrs. Marijke Steenbergen, President of the European Volunteer Centre (CEV).

- Mr. Jeremy Smith, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR).
- Mr. Cony Reuter, President of the European Social Platform.
- Mr. Jasa Jarec, Europe for Citizens Contact Point Croatia.

The jury chose 8 projects to be given the Golden Stars Award. The result is a well-balanced selection of projects illustrating good practice for each of the actions of the Europe for Citizens Programme. All project categories are represented in the Golden Stars Awards: town twinning, civil society and remembrance projects.



The European Commission is delighted to present the winners of the Golden Stars Awards 2009:



Town Twinning Projects

- Municipality of Monza (Italy) for the citizens' meeting "The European Value of the Exchange of Experiences" with partners from the Czech Republic.
- Municipality of Hamrun (Malta) for the citizens' meeting "European Citizens United through Culture and History" with partners from IT.
- Municipality of Gyomaendröd (Hungary) for the citizens' meeting "Women's Participation in Political Life" with partners from Romania, Germany, Poland and Slovakia.
- Municipality of Rjeka (Croatia) for the thematic networking project "Emigration – Yesterday and Today" with partners from Bulgaria and Slovenia.

Civil Society projects

- Re-Life: New Tasks in an Enlarged European Union, an Italian project of the INSIEME società cooperativa sociale, with partners from Austria and Croatia.
- A citizens' Europe for all, disabled people on the move, an Irish project of the European Blind Union, with partners from Italy, Slovakia, Austria and Malta.

Remembrance Projects

- Voix Étouffées du IIIème Reich, a French project of the organisation Forum Voix Étouffées, with partners from Germany, Austria, Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic.
- Ausstellungsrealisierung – Erweiterte Dauer-ausstellung: "Ich bin als Mensch geboren und will als Mensch hier raus!" Der Geschlossene Jugendwerkhof Torgau im Erziehungssystem der DDR" ("I was born a human being and I will leave from here as a human being!" Juvenile detention centre Torgau in the education system of the former German Democratic Republic), a German project of the Initiativgruppe Geschlossener Jugendwerkhof Torgau e.V. with partners from the United Kingdom.

Municipality of Monza (Italy)

“Reflecting on and celebrating the value of European citizenship for the new generations of Europeans”

Themes

- Celebration of Europe Day (9th of May).
- Reflection on and promotion of twinning related activities for young people and women.
- Youth policy, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and promotion of female entrepreneurship.
- Mobility: work, study and community services in other European countries.
- Promotion of cultural heritage and traditions of the twinned municipalities.

Geography

The meeting was organised by the municipality of Monza (Italy) and involved as partner the city district Prague 1 of the city of Prague (the Czech Republic).

Activities

This town twinning meeting aimed at establishing a permanent stream of activities between the municipalities which recently entered into the twinning partnership. The activities focused on involving young people in the town twinning programme through exchanges, meetings and seminars thus encouraging mobility in Europe and highlighting the significance of European citizenship for the young generation of Europeans. The meeting also addressed the issue of female entrepreneurship in particular and equal opportunities in general. The event began with a festive celebration of Europe Day with participation of citizens from the host and the invited town as well as senior politicians including the Czech Deputy Minister of Informatics.





During the town twinning meeting several volunteers who participated in the European Voluntary Service scheme presented their experience. Volunteering associations from both municipalities contributed significantly to the organisation of the meeting.

Participants/Audience

Over 3,000 people participated in the town twinning meeting. Such a large involvement of citizens from the host town was a tangible expression of the interest and commitment of the citizens, political, educational and business representatives and institutions of both towns to the further development of this twinning partnership.

Duration

The meeting took place between 9–12 May 2009 in the town of Monza.

Results

Strong relationships between the educational and business institutions as well as between the civil society organisations from the two twinned municipalities were established. This town twinning meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on and make concrete plans for future structured cooperation between the two municipalities.

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Local Government of Gyomaendrőd (Hungary)

“Women’s Participation in Political Life”

Themes

- Equal opportunities and participation of women in political life at the local and European level.
- Reflection on the future direction of the twinning partnerships.
- Intercultural dialogue and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Geography

The meeting was organised by the municipality of Gyomaendrőd (Hungary) and involved partner towns from Romania, Germany, Poland and Slovakia.

Activities

The main focus of this town twinning meeting was women’s participation in political life. This topic was chosen as there are many women representatives active in the public life of the twinned towns. A conference which provided an opportunity to share experiences and exchange ideas on how to overcome possible obstacles women face in their political career was held.

A rich cultural programme was also organised offering the participants a chance to learn about their respective cultural traditions and to celebrate the cultural diversity which is characteristic of Europe.



The conference on the participation of women in political life involved representatives of voluntary organisations such as the Hungarian Red Cross. The speakers reflected on the important role women play in the area of volunteering.

Participants/Audiences

Around 100 citizens participated in the conference from the host and invited towns. The festival was attended by a large number of local inhabitants including teachers, art groups, local politicians and youth.

Duration

The meeting took place from 30 April to 3 May 2009 in the town of Gyomaendrőd.

Results

This town twinning meeting helped to highlight the important subject of women's participation in democratic life. Perspectives and experiences from the local level enriched the debate and formed a good basis for future deliberations and actions in this area.

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Municipality of Hamrun (Malta)

“European Citizens United through Culture and History”

Themes

- Celebration of Europe Day (9th of May).
- Encouraging active citizenship and volunteering within the local communities.
- Intercultural dialogue and the promotion of cultural diversity.

Geography

The meeting was organised by the municipality of Hamrun (Malta) and involved the partner municipality of Carpineto Romano (Italy).

Activities

The central part of this town twinning meeting was a celebration of Europe Day. The cultural and historical links between the two municipalities were highlighted, which contributed to the strengthening of shared identity and the feeling of belonging together, not only within the two municipalities concerned but also in the wider European Union context. Events included art exhibitions, concerts and street festivals.





This town twinning meeting involved significant number of volunteer organisations. 14 volunteer associations, such as the scouts and the girl guides, various cultural associations and clubs from both towns were involved in the preparation and implementation of activities.

Participants/Audiences

In addition to 150 citizens from the invited town a large number of local residents from different walks of life including children, youth, families and senior citizens participated in the week-long activities.

Duration

The meeting took place from 5 to 12 May 2009 in the town of Hamrun.

Results

In the words of the organisers, this event helped to “overcome differences and strengthen a sense of a Europe united through solidarity and active citizenship”. The activities organised during this town twinning meeting provided an opportunity to demonstrate how common historical heritage and cultural roots can forge a strong feeling of common identity.

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Municipality of Rijeka (Croatia)

“Emigration – Yesterday and Today”

Themes

- Impact of EU policies on societies – the challenges of immigration.
- Learning about other European towns and their experiences with the integration of immigrants.

Geography

This network of twinned towns’ project was initiated and led by the municipality of Rijeka (Croatia) and involved partner municipalities of Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Bourgas (Bulgaria).

Activities

The City Department of Education and Schooling and the City Department of Culture, in cooperation with the Rijeka Youth Centre and the Rijeka City Museum organised a debate tournament on immigration in today’s Europe. The event included thematic lectures and a visit to the City Museum exhibition on emigration from central Europe to America in the period 1880-1915 as well as team-building games, entertainment programmes and a reception at City Hall.





The organisers stressed that, although the memories of the previous generations of emigrants had faded away, “new migrations of the modern world are a reminder of the constant problem of running away from the ancestral home and homeland”. The issue was put into a historical context of mass emigration from Europe to the United States in the period from 1815 to 1930 when over 50 million Europeans left their homes. Almost 5 million came from central Europe (the territory of Austria-Hungary), representing the fourth largest source of emigration after Great Britain (11.4 million), Italy (9.9 million) and Ireland (7.3 million).

Participants/Audiences

The project gathered participants from the high schools from the twinned towns and participants from the host town.

Duration

This was a networking project which culminated in an event held in the project’s lead town of Rijeka from 11 to 15 May 2009.

Results

This project brought together young people from different European towns and gave them an opportunity to learn from history and to reflect on the current and future challenges faced by the European Union. All the participants played an active role in the project and were able to contribute their own perspective as young European citizens. A network was created and a Facebook group has been started to ensure an ongoing link between the project participants.

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INSIEME società cooperativa sociale

“Re-Life: New Tasks in an Enlarged European Union”

Themes

- Environmental sustainability
- Participation and well being
- Sustainable life styles

Geography

This project was initiated and coordinated by an Italian organisation and involved partner organisations from Austria and Croatia.

Activities

The main focus of this project was to offer European citizens from different generations and walks of life an opportunity to reflect, discuss and debate on the lifestyles which facilitate social cohesion, sustainable development and

respect for the environment. The project especially addressed the local level through four local workshops. A European conference was organised at the end of the project to disseminate the results of the activities and to discuss experiences and best practices.

Participants/Audience

Around 500 people were directly involved in the activities of the project and around 6,000 were indirectly targeted by the project through the brochures published by the project organisers and website developed in course of the project.





Duration

The project was implemented from 1 October 2008 to 31 July 2009.

Results

This project brought environmental and sustainability issues into public discourse and promoted an exchange of experiences, best practices and policies at the European level. It encouraged networking between local civil society organisations interested in sustainability and environmental issues at the European level.

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European Blind Union

“A citizens’ Europe for all, disabled people on the move”

Themes

- Social inclusion of people with disabilities
- Equal treatment

Geography

This project was initiated by the Irish member organisation of the European Blind Union (EBU) and involved members from Italy, Slovakia, Austria and Malta.

Activities

The peak of this project was the conference “A citizens’ Europe for All, Disabled People on the Move” held in Dublin from 15 to 17 May 2009. The conference addressed citizenship from the perspective of equal treatment and non discrimination, especially with regard to blind and partially sighted people. The conference resulted in the adoption of the EBU Dublin Declaration aimed at raising European Union decision makers’ awareness of the aspirations





and needs of persons with visual impairment. The Declaration was drafted, in particular, to address the newly-elected European Parliament and newly appointed European Commission.

Participants/Audience

Participants to the conference came from across Europe including Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Poland, Sweden, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Duration

The project was implemented from 1 October 2008 to 31 July 2009.

Results

A new website (www.inclusiveeurope.eu) has been developed. The main aim of the website is to provide accessible information to the visually impaired. Concrete policy proposals were made and they are now being followed up by members of the network at national and European level. In general, this project provided an opportunity for European citizens to raise their concerns on a very important issue and to engage in dialogue with representatives of the European Union institutions.

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Forum Voix Étouffées

“Voix Étouffées du IIIème Reich” (Silenced Voices of the 3rd Reich)

Themes

- Holocaust remembrance through music

Geography

The project was initiated and coordinated by the French organisation “Forum Voix Étouffées” and involved partners from Germany, Austria, Romania, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Activities

The activities of the project contributed to commemorating and raising awareness about composers that were victims of the Nazi regime and their lost music in order to highlight the negative consequences of the Holocaust and Nazi propaganda in the field of culture. There were concerts, pedagogical activities, information campaigns, roundtables and workshops.

The main objective of the project was to rehabilitate the music and memory of composers who were persecuted by the Nazi regime and to present the historical context that led to their disappearance or persecution.

Participants/Audience

The main target of the project was youth in general and young students in different levels of musical training as well as those enrolled in regular schools. Around 1,000 students took part in various pedagogical activities. Around 5,000 people attended the concerts performed during the duration of the project.





Duration

The project was implemented from 1 October 2008 to 30 July 2009.

Results

A follow up project for 2009/2010 has already been planned. New events including concerts and conferences are foreseen in Poland and in Lithuania in 2010. By highlighting the destructive character of Nazi cultural policies, the project encouraged Europe-wide reflection on common values, especially respect for diversity and universal human rights.

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Initiativgruppe Geschlossener Jugendwerkhof Torgau e. V.

Ausstellungsrealisierung – Erweiterte Dauerausstellung: “Ich bin als Mensch geboren und will als Mensch hier raus!” Der Geschlossene Jugendwerkhof Torgau im Erziehungssystem der DDR (“I was born a human being and will leave here as a human being!” Juvenile detention centre Torgau in the education system of the former German Democratic Republic)

Themes

- The repressive system of re-education and political indoctrination in the former GDR
- Young victims of political persecution and repression by a neo-Stalinist regime
- Human rights and civil liberties

Geography

This project primarily involved German organisations with some involvement of partner organisations from the UK. However, given its location in the eastern flank of Germany there is a high potential for impact in the wider region, including the neighbouring countries of Poland and the Czech Republic.

Activities

The project contributed to the development of a permanent exhibition in a former juvenile detention centre which is in Torgau in the former German Democratic Republic. Over 4,000 young people passed through the centre between 1964 and 1989 to be “re-educated”. They had not committed any criminal offence nor did a legal warrant for their detention exist. Strict discipline and rigidly planned daily routines were enforced leading to unbearable mental pressure. As a result the youths detained in the centre for up to six months would try to escape or inflict injuries on themselves to the extent of committing suicide to get away.





Many of those who passed through the centre suffer post-traumatic syndrome and face difficulties in daily life, including various kinds of phobias and disorders that prevent them from enjoying fulfilling professional and private lives.

After 1989, the “Initiativgruppe Geschlossener Jugendwerkhof Torgau” founded a venue for remembrance in the former detention centre to capture and protect this important part of the history of not only the former German Democratic Republic but of Europe as a whole.

Participants/Audiences

Around 5,000 visitors pass through the memorial each year. There is also an important outreach through the website established by the organisers.

Duration

The project was implemented from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2009.

Results

A permanent exhibition has been created to bear witness to the methods used by dictatorial regimes in one of the former “Eastern Bloc countries” against their own population and especially the most vulnerable: the young. The exhibition uses modern means such as multimedia presentations including photographs, documents and audiovisual materials to allow the visitors to learn about both the facts and the emotions behind this particular aspect of Europe’s history.

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Active European Citizenship: Golden Stars Award 2009

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2008 — 24 pp. — 21.0 × 29.7 cm

ISBN 978-92-79-14401-1

DOI 10.2766/60800

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Education and Culture DG

“Europe for Citizens” Programme

DOI 10.2766/60800

NC-80-09-132-EN-C

<http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship>



Publications Office

Publications.europa.eu

ISBN 978-92-79-14401-1



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