

## The project «Citizens' Forums for United Europe» was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

### Strand 2 – Democratic engagement and civic participation Measure 2.3 "Civil Society Projects"

*8-10 September 2020*

#### *Preparatory activity in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria*

On the 9th of September 2020, in Stara Zagora Bulgaria was held the first meeting of the project consortium. Due to the lasting pandemic situation, the event was hybrid, most of the partners were present onsite, but there were some who were online. A total of 12 participants were involved in the meeting.

The meeting was strictly dedicated to project management and activities planning. The discussions were on the following topics:

- Update following COVID-19 outbreak
- Partnership Agreement
- Planning of activities
- Project prolongation
- Other pressing matters



**A total of 16 events were held during the project implementation phase**

**9 May 2021**

***Regional event in Valladolid, Spain***

Alpha Centre performed several activities, as exposition on the Robert Schuman declaration, freeze mob with secondary and university students, and Active Citizens for United Europe sport local championship. More than 50 citizens from 10 to 70 years old visited the exposition and enjoyed the Europe's Day celebration.

In the forum on the project topic took part 34 participants from Spain, who debated on the demographic and social challenges and drafted some recommendations to share the youth point of view on the possible solutions and measures the EC could undertake.



25 June 2021

### Local event in Laguna de Duero, Spain

Alpha Centre celebrated 2nd local event in the frame of the eUnited project in June 2021. 29 Spanish citizens from all ages gathered in Laguna de Duero (Spain) to discuss the demographic and social challenges in the region and reflect on what the EU means for them.

The event was focused on gathering mainly rural people and elderly citizens, so to collect their point of view on the topic of demography and society, and the challenges that Europe faces.

Each one wrote some recommendations and posted on the eUnited wall. Additionally, the participants explored the Citizens' App of the European Commission and took a Quiz to learn more about the European Union.



**2-4 September 2021**

***International event in Madrid, Spain***

Alpha Centre welcomed international guests to the Citizens' Forum on European demography, society and culture. The event was celebrated on 3rd September 2021 in Madrid, Spain with 20 international participants from the 6 partner countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain), mainly social workers.

The international Forum was supported by the Ministry of Culture, Spain, with the online participation of the European Citizenship Point in Spain. Findings from the research on the effects of the demographic change in the EU societies were presented by all eUnited partners, highlighting its specific country demography, society and culture.

Artistic performance from Spain demonstrated the folklore and especially the gaita in a multicultural perspective.

Additionally, coordination meeting of the partners took place after the Forum's celebration, and team building activity completed the international event.

Special poster was printed for the event's promotion, and T-shirts were produced to be delivered to all participants. The Representation Office of the European Commission in Spain delivered some pens, pins and other materials to the participants.

Alpha Centre counted on collaboration of the Community of Madrid, NGOs from the region and Hostal Persal, providing the hall for celebration of the activity.



**24 September 2021**

**Local event in Schönbrunn, Germany**

Already in September 2021, an event on the topic of digitalisation was held at the Regelschule Schönbrunn in Thuringia. 30 German students from the region took part in the event. Various aspects of digitalisation were presented at the event. (Individual teacher preferences often decide on the use of media; Differences between subjects (especially science classrooms are better equipped); In the schools - Good basic digital basic equipment, but partly outdated or not usable; The schools are sensitised to digital content would like to see more integration in the classroom). To start with, the term and the meaning of digitalisation were explained and presented. A study conducted at the school on digitalisation in the education system was then evaluated. The students were able to expand their understanding of the topic and gave impulses that were taken into account at the conference in Berlin in December.



**28-30 October 2021**

***International event in Sassari, Italy***

The international event in Italy was held on the island of Sardinia in Sassari. It involved 28 participants from 6 countries - Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and UK. The main topics of the event was on Better EU Communication.

The objective was to summarise the progress made in the 6 Member States (Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Germany, Spain and Italy) on the White Paper on the Future of Europe, launched by the EC in 2017, to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in the local/regional policies and develop suggestions for the final Citizens 'Europe e-Paper, focusing on the opportunities for better EU future, suggested by citizens during the event.



**2-4 December 2021**

***International event in Berlin, Germany***

As part of the EUnited project series, a citizens' forum was organised in the German capital Berlin from 02.12.2021 to 04.12.2021 to bring the local population into exchange with Europeans. The project was organised by the non-profit association BIDA Kultur und Bildung e.V., which has its headquarters in the Thuringian city of Suhl. 33 participants from 7 countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and UK) were involved in the event.

The Citizens' Forum was opened in the conference room "Alexanderplatz" by Bistra Choleva, the chairperson of BIDA Kultur und Bildung e.V.. The forum is one of many forums in a series of projects organised throughout the EU. In addition to the international project partners, local guests from Berlin and other interested citizens from other regions of Germany were also present. After the

opening, the international project partners briefly presented their organisations and associations and their activities. The central topic of the forum was digitalisation in the European Union. The international partners presented various digitisation processes in their countries of origin. The fields of application discussed were, for example, public and municipal administration, the health system, the education system, agriculture and the economy. In the subsequent open part, the participants discussed the contents and exchanged opinions on advantages and disadvantages. The central advantages were perceived to be the increase in efficiency in administrative processes of hospitals, schools and city halls. There was a critical discussion on the topic of data protection. The citizens' forum was closed by the chairperson of the association with a few words about the rest of the day.

During the project, the international partners and the local population were able to exchange with each other. This led to an understanding on an international level, which actively and directly contributes to European understanding and integration. Individually, the participants of the conference were able to expand their expertise on digitalisation at the European level. New highlights, perspectives and suggestions for their own development were given. The language skills of the participants were also improved; communication between the participants took place to a very large extent in English.



**17-19 March 2022**

**Kozani, Greece**

In Greece, the international event took place at the LGA-WM offices on March 18, 2022, in which young people from 18-30 years old participated. A total of 136 participants were involved, both online and onsite, from 6 different countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain). The event was also broadcasted via live streaming on YouTube and thus was given the opportunity for remote participation.

The participants had the opportunity to meet and discuss topics such as: Trends and concerns in European public opinion regarding security challenges in Europe, necessary resources to effectively prevent and counter asymmetric threats, public awareness of European security and defence policies and migration management, social cohesion and solidarity between EU member states. After the event, a case study at a migration office was carried out, in order to present the work done at regional level in the security area, including cybercrime. During this activity, the participants had the opportunity to interact with the asylum seekers who are accommodated, to tour the offices of the migration office and to discuss with the employees both the difficulties faced by the asylum seekers and their daily life in the Structure. All the participants received souvenir gifts (local products from the wider area) on behalf of LGA-WM and after their visit, they received a certificate of attendance.





**5-7 May 2022**

***International event in Warsaw, Poland***

The event was organized in the form of workshops, presentations and discussions for an international group – 105 participants from Poland, Germany, Bulgaria, Italy, Greece and Spain (various ages: 18-55 years).

The main theme of the project was the future of the European Union, including the challenges it will face in the nearest future and how it can become more competitive. The aim was to increase the participants' knowledge and awareness of the challenges in the modern Europe and to develop a common perspective and possible solutions. An important element was to learn about the different points of view and differences in the approach of representatives of hosted countries.

The first part of the meeting was devoted primarily to the introduction and integration of participants, sharing their motivations, interests and expectations regarding the course and results of the meeting in Warsaw.

The meeting was an opportunity to talk together about the current situation in Europe and the challenges it faces. We talked about safety, activities in the field of environmental protection, migration issues and local government issues.

Before coming to Warsaw, the participants were asked to prepare short presentations in which, based on the example of their countries and perspectives, they could address the issue of challenges in Europe. As part of the workshops, the participants presented what they had managed to achieve, and then developed methods of problem solving and a creative approach to challenges in Europe.

On the second day of the meeting, the participants took part in educational activities in the „European Town” during the celebration of Europe Day in Łazienki Królewskie Park in Warsaw. There were, among others, present in the Miasteczko representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament as well as experts from other social organizations with whom the participants held individual talks.

The meeting ended with a joint summary in the form of a workshop, discussion and sharing of personal impressions and feelings. Evaluation of individual parts of the program was also carried out with the participants.



**10 June 2022**

***Regional event in Suhl, Germany***

On 10.06.2022 BIDA e. V. celebrated the 2nd regional event "Citizens' Forum on European Digitalisation" in the frame of the EUnited project, Programme Europe for Citizens. 20 representatives from the social institutions from Suhl, Zella- Mehlis and Hildburghausen (Jugendschmiede Jugendzentrum, TIBOR, wbm, Internationaler Bund, Hildburghäuser Bildungszentrum, unofficial.pictures e.V, Volkshochschule und Stadtjugendring) discussed about the current digital challenges for the citizens in Europe and reflected on what the EU means for them. During the meeting were presented the recommendations of the young people from the region, who participated in the first local and regional event in October 2021 and the results of the conferences and seminars in all partner countries.



**27 April 2022**

***Regional event in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria***

SZREDA team has organised the first local event in the scope of the eUnited project. 33 Bulgarian students discussed on the importance of the democracy as a key pillar for sustainable societies.

During the event, was drawn the importance of the rule of law and the active citizenship. A special panel was dedicated on the European institution and the process of decision-making. They were involved in the work of the European Parliament, its constitution (political groups, parliamentary committees, etc.) and, mainly, its powers in terms of decisions and protection of civil rights and citizens in the European Union.



**27-28 April 2022**

***Regional event in Sassari, Italy***

The event was held in Sassari and involved a total of 25 participants from 5 different countries (Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, Spain and Turkey).

The activity started with a detailed presentation on the project and touching on the important points of it. The session was then continued with another activity, where participants were divided into groups of 4 people and asked to search for hate speech on social networks and reflect on why they

chose them, why they are discriminatory comments, and how to respond, also on the basis of the notions learned during the workshop.



**19 May 2022**

***Local event in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria***

SZREDA has organised a second local event in Stara Zagora involving young people from different backgrounds. This one attracted 60 participants. The discussions were on the topic of digitalisation and the digital reform that is part of our daily activities.

The city of Stara Zagora has been trying to become a digital hub in Bulgaria, where through education investments will be attracted for starting innovative companies in the IT sector. There is a clear will from local community and stakeholders to develop an ecosystem giving young people the opportunity to stay in Stara Zagora and to start a specialised education as early as high school and continue to the local Trakia University to obtain a Bachelor degree. This creates opportunities for young people to follow a career path in the IT sector. At the same time, it is an opportunity to keep young people in the area and to even attract others from different parts of the country.



**15-16 June 2022**

***Local event in Sassari, Italy***

The activity took place in Sassari, Italy, involving a total of 26 participants from 3 different countries (Bulgaria, Italy and Romania).

In the first session of this event the trainer gave a detailed introduction to the project and opened the discussion on the topics that should touch during this event. Then continued with forums, debates and discussions on several different topics. The topics covered during this event were: Competitive Europe in Poland, Migration & Security in Greece, Demography and Society in Spain, EU Communication in Italy, Digitalization in Germany, Climate Change & Environment in Bulgaria.



**30 June-2 July 2022**

***International event in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria***

On the first day of July, SZREDA has organised the final international event of the eUnited project – the Final Conference on Climate Change and Environment. It involved 73 participants from 6 countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Spain). A pool of interesting speakers from the Ministry of Environment and Waters, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and WWF Bulgaria.

During the workshop of the Final Conference on 01/07/2022 youth participants has agreed that there is potential solution on 3 different levels and have suggested as follows:

On worldwide level

- Invest in Hydrogen based energy sources and infrastructure
- Limiting single-use plastic and replace with alternative resources

- Limiting trade with environment harmful countries, through higher taxes or installing quotas
- Creating a network of ecological schools in all countries across the globe, adapted to all age groups of the population

#### On EU level

- EU to have exclusive competences in the field of environmental policies
- Investment in train network across EU through GHG emissions quota paid by commercial and cargo airlines (including by private jet owners)
- One-day Second-hand share market across Europe
- EU wide network of recycling machines for plastic and glass bottles

#### On regional level

- Promoting short supply chains, local products and urban agriculture
- Integration of public composters along with separate waste collection
- Alert system for local climate anomalies (such as air pollution, floods, etc.)
- Promoting local initiative for recycling, such as “Trash for books”





**10 July 2022**

***Local event in Sassari, Italy***

The event took place in Sassari, Italy, involving a total of 15 participants from 4 different countries (Estonia, Italy, Romania and Slovakia).

The event started with a detailed presentation on the project which was accompanied by a conversation between the participants and the facilitator, and many times the facilitator opened a discussion on issues that were important. Participants worked in groups by brainstorming on EU citizens' involvement and then the facilitator opened the discussion on these issues.

At the end of the day the evaluation was done and from the feedback received from the participants it turned out that they liked the activities and had gained important knowledge and skills for them.



**27 July 2022**

***Local event in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria***

The final event of the project eUnited was held in Stara Zagora. It involved 15 Bulgarian participants, and the main topic of discussion was climate change and youth involvement.

As a focal point of discussion were taken the conclusions and suggestions drawn in the final international event – the Conference in Bulgaria on 1<sup>st</sup> of July. A special attention was drawn on different tools that could be used by young people to share their opinion and to seek likeminded people among their peers. The most largely known initiatives on EU level have been promoted, including the European Solidarity Corps among others.

Some of the young people shared their ideas on how they could change the narrative. Some of the suggestions were for a guided training on the importance of water, an independent pool of young climate journalists, etc.

