



Education and Culture

'Europe for Citizens' programme



# ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP GOLDEN STARS AWARDS 2007

The book of prize-winning projects  
in town twinning and civil society

Europe for Citizens Forum — Together for intercultural dialogue  
Brussels, 8 November 2007



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## The Golden Stars awards

The 'Europe for citizens' programme promotes active European citizenship. It addresses local authorities, civil society organisations and other stakeholders who are ready to develop activities to provide citizens with opportunities to help construct Europe together.

The Golden Stars award is the annual recognition of projects which have been particularly successful and which therefore can provide good examples and a source of inspiration to others.

## How the selection was made

The projects were selected by a jury made up of members of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee plus experts from the field. The jury considered the overall quality of the projects and how they match with the priorities of the 'Europe for citizens' programme, in particular the most topical issues such as intercultural dialogue, new forms of citizen participation and equal opportunities.

The jury also wanted the selection to reflect the diversity of projects and activities in the field and to include good examples of both the 9 May celebrations and the so-called 'cross-fertilisation' between the different actions of the programme.

## And the winners of 2007 are

### Civil society projects

- **European Forum – Learning in immigration societies: for human rights-oriented democracy in Europe** (Netzwerk Migration Europa, Germany)
- **How to become an active European citizen** (Centrum pro komunitni praci stredni Morava, Czech Republic)
- **Communicating EU values across Greece** (Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, Greece)
- **The Baltic adventure! Youth travelling on the roads of enlargement** (Europahuset Gävleborg, Sweden)
- **Overcoming irritations and prejudices between people of different cultures, religions and convictions in the EU enlargement process** (United Religions Initiative Europe AISBL, Germany)

### Town twinning projects

- **Conservation of energy and natural resources** (town of Nether Kellet, United Kingdom)
- **Enfants du pays, parents de l'Europe – une même citoyenneté malgré la diversité des origines** (town of Le Coudray St Germer, France)
- **Citizens together – Without borders** (town of Tekovské Lužany, Slovakia)
- **Europe Week** (town of Hennef, Germany)
- **The Days of Europe 2006 – Solidarity in Europe, hundreds of ideas, thousands of friendships** (town of Wągrowiec, Poland)

# Golden Stars winners: active citizenship for intercultural dialogue



Both now and in the years ahead, the European Union must take on one of the major social and political challenges facing us at home and in the world – the need to develop and nurture intercultural dialogue to help resolve the tensions that can result from differences or frictions between cultures. The European Commission is responding by encouraging ongoing dialogue between peoples and cultures in different EU countries. This is why the 'Europe for citizens' programme supports civil society and the town twinning movement over a huge range of projects that trade ideas and experiences, stretching out hands of friendship across borders. Participants in the projects not only feel that they get to know and understand each other better, they also gain a sense of creating a larger European family based on common values such as tolerance, equal opportunities and democratic dialogue. These are the fundamental principles behind the 10 projects awarded Golden Stars of active European citizenship for 2007.

The projects show how important and necessary it is, for all generations and nationalities, to turn the spotlight on Europe, on our collective achievements and on our common challenges. With their emphasis on dialogue, reflection and shared action, they exemplify a common consciousness grounded in European values.

The commitment of civil society organisations and local communities to construct a 'Europe of neighbours' offers a counter-argument to the criticism we sometimes hear of Europe as a technocratic, centralising undertaking. These projects bear witness to the emergence of a genuine political consciousness and a shared European identity.

By getting actively involved in the debates and reflections on the EU, Europeans of all ages develop links – links between individuals, local civil society organisations, NGOs and representatives of the EU institutions. These new bonds in turn spur people on to develop a European dimension to their civic engagement.

These 10 projects have been identified by the European Commission for their innovative nature, their enthusiasm, and especially because they provide such good examples for potential project organisers. They epitomise a Europe which inspires, unites and spreads the message of tolerance and mutual understanding.

I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to the 10 Golden Stars of European citizenship. The commitment which these projects embody will inspire many similar, successful efforts to build a 'Europe for citizens'.

**Ján Figel'**

Commissioner for Education,  
Training, Culture and Youth

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Ján Figel''. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'J' and a cursive 'Figel'.

## Intercultural dialogue in practice

The European Union is a place where different peoples and cultures intersect. In order to build a democratic Europe based on shared values, a 'public space' for getting together, debating and exchanging opinions is indispensable. This kind of public space is essential if we are to prevent and fight against discrimination of any kind wherever it still persists.

The founding fathers of the European Union based the European project on the ambition of achieving lasting peace and tolerance among Europe's nations and, indeed, Europeans now live in peace with each other and enjoy many benefits and freedoms which are the result of decades of European integration. However, we still too often hear news about tensions between communities in the same country and all too often immigration to Europe is used as a scapegoat for all the social and political problems facing Europe's societies.

The projects presented in this brochure have actively contributed to better cooperation and mutual understanding among Europeans and help to develop a common European identity uniting Europeans of different nationalities. Intercultural dialogue, which is one of the key features of many of the projects included in this brochure, has proved its considerable potential to foster the feeling of being European among the participants in the projects and consequently among Europe's citizens.

The following projects have been successful in a different way in mobilising individual Europeans around these issues.

### Civil society project

NETZWERK MIGRATION EUROPA,

'EUROPEAN FORUM – LEARNING IN IMMIGRATION SOCIETIES:  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS-ORIENTED DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE'



### Remember the past and learn from history to build a common future

#### THEMES

Historical dimension of human rights violation – forced labour, expulsion, forced migration and the Holocaust

European systems of human rights protection and the role of NGOs

Three generations of human rights and the European Human Rights Convention

Coexistence in multicultural and multi-ethnic societies



## DESCRIPTION

How to construct a truly multicultural and multi-ethnic, democratic Europe learning from its past experience? The project of Netzwerk Migration Europa put this question at the centre of reflection for young people, youth workers, school teachers and other multipliers of different nationalities. The participants in the four seminars held in Berlin, Warsaw and Prague were confronted with Europe's past through direct testimonies, visits to places of the Holocaust, the memorial of forced labour and migration, the memorial of murdered Jews, films and other information about the history of exile, expulsion and forced labour. They also discussed contemporary migration problems. An analysis of human rights legal instruments and provisions provided a link between the past and the present and possible recommendations for the future.

## METHODS AND IMPACT

Special training materials on immigration, asylum and the respective international and European human rights instruments were developed for the participants. Moreover, the various experts provided a good

balance between the theoretical and practical aspects of human rights protection.

The project ensured the dissemination of results, a multiplier effect and the possibility of developing further networking. The results of the project discussions and findings were published in a booklet about migration, asylum and human rights, *Migrants, refugees and human rights resource book*. This is addressed to NGOs, human rights practitioners and students in the field of European citizenship and will be put at the disposal of anyone interested in understanding Europe's past and learning about key legal instruments concerning migrants. As a result, the 'European Forum — Learning in immigration societies: for human rights-oriented democracy' was established to continue to exchange ideas on these very important issues.

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This project demonstrates the capacity of individual Europeans to reflect on a complex issue which concerns all Member States.



*For us, 'active European citizenship' means active participation, dialogue and exchange in social and political life in Europe, a multi-perspective approach to common European issues such as identity, migration, history and memory, and learning and acting in terms of social, economic, cultural and political equality and justice.*

## Netzwerk Migration Europa project

The establishment of the European Forum enabled the creation of a knowledge base to help give the general public a better understanding of issues relating to exile and immigration. Each of the project participants became an ambassador of tolerance in his or her native country.

The project of the United Religions Initiative (URI) provided an opportunity for people of different faiths to meet around the same table and to discuss prejudices encountered by religious communities across Europe.

*For us, 'active European citizenship' means that people from different regions and cultural and religious traditions get to know each other and share their values and dreams of a peaceful, pluralistic Europe.*

## URI project



As in the previous case, the experience of a dialogue helped to ease the social tensions linked to differences in religious beliefs. As a result of this experience there are now new 'apostles of tolerance' in our societies.

## Civil society project

UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE EUROPE (URI),  
'OVERCOMING IRRITATIONS AND PREJUDICES  
BETWEEN PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES, RELIGIONS  
AND CONVICTIONS IN THE EU ENLARGEMENT PROCESS'



## Respecting others' convictions and religions in a multicultural Europe

### THEMES

Interfaith dialogue and best practices of interfaith work  
Prejudices between European citizens of different convictions and religions  
Mutual understanding and respect  
The European Union and its processes

### DESCRIPTION

How to deepen understanding and promote mutual respect between Europeans of different religions, convictions and beliefs? United Religions Initiative (URI) is an active network which promotes lasting interfaith cooperation and represents more than 100 religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions. This award-winning project included a European conference, where the participants were given an opportunity to share their views, expand their knowledge about other faith communities and traditions and to understand the respective historical, social and political backgrounds. The organisers ensured that countries, ages, gender and all major religious organisations, faiths and denominations, including humanists, were all well represented.

Participants therefore had an opportunity to air their fears and prejudices and to exchange best practices on interfaith dialogue. Moreover, visits to the EU institutions and meetings with EU experts gave their project a significant European dimension. It also gave them an opportunity to discuss the role of religion in Europe and to further their interests in the European Union and its processes.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

This project provided an opportunity to create new links between people from different European countries, with particular emphasis placed on bringing citizens together from the 'old' and 'new' Member States. The conference proposed different formats for interaction, such as workshops in small groups, spontaneous presentations of best practices by participants, joint reflection and also study visits and debates with experts. The key activists in inter-religious and inter-faith dialogue invited to the conference by the URI network provided a strong multiplier effect. Expansion of the URI network in Europe was also discussed at the event. A high-quality conference report was produced and later widely distributed throughout Europe and worldwide via the networks and the media.

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This project opens new horizons for intercultural dialogue. The URI network has expanded and grown stronger, and a new website has been created for the URI Europe network to provide a permanent platform for exchange of information within the network. The following project 'Citizens together – Without borders' likewise brings the urge to exchange opinions and information to the local level.

## Town twinning project

TEKOVSKÉ LUŽANY (SLOVAKIA) WITH BATASZEK (HUNGARY),  
DITRAU (ROMANIA), QUAREGNON (BELGIUM),  
NEWTON ABBOT (UNITED KINGDOM),  
BESIGHEIM (DENMARK), AY CHAMPAGNE (FRANCE),  
CONDE SUR L'ESCAUT (BELGIUM),  
KAMPEN (NETHERLANDS), 'CITIZENS TOGETHER –  
WITHOUT BORDERS'



and local citizens discussed the challenges of integrating minorities into the host societies as well as the role and position of women from minority backgrounds. The issues of racism and xenophobia are of great importance for a multicultural European society and Tekovské Lužany and Bataszek have considerable historical experience with minorities. In debates with politicians, participants shared their views, exchanged good practices and formulated recommendations for the future. They identified education as one of the keys to the integration of minorities and the empowerment of women in local societies.

The other important topic of the meeting concerned the benefits of town twinning networking. The host town Tekovské Lužany and its longstanding partner Bataszek presented their past cooperation work to the other invited towns. Both towns come from new EU Member States and therefore represent a particular town twinning tradition. All the invited towns discussed the possibility of further expanding existing partnerships. This was possible through the particular system of connections: Tekovské Lužany is twinned with Bataszek, which is twinned with the German town of Besigheim, which has a partnership with the other invited towns. All the towns present examined the outcomes of past – and opportunities for future – cooperation. It was agreed that exchanges will be organised not only between the representatives of local authorities but also with civil society.

## Bringing together the peoples of Europe

### THEMES

Fight against racism, xenophobia  
Integrating minorities  
Non-discrimination

### DESCRIPTION

How can EU citizens tackle local problems that touch upon universal European values? At this multilateral town twinning meeting organised by the municipality of Tekovské Lužany in Slovakia, representatives of the invited towns, local authorities, civil society and religious organisations



#### METHODS AND IMPACT

This multilateral exchange looked at important European issues from a local perspective while at the same time having a strong networking component. The participating towns decided to meet at least once a year and try to work more effectively on areas of common concern. Plans for inter-regional projects were established. Participants from the invited towns and local inhabitants, especially young people, were engaged through different activities: debates, meetings as well as sports and cultural activities.

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This project shows that the European Union is a living example of sharing a common history and dealing collectively with common challenges. This is especially important as many Europeans see the European Union as a distant and centralised bureaucracy. The low turnout in European elections reflects this perceived distance between local interests and the European integration process.



*We found that although we live in different parts of Europe and speak different languages, together, hand in hand, we are one big family.*

**Tekovské Lužany project**

This project is therefore an important illustration of many similar initiatives taking place at local level through which Europe becomes more real in the eyes of Europe's citizens.

## Making Europe tangible

Making Europe a more concrete concept for Europe's citizens is a significant challenge. But this challenge can be met by working together regardless of national origin and by learning about the achievements of EU policies.

The following projects provide a good example of such an approach.

On Europe Day, which is celebrated each year on 9 May, a number of debates take place in different Member States. These debates contribute to a better understanding of the idea of Europe among Europeans. This is the case, for example, with the town twinning project 'Europe Week', in which young participants had an opportunity to transform themselves into the representatives of their respective countries in order to discuss the 'chocolate directive'. The public debate which followed as well as the participation of MEPs in the debate gave these future citizens of Europe a real opportunity to gain a better grasp of the European decision-making (policy) process.





## Town twinning project

HENNEF (GERMANY) WITH BANBURY (UNITED KINGDOM),  
LE PECQ (FRANCE), NOWY DWÓR GDAŃSKY (POLAND),  
'EUROPE WEEK'



## Together to celebrate Europe

### THEMES

Enlarged EU  
Education  
Services directive  
Local economy  
Cultural diversity

### DESCRIPTION

How to make the celebration of 9 May (Europe Day) attractive and visible to a broad public at local level? The German town of Hennef joined forces with its twinned towns – Banbury (United Kingdom), Le Pecq (France) and Nowy Dwór Gdański (Poland) – to organise a colourful Europe Week, during which it was possible to see, feel, hear, debate and 'practise' the EU.

The key to its success was the mobilisation of a large number of stakeholders: local associations, schools, institutions and businesses. Thanks to this, almost 70 different events were organised during the week. Some of them addressed specific target groups, such as young people, school children or artists, and provided something for every taste.

The learning activities were designed to enhance knowledge of the European Union. A public debate on EU topics with several MEPs was

organised and attracted a large audience. Young people were able to discover the work of the European institutions through a role-playing game in which they took the role of EU decision-makers and negotiated a 'chocolate directive'.

The cultural events aimed to show and share the richness of Europe's local traditions. For example, a specially designed European musical involved 14 choirs and 350 singers of different nationalities. The libretto presented all EU Member States and was partly played in original languages. Finally, outdoor, sports-related activities promoted such values as tolerance, non-discrimination and non-violence among participants.

The Europe Week in Hennef was visible for everyone: shop and house windows were dressed with EU themes and the local media showed great interest in and provided lots of publicity for the celebrations.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

The design of the week combined a good mixture of activities focusing on European issues of interest to a broad public. The engagement of local associations and local institutions provided the necessary know-how and the potential for large-scale mobilisation. Through a carefully planned series of educational and festive activities, more than 1 200 people participated in the Europe Week and learned about the European Union and its different local cultures.

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*Współpraca, Przyjaźń i Zaangażowanie w działalność europejską, tak w skrócie możemy określić pojęcie Aktywnego Europejskiego Obywatelstwa.*

*Cooperation, friendship and engagement in European integration – three words that illustrate active European citizenship for us.*

### Project of Wągrowiec city

In a similar vein to Europe Week, the following project, 'The Days of Europe 2006', celebrated Europe Day through a series of high-profile local events.

By focusing on the issue of solidarity between cultures and individuals, this town twinning project gave more than 5 000 participants an opportunity to challenge the stereotypes linked to nationalities or disabilities.

#### Town twinning project

WĄGROWIEC (POLAND), ADENDORF (GERMANY),  
SCHÖNVALDE (GERMANY), GYULA (HUNGARY),  
LE PLESSIS-TREVISE (FRANCE), 'THE DAYS OF EUROPE 2006 –  
SOLIDARITY IN EUROPE, HUNDREDS OF IDEAS,  
THOUSANDS OF FRIENDSHIPS'



#### DESCRIPTION

How to consider issues of European solidarity within a context of local communities? Almost 5 000 participants – inhabitants of the host and invited towns, among them disabled people, and representatives of local authorities and organisations – joined together to participate in the Days of Europe 2006 in Wągrowiec. The cultural and festive activities served as a background to demonstrate the outcomes of cooperation between all the invited towns, initiating new contacts and strengthening existing partnerships. Representatives from Wągrowiec, Adendorf and Schönwalde showed the effects of mutual cooperation, and presented joint projects to their friends from Hungary, France and Russia. The meeting led to further expansion of contacts as a new twinning partnership was signed between Wągrowiec and Le Plessis-Trevise. The European spirit of integration was in evidence all week. The local authorities of

#### European solidarity in action

##### THEMES

European solidarity in cooperation between local self-governments  
Strengthening and development of current partnerships  
Elimination of biases and stereotypes  
Integration of disabled people in society

Wągrowiec put this small town in a European context with the official opening of the town's official website [www.wagrowiec.eu](http://www.wagrowiec.eu). The meeting was an important step towards building a network of small towns and counties and expanding the scope of cooperation between towns. The project demonstrated very good capacity for mobilisation and 'cross-fertilisation'. Throughout the event, there was intensive cooperation between municipalities, civil society organisations and the Municipal European Integration Centre.

#### METHODS AND IMPACT

The Days of Europe 2006 consisted of three blocks. A conference block was devoted to exchanging town twinning working methods, presenting the possibilities of applying for EU funds, analysing existing and potential networking opportunities and developing joint projects. A wide variety of tools were used, including expert and multimedia presentations and

debates. The organisers put particular emphasis not only on solidarity between towns but also on the integration of disabled people in local communities. A cultural block consisted of a photo exhibition presenting the cultural heritage and diversity of Europe, concerts and performances by artistic groups from all invited countries, a classical concert entitled 'Across Europe with a baton' and a presentation called 'Across Europe with cultures'. Finally, a sports block involved participants from the invited towns, including people with disabilities, in European sports events.

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The new partnership agreements concluded in the course of the event gave a major European dimension to these small municipalities. Similarly, by organising public debates in neighbourhoods where European integration is not part and parcel of everyday discourse, the project 'Communicating EU values across Greece' managed to explain the impact of European policies to large sections of the population.

### Civil society project

**ELIAMEP – HELLENIC FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN AND FOREIGN POLICY (GREECE),**  
**'COMMUNICATING EU VALUES ACROSS GREECE'**





## Fostering European debate on EU values and active European citizenship

### THEMES

Raising awareness of EU values and of the future of the EU  
European citizenship in connection with intercultural dialogue and tolerance  
Immigrants, integration and diversity  
Role of the media in creating a European public space

### DESCRIPTION

How to encourage a national debate on issues concerning migration, the values and future of the European Union and active European citizenship? The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy succeeded in placing the media and key players at the centre of events and providing broad media coverage of all the organised events. A strong multiplier effect for the Greek population was achieved through intensive collaboration with diverse stakeholders. The first series of public meetings was organised in six major Greek cities in cooperation with the local authorities, main universities and local civil society. During the open discussions, participants touched upon such issues as European citizenship and democracy, cultural and ethnic diversity and the future of the EU. The results of these meetings reached the semi-urban population, local minorities and the significant student population. The second stage consisted of a workshop organised together with immigrant associations. EU values and active civic participation were discussed in the

context of the social and cultural inclusion of minorities in the host societies. This led to a substantial discussion on the challenges of tolerance and intercultural dialogue in Europe. The final project event involved journalists and media representatives on the topic of 'Communicating Europe'. The invited guests reflected on the role of the media in the creation of a European public space. The events were all a combination of lectures by experts, meetings and exchanges of opinions with open debates.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

In order to reach the main immigrant populations, the foundation produced an easy-reader booklet entitled *Europe: a community of values*, which was printed in 10 000 copies in Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian and Russian. The brochure was distributed by the foundation both during the events and to the immigrant associations, the Greek Council of Refugees and students. The particular emphasis in this project was put on educating journalists on EU affairs and enhancing the capacity to disseminate information on the EU through broad mobilisation of the media. The foundation also established close cooperation with local authorities and universities, immigrant associations, the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission and the European Parliament Office in Athens.

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This year's award-winning civil society projects bear witness to the growing readiness of European citizens to discuss Europe-related issues. The large number of discussion groups that have been established in all corners of the European Union signal the emergence of a political conscience on which the European Commission, the European Parliament and also local authorities in their communities, municipalities or regions can capitalise.

The project 'Enfants du pays, parents de l'Europe' focused on exploring local cultures in a European context. Immersion in the culture of their counterparts enabled participants to grasp a better understanding of national differences and similarities. The visit by the project participants to the European Parliament in Brussels has led to further international dialogue between them. These future citizens of Europe who have had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the functioning of the European institutions can also become interlocutors vis-à-vis both previous and future generations.





## Town twinning project

LE COUDRAY ST GERMER (FRANCE), TRSTENA (SLOVAKIA),  
'ENFANTS DU PAYS, PARENTS DE L'EUROPE – UNE MÊME  
CITOYENNETÉ DANS LA DIVERSITÉ DES ORIGINES'



## Prepare the future by creating a sense of common belonging

### THEMES

European citizenship and the sense of common belonging

Intercultural and intergenerational dialogue

Role of young generations in building mutual understanding in an enlarged European Union

Integration between new and old Member States

### DESCRIPTION

How can young Europeans from different countries find out that they all belong to the European Union? Slovak pupils and their relatives came to France for an intensive 15-day exchange and discovered that, despite geographical distance and different origins, they actually share more than they thought. Through the different types of activities they learned about the cultural richness and diversity in Europe. A series of events were organised in a local school, where Slovak and French pupils studied together for a week and organised the European Week. This immersion in the school system led to all students taking an active part in discovering the European Union. They prepared displays on enlargement, a panorama of the EU and European citizenship, and organised round tables, debates

about Europe and information campaigns. The participants also enriched their understanding of European integration through study visits. These included the Jean Monnet House in Houjarray, the Slovak embassy in Paris and a trip to the European Parliament in Brussels, where the young people and their families had the chance to discover the EU institutions. Finally, cultural events and typical meals allowed the participants to find out more about the local culture, traditions, food and specialties of the Pays de Bras.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

This town twinning project used a full spectrum of methodological tools. The joint school activities served as learning-by-doing exercises. The study visits made the idea of European integration more tangible and served as an illustration of the work of the EU institutions. Sharing was made more real by involving host families. The Slovaks became familiar with the everyday life of their French hosts and the idea of direct intercultural dialogue thus became more concrete. Finally, the involvement of young people, their parents and grandparents gave everyone the opportunity to experience intergenerational dialogue.

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All these projects have a significant European dimension and demonstrated the capacity of local authorities and civil society organisations to engage Europeans in an exercise of active European citizenship.

## Learning and multiplying active European citizenship

There is no single definition of active European citizenship. The world of academia, civil society organisations and individual citizens can use different definitions to arrive at the same point/concept. However, two key words are always present when we talk about active European citizenship. These are: participation and respect for each other.

The following three projects give real meaning to these somewhat abstract concepts.

The project 'How to become an active European citizen?' is an illustration of the logical link between the concepts of respect, participation and democratic dialogue.



*Evropské aktivní občanství lze výstižně definovat citátem, jenž vznikl v souvislosti s udržitelným rozvojem. 'Jednej lokálně, myslí globálně'.*

*Active European citizenship can be defined by the slogan 'act locally, think globally'.*

**Centre for Community Organising Middle Moravia project**

The Czech NGO Centrum pro komunitní práci střední Morava and the national Ministry of Education successfully joined forces to develop new approaches and learning methods on European affairs for elementary and secondary school students and their teachers. The participative pedagogical approach encouraged the active and critical engagement of the project participants, who consequently acted as a catalyst for greater interest in Europe in their respective municipalities and communities.

### Civil society project

CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISING  
MIDDLE MORAVIA (CZECH REPUBLIC),  
'HOW TO BECOME AN ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZEN?'



## Learning about Europe

### THEMES

Active European citizenship  
New participatory methods of teaching about the EU  
Civic education

### DESCRIPTION

How can we make civic education about the European Union more attractive for young people? In this project, the Centre for Community Organising Middle Moravia worked together with the citizens' association Civitas, school teachers and students to design innovative and participatory methods of teaching civic education programmes at primary and secondary schools. Coming from one of the 'new' Member States, Czechs have limited experience in being active EU citizens. Therefore, the main objective of the project was to spread knowledge about the EU, raise awareness on how to get involved in the EU decision-making process and promote citizen participation and initiative.

Design, production and implementation required a very detailed and precise methodology. First of all, the pilot schools were selected and the project website was created to provide information about the projects and links to European resources. Then, the training module 'How to become an active European citizen?' was developed. The subjects covered concerned the knowledge, skills and experience that active citizens should have. The training module served as a background for developing a training methodology for teachers, in the form of study books and worksheets. It explained how to apply the new civic education module in classes. After being presented at the workshop, both modules were implemented in pilot schools.

During an academic year, students could learn, for example, what the European Ombudsman is and how to contact him, where to find European resources, how they can take part in the EU consultation process, etc.

The design and implementation phase were followed by a nationwide competition in which students designed projects focusing on the influence of the EU in their own community. Students were encouraged to identify the issues they found most critical and to propose solutions. For example, they prepared and carried out a survey on 'What do people know about the EU in our town?' and designed a project to be funded through EU Structural Funds for the benefit of their town. The two winning projects were sent on a visit to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The group also consisted of students with disabilities, the intention being to provide a practical opportunity for all students to understand the equal opportunities policy. Finally, a national dissemination conference was held to discuss the results of the project and to highlight new approaches to teaching about the EU.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

Designing this new civic education module gave teachers the chance to expand their existing courses on the EU. The Ministry of Education appreciated the very good cooperation between project leaders, experts, teachers and students and certified the new civic education module. It could thus be integrated into the mainstream school curriculum. Throughout the project, regular contacts with the media were maintained. Specialised teacher journals, major national newspapers as well as press releases published on the website helped to spread information about the project.

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*Téměř ve všech projektech, které se účastnily této soutěže toto zamyšlení ústilo  
v nadějně očekávání a víru ve smysl evropské integrace.*

*In all the projects that participated in the competition, the conviction that European integration is of profound importance  
for the future of Europe has increased.*

**Centre for Community Organising Middle Moravia project**

The 'Baltic adventure' project brought together a young generation of Europeans with the same participative spirit to experience the issue of EU enlargement. Study trips were organised to help understand their neighbours better and, as a consequence, a democratic conscience developed which holds out much promise for the future of the European Union. The project participants spontaneously became 'ambassadors' of Europe.

The most positive aspect of this project was the firm commitment of the project participants to share the experience they had acquired in the course of the project with their peers.



## Civil society project

EUROPAHUSET (SWEDEN), 'THE BALTIC ADVENTURE!  
YOUTH TRAVELLING ON THE ROADS OF ENLARGEMENT'



## Discovering Europe

### THEMES

EU enlargement

Active European citizenship of young people/young active European citizens

EU fundamental rights and citizenship of the EU

Making young people's voices heard in Europe

### DESCRIPTION

How to empower young people to be active citizens in the enlarged European Union? The Swedish organisation Europahuset (Europe House) enabled young people from four Baltic countries to find out their rights and discover other EU countries.

The one-year project was structured in four stages. Firstly, a preparatory phase concentrated on recruiting young people, schools and partner organisations to take part in the project. The youngsters were chosen by school teachers, students' councils and partner organisations – Youth Initiative Support Centre (Latvia), Europe House (Lithuania), NGO Europe House (Estonia). In the second, knowledge-building phase, participants attended preparatory courses. They went through intercultural training and teambuilding sessions, seminars on the EU and fundamental rights

and citizenship of the Union and learning blocks about their respective countries. The third phase consisted of fact-finding missions – a trip to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia for Swedish participants and a trip to Sweden for participants from the Baltic States. During those trips, young people visited schools, hospitals, local organisations, students' councils, national institutions and other places of interest. In the final, dissemination phase, young people came back to their countries, produced information materials, acquired communication skills and ran information campaigns in their schools about what they had learnt and discovered.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

This project actively engaged 41 young people from four different Baltic countries and taught them both about their respective cultures and EU values and rights. It allowed them to acquire practical knowledge and empowered them to act as multipliers in their milieus. As a result, the project reached around 2 500 pupils in schools in Sweden and the Baltic States. Europahuset disseminated the results of the projects extensively through articles in the local press, a specially designed poster of the 'Baltic adventure', PPT presentations and the organisation's website.

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These future European citizens had the opportunity to get acquainted with the issue of enlargement in a very intimate manner and thus naturally became a source of information in their own school environments. Thus, a considerable number of young Europeans have been indirectly involved in the project.



*In the evaluations we made, everyone mentioned their new understanding of Europe and young people's lives in different countries and their sense of being a part of something bigger.*

#### Europahuset project

The following project is a very good example of an action based on environmental concern. Twinned communities from the United Kingdom and France shared their experiences on the issues of environmental protection and sustainable development. A collective concern for the protection of the environment at local level emerged as a consequence of this project, as the emphasis was put on each participant's responsibility in meeting the challenge of preserving the environment.

The different generations of participants involved in this project gained a better knowledge of environmental issues and a better understanding that the challenge of preserving the environment not only has national but significant European and indeed planetary dimensions and that every individual is concerned. They also developed the necessary skills to take their own action.

Raising awareness about environmental issues has for many years been a major challenge for the European Union. Concern for the protection of the environment is without any doubt one of the major aspects of active European citizenship.

#### Town twinning project

NETHER KELLET (UNITED KINGDOM), BUSSIERES/LOIRE (FRANCE),  
'CONSERVATION OF ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DAILY LIVES OF EUROPEANS'



## Building common responsibility for Europe

### THEMES

Sustainable development, recycling, energy and conservation of natural resources

The effects of European funding on local conservation projects

The work of local, national and European institutions and services

### DESCRIPTION

How to demonstrate a common EU concern in the local context? The participants of this town twinning exchange decided to tackle the problems of energy, natural resources conservation and waste disposal – issues which directly concern every local community. In addition they looked at the working of local, national and European institutions and services with the aim of increasing active citizenship and European awareness among the local population.

The main objective was to provide participants with practical insight on the topics of the meeting. Guests from the French village of Bussieres, together with their English friends, visited the National Wildflower Centre in Liverpool, a nature reserve where endangered and commoner species are produced and conserved. They had also a chance to see Wigan Pier – an example of recycled redundant buildings – and a wind farm and refuse disposal site to learn about recycling and energy conservation.

Apart from the practical experience they gained, participants had the opportunity to discuss energy issues with a British MEP, who gave a talk

from the viewpoint of EU energy policy. During the debate, participants had the chance to compare attitudes in each country towards renewable energy and waste disposal and discuss the effects of European funding on local conservation projects. The open discussion attracted both exchange participants and a large number of local inhabitants, who took up other European issues as well.

### METHODS AND IMPACT

This project mobilised people from both villages around important ecologic issues. It allowed them to see their local problems in a wider context thanks to the presence of local, national and European politicians. This was a practical illustration of the interdependence of local, national and European affairs. The practical examples, exchanges of experience and discussions enabled participants to find solutions and compare good practices. The French visitors became more familiar with the day-to-day life of Nether Kellet, thanks to living in host families and the intensive cultural programme.

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These projects demonstrated different avenues of encouraging Europeans to become active European citizens by developing respect for their European neighbours and by getting involved in public life.



***Who will be  
the Golden Stars winners in 2008?***

European Commission

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