

**The project « AGORA – Democratic Values & Culture in Europe » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"**

**Applicable to the Strand 2 – Democratic engagement and civil participation**

**Measure 2.2 "Networks of Towns"**

**6 events have been carried out within this project:**

### **Event 1**

**Participation:** The event involved 101 citizens, including 71 participants from the city of Athienou (Cyprus), 7 participants from the organization of IRTEA Athens (Greece), 7 participants from the city of Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal), 8 participants from the city of Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and 8 participants from the city of Smolyan (Bulgaria).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Athienou (Cyprus), from 9/9/2021 to 10/9/2021.

**Short description:** Opening Ceremony / Kick-off partners meeting

The Kick – off meeting organized in Athienou (Opening Ceremony), has been developed as follows:

1. Thursday, September 9th, opening with the Press Conference – General Presentation of the Project. Subsequently, we continue with the Mayor's welcome speech.
2. Next, all partners took part to an ice breaking activity.
3. After the coffee break, each Partner made a presentation of their city/organization.
4. The second part of the morning event was based on the Administration (Discussion about the program, decisions about the future activities etc).
5. Afterwards, the afternoon started with a Presentation by the Mayor of Athienou Municipality about the EU projects of the Municipality of Athienou.
6. Afterwards, participants had the honor of having as guest Dr. Michaelangelo Anastasiou, Doctor of Sociology. He made a successful and very interesting Presentation with the title "Challenges to the European Union: The Ambiguities of Integration". The afternoon session closed with questions and conclusions of the day.
7. The second day was made up of two parts, a first part that covered the entire morning of Friday, September 10th, where it was focused to a Visit of Athienou EU projects and buildings constructed with EU contribution and interaction with people (Outside Game).
8. At noon, we had the honor to welcome Mr. Athanasios Athanasiou, on behalf of the European Commission of Cyprus, where he made a speech with the title "EU in the age of disinformation – our collective response". Afterwards, there was a discussion with all partners.
9. After that, a group activity took place– partners' workshop, with the title "Six Thinking Hats" and a Communication Activity - Creation of photos and videos.
10. The meeting closed with questions and conclusions of the day and a session full of partners' feelings and what they learned from all the activities that took place during the two days.

## **Event 2**

**Participation:** The event involved 173 citizens, including 132 participants from the city of Smolyan (Bulgaria), 10 participants from the organization of IRTEA Athens (Greece), 10 participants from the city of Athienou (Cyprus), 11 participants from the city of Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and 10 participants from the city of Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Smolyan (Bulgaria), from 21/10/2021 to 22/10/2021.

**Short description:** Structured Dialogue

The event was focused on structured dialogue and workshops for youngsters and local authorities representatives on themes, related to the Euroscepticism, democracy, freedom of speech, European rights, democratic processes and interaction with policy and decision-making stakeholders, etc.

During the 2-day meeting, lots of activities were held, such as workshops, presentations, discussions, visits and interaction games. The youngsters were provided with better knowledge of policy making process and democratic procedures. They could work on the subject of structured dialogue and how to involve all stakeholders in the decision making process, and were encouraged to be active, to make their voice heard through a variety of non-formal methods.

During the meeting held in Smolyan were involved many citizens, huge part of which were young people from the invited partner organizations. Additionally, a lot of youngsters from Smolyan participated the event, some of them physically, another part – online. To all participants were presented key topics considering the participation of young people in policy making and decision-taking on local, regional, national and EU level. This way they became more confident in participating the process and they feel that their voice is heard and important.

## **Event 3**

**Participation:** The event involved 157 citizens, including 11 participants from the city of Smolyan (Bulgaria), 11 participants from the organization of IRTEA Athens (Greece), 10 participants from the city of Athienou (Cyprus), 114 participants from the city of Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and 11 participants from the city of Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Cinisello Balsamo (Italy), from 17/3/2022 to 18/3/2022.

**Short description:** Workshops

During these days, the young participants were presented with an all-day long structure of activities, with the final goal of implementing their abilities to discuss in group, reflect upon European and global issues (Topics: Migrations, Democracy, Imbalance EU, Extremisms, Climate Change), express their point of views to include in the final policy paper and propose a group-project. The first day the activity took place in the cultural center Il Pertini, instead the second day at schools.

The process was based on three phases:

- Open dialogue on the topic , where participants expressed freely on the subject using support material given by the group leader.
- Issue Model Canva: discussion and definition of the context of a specific problem , where they worked together to identify and contextualize a specific issue regarding the general topic, using a particular tool “Issue Model Canva” (including "Target; Impact; Place; Main players; Data and resources; Existing projects; Role of the European Union; Your resources").
- Development of a group project : starting from the resources expressed on the previous canvas, participants were given the task to develop a project that faced the issues and tried to resolve them. As a facilitation tool, the working template had 7 sections (5 Ws, plus How and the Title). At the end of the day all the participants presented what they did.

During the afternoon of the second day we organized a cultural City-Game, where all the participants had the opportunity to discover the city, learn more about local traditions and talk with citizens.

#### **Event 4**

**Participation:** The event involved 126 citizens, including 10 participants from the city of Athienou, Cyprus, 10 participants from the city of Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal, 10 participants from the city of Cinisello Balsamo, Italy, 10 participants from the city of Smolyan, Bulgaria, 86 participants from the city of Athens, Greece.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Athens, Greece, from the 05/05/2022 to 06/05/2022.

**Short description:** Open Dialogue

The aim of the event as an Open Dialogue was to reinforce and highlight the importance of active citizenship through an experiential activity simulating a democratic procedure and specifically of the European Parliament, thus also underlining the sense of European belonging.

The activity was hosted at the premises of the President Hotel in Athens with young participants and fellow citizens at the audience who were interested in learning more about the experiential game of Simulations as a means of developing the knowledge, skills and competencies of young people as well as reinforcing their interest and eagerness to participate in the democratic procedures and be active citizens.

Among the most valuable results produced during this meeting were the following:

- Enhance the visibility of the project results
- Produced Document in the form of European Parliament Conclusions which reflect the opinions of the participants on the topic and will be annexed to the Policy Paper
- Develop youth's knowledge on the European Union decision-making processes
- Establishing a theoretical background on the European Green Deal
- Promoting pluralism and open discussions as a means of a fruitful democratic procedure
- Encouraging young participants to get informed on European affairs and partake actively in democratic procedures
- Engage decision - making stakeholders at local level to the project outcomes
- Inform local community about the project outcomes
- Promote the European identity
- Promote active citizenship

More specifically, on the 5th of May at President Hotel, the Event began with a set of Structured Dialogues on topics that are directly connected to the Project at hand as well as the current developments at the European region level. The first panel under the topic of "2022: European Year of Youth Challenges and Opportunities for Young People in Europe, Building the Identity of the European Citizen" addressed the audience, mostly comprised by youth aiming to bring out the European side of their identity and nurture a fruitful open dialogue on the topic in order to promote the democratic and open exchange of opinions, which stands as a main pillar in our European community.

The panel had the honor of hosting esteemed experts and authorities under the moderation of Ms. Despina Papadaki, Secretary General of I.R.T.E.A. The floor firstly received, Mr. Haris Kountouros, Public Relations and Communication Officer of the European Parliament in Greece, who addressed the topic "Between peril and opportunity – quo vadis Europe?". Moving on, the panel continued with Mr. George Panagopoulos, Mayor of Salamina in Greece, who discussed "Youth in local government, initiatives, priorities and Challenges". Furthermore, Mr. Kyriakos Kareklas, Mayor of Athienou in Cyprus, closed the panel with a general discussion and addressing "AGORA project Priorities, Goals and Actions". Last, but not least, a Presentation of the EUropa.S. 2022 Conference Results took place by the esteemed Secretariat.

After a short coffee break, the second panel began under the topic "European Green Deal: Assessing the new Opportunities, Threats & Risks for the Environment", which also was the topic of the Simulation Activity. And therefore, this Panel worked as preparatory session for the young

participants to get familiar with the theoretical background of the topic, the relevant European policies and regulations. The speakers' list started with Ms. Victoria Tsitsoni, Economic Policy Analyst for WWF Greece, who offered her expertise on the practical aspect of the environmental and climate side of the topic. Moving on, the Boards and Best Participants of two simulated Committees on the Conference EUropa.S. 2022 (on Industry, Research & Energy as well as the Council of the European Union) took the floor and delivered speeches on how they approached the topic in their simulation activity as well as the subtopics and aspects of the Green Deal that surprised them during their discussions. Naturally, with their experience on the procedural part, the Boards of the 2 Committees also offered pieces of advice and a theoretical context on the procedure of decision making at the European level.

### **Event 5**

**Participation:** The event involved 25 citizens, including 2 participants from the city of Athens, Greece, 2 participants from the city of Santa Maria da Feira, Portugal, 2 participants from the city of Athienou, Cyprus, 2 participants from the city of Smolyan, Bulgaria, 2 participants from the city of Cinisello Balsamo, Italy and 15 participants from the city of Brussels, Belgium.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Brussels, Belgium, from 11/07/2022 to 12/07/2022

**Short description:** Creation of Policy Paper- Presentation activity in Brussels

The aim of the event was to present to the Members of the European Parliament and other policy makers, the produced results of the project, the Policy Paper reflecting the opinion of 300 and more young persons around Europe on active citizenship, democratic participation and policy making on a local level, in topics up to date for the present and future of Europe.

The activity was hosted at the premises of the European Parliament in Brussels with 25 participants, Mayors, Vice Mayors, Municipal Councils' Representatives, and other local authorities' representatives from the partner organizations.

Among the most valuable results produced during this meeting were the following:

- Enhance the visibility of the project results
- Engage decision - making stakeholders in European level to the project outcomes
- Affect through the Policy Paper future policy shaping in European level
- Inform local community about the project outcomes
- Promote the European identity
- Promote active citizenship

### **Event 6**

**Participation:** The event involved 128 citizens, including 88 participants from the city of Athienou (Cyprus), 7 participants from the organization of IRTEA Athens (Greece), 9 participants from the city of Santa Maria da Feira (Portugal), 8 participants from the city of Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and 9 participants from the city of Smolyan (Bulgaria).

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Athienou (Cyprus), from 8/9/2022 to 9/9/2022.

**Short description:** Closing Ceremony

The two-day meeting of the partners in Athienou had a rich and varied Agenda. At the first day, the partners were welcomed by the Mayor of Athienou, Mr. Kyriakos Kareklas, as well as shown a 5-minute informative video about Athienou, the achievements, the occupation, etc. There was also a presentation of the results that were achieved during the program, a presentation of the Program Declaration which was prepared and presented to MEPs at the European Parliament in Brussels and videos with snapshots of all the meetings held within the framework of the program. After the coffee break, the partners had the opportunity to visit a traditional dairy house and watch the preparation of halloumi by female volunteers in the traditional ancestral home of the Monk Kallinikos. After lunch break, discussions were also held about the framework for networking and future cooperation between the partners at the European level and round table discussions. The afternoon session closed with questions and conclusions of the day.

On the second day was held an official Ceremony and Signing of the Twinning Pact between the partners with the National Anthem of each partner's country in the background. Afterwards, all participants had the opportunity to be guided around the Municipality of Athienou, rich in history and culture and visit people in Athienou promoting of the European identity (Outside Action).

After that, all the participants were informed about their remaining obligations and the meeting closed with questions and conclusions of the day and a session full of partners' feelings and what they learned from all the activities that took place during the two days.

All the participants from abroad left for their countries on Saturday September 10 with the best impressions and giving their congratulations for the excellent organization and hospitality of the Municipality of Athienou. A journey of the young people of the 5 partners, which started late due to the Covid-19 pandemic with the first meeting on September 9 and 10, 2021 in Athienou, has come to an end, leaving behind important results.