

**The project "Faces and Stories of Europe - Shaping the Future of Europe with Contemporary Witnesses" was supported by the European Union within the framework of the "Europe for Citizens" programme**

**Applicable to the  
Programme Area 2, Measure 2.1 - "Town Twinning"**

**Applicable to the  
Programme Area 2, Measure 2.2 - "Networks of twinned towns",  
Measure 2.3 - 'Civil society projects',  
Programme Area 1 - "European Historical Awareness"**

A total of **19 events** were organised in 4 European cities under the project. **They are divided here into these 4 cities.** In addition, the **impulse paper** and the **evaluation** are also included as "events" for this summary. At first an overview of:

### **1. All events**

**Participation:** The events directly involved a total of 1,167 participants. Of these, 292 participants were from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece), 270 from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria), 395 from the city of Jena (Thuringia - Germany) and 210 from the city of Lüneburg (Lower Saxony - Germany). In addition to the participants from Jena, 2 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria), 1 participant from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece) and 3 participants from the city of Lüneburg (Germany) took part in the international events in Jena.

**Place/date:** The events took place during the project period from 1/11/2018 – 31/03/2020.

**Short description:** Through contemporary witness workshops, interviews with "faces" and their stories, an understanding of European history in its diversity and interconnectedness has been developed. Contemporary witness videos have been created that tell of commitment against dictatorship and contempt for humanity. In it, people report on what drove them: The longing for human dignity, freedom and democracy. This commitment radiates to young citizens who have conducted these interviews and to those who will see these videos. 30 years after the democratic turnaround in Europe, the International Meeting and Debate in Jena was able to set an example for the liberal-democratic EUROPA.

Unfortunately, xenophobic slogans have now become acceptable in all the countries involved. Populist and nationalist parties achieve very high election results - throughout Europe. And also the terrorist attack on the synagogue in Halle on 9 October 2019 makes the current dangers for democracy very clear. All the

more important is the view into history. The interviews with contemporary witnesses in Greece focused on the military coup and dictatorship in Greece from 1967 to 1974 and the European elections. In Greece, family cohesion is very important. Therefore, contemporary witnesses were questioned and interviewed by their partly related young people. With a reminder of the history - junta and military coup and seven years of military dictatorship - before the EUROPA elections, the current political situation in Greece and Europe was discussed. These workshops also served to motivate contemporary witnesses for an interview.

The famous Vasco Krapkata was a guest in Pleven on 26.02.2019. He was able to give a very emotional account of the decisive events of the democratic turnaround in 1989: "The best thing that happened on the planet after the Second World War is the United Europe, and the best thing that has ever happened to us is that we are part of it".

Two extensive workshops were also held in Jena/D. Various citizens also made themselves available for interviews. The intimidation by the GDR regime as well as the restriction of human rights were a particular topic. Recht in Europa in Jena organised two major events to mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall: An international panel discussion and an international multiplier event in Jena. The panel discussion on November 6, 2019, was held in the foyer of the Christian High School with the participation of Jena's Lord Mayor and other representatives of politics as well as international guests.

In Lüneburg/Germany, citizens could show their faces and tell their stories from a West German perspective. Stories about escape, surveillance, family division and political indoctrination. Together with Educommart, Miteinander in Europa from Lüneburg had prepared the presentation of the eyewitness videos for March 27, 2020 at Europe's largest education fair DIDAKTA. Unfortunately Covid-19 postponed this event to 2021. The consortium plans to present the product at DIDAKTA in Stuttgart from 23-27 March 2021.

The "results" were recorded in the impulse paper and handed over to the politicians. The various activities of WITNESSES offered opportunities for citizens to actively participate and help shape EUROPE's future. The experiences and results have a lasting effect, especially among these citizens involved.

Through WITNESSES 1,167 participants in Greece, Bulgaria and Germany could be directly involved and reached.

## **2. Events in Kifissia/Athens (Greece)**

**Participation:** The events involved 292 citizens, especially 292 participants from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece). Five main events were held.

**Short description:** The main events were a) An eyewitness workshop on 10.5.2019 with 100 participants from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece) b) an eyewitness workshop on 22.5.2019 with 54 participants from the city of Kifissia/Athens c) Dialogues with contemporary witnesses on 4.1.2020 with a total of 48 participants from Kifissia/Athens d) Various interviews with contemporary witnesses with video recordings in the period from 07.04.2019 to 04.01.2020 with 40 participants from Kifissia/Athens and e) the final editing of the videos with subtitles with a total of 50 participants from Kifissia/Athens in the period from 06/05/2019 – 30/01/2020.

In Kifissia/Athens on May 10 and 22, 2019, workshops with contemporary witnesses were held. In cooperation with the pensioners' association, biographies of contemporary witnesses from different generations were compiled. Young citizens were thus motivated to directly interview their older relatives - a wonderful effect. The focus of the exchange was the military coup in Greece in 1967, the dictatorship period from 1967 to 1974 and the European elections. With a reminder of the history - junta and military coup and seven years of military dictatorship - before the EUROPA elections, the current political situation in Greece and Europe was discussed. These workshops also served to motivate contemporary witnesses for an interview. The interviews of the WITNESSES took place in their home environment due to their age.

The interviews were conducted between May 2019 and Jan. 2020. Another workshop with contemporary witnesses was held on 4.1.2020. The resulting videos had an average shooting time of 70 minutes and were elaborately edited, subtitled and prepared for use.

### **3. Event in Pleven (Bulgaria):**

**Participation:** The events involved 270 citizens, especially 270 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria). 4 main events were held:

**Short description:** The main events were a) A contemporary witness workshop on 26.2.2019 with 80 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria), b) an eyewitness workshop on 21.11.2019 with 100 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria) c) Various contemporary witness interviews with video recordings in the period from 15.02. - 15.06.2019 with 40 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria) and d) the processing of this video material with subtitles with 50 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria) in the period from 16.02. - 06.09.2019.

In Pleven two large contemporary witness workshops were held. On 26.02.19 the famous Vasco Krapkata (The Patch) was a guest. He was able to report on the decisive events of the democratic turnaround in 1989 to very emotionally young citizens from various schools. He left striking words: "The best thing that has happened on the planet since the Second World War is the United Europe, and the best thing that has ever happened to us is that we are part of it". The interviews with contemporary witnesses were conducted and edited between 15.2. and 15.06.2019. On 21.11.2019 another workshop was held in the secondary school with over 100 participants. In addition to the workshops, various interviews with video recordings took place between 15.2.2019 and 15.6.2019. These were then edited for use, shortened and subtitled.

### **4. Event in Jena (Germany – Thüringen)**

**Participation:** The events involved 395 citizens, in particular 389 participants from the city of Jena (Thuringia - Germany), 1 participant from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece), 2 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria) and 3 participants from the city of Lüneburg (Lower Saxony - Germany)

**Short description:** The main events were a) A contemporary witness workshop on 03.06.2019 with 80 participants from the city of Jena, b) a contemporary witness workshop on 26.06.2019 with 55 participants from the city of Jena, c) various contemporary witness interviews with video recordings with 40 participants from the city of Jena in the period from 03.06. - 23.08.2019 d) the editing of the video material with subtitle editing with 40 participants from the city of Jena in the period from 04.06. - 11.10.2019, e) an international panel discussion with contemporary witnesses on 06.11.2019. A total of 142 participants took part. Of these 136 participants were from the city of Jena; 1 participant from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece); 2 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria) and 3 participants from the city of Lüneburg. f) The International Multiplier Event with presentation of the contemporary witness videos for the teaching of politics and history took place in Jena on November 7, 2019. A total of 38 participants took part. Of these, 32 participants were from the city of Jena; 1 participant from the city of Kifissia/Athens (Greece); 2 participants from the city of Pleven (Bulgaria) and 3 participants from the city of Lüneburg.

Workshops were held in Jena/D on 3 and 26.06. Various citizens also made themselves available for interviews. The intimidation by the GDR regime as well as the restriction of human rights were a particular topic. Recht in Europa in Jena also organized two major international events to mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall: An international panel discussion and an international multiplier event in Jena. The panel discussion on November 6, 2019, was held in the foyer of the Christian High School with the participation of the Lord Mayor of Jena and other political representatives as well as international guests. One highlight was special here: The format of the "speed dialogue" was used here in a new way and met with a very good response from the participants. At the "Speed-Dialogue" 5 participants could talk to a

politician for 4 minutes - then there were changes. The International MV took place on 7 November 2019. Representatives from the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as educators from various schools and guests from the partner countries took part. Through the feedback, Educommart and its partners were able to get important feedback on the presented contemporary witnesses videos, which improve the quality and usability. They have been implemented directly.

## **5. Event in Lüneburg (Germany – Lower Saxony)**

**Participation:** The event involved 210 citizens, especially 210 participants from the city of Lüneburg (Germany - Lower Saxony).

**Short description:** The main events were a) An eyewitness workshop on 5/6/2019 with 60 participants from Lüneburg, b) An eyewitness workshop on 6/6/2019 with 70 participants from Lüneburg, c) Various eyewitness interviews with video recordings with 40 participants from Lüneburg in the time between the 27th and the 27th day of the event. 5. and 14/06/2019, d) The editing of the video material with subtitles with 40 participants from Lüneburg in the period from 24/06 – 04/09/2019.

In Lüneburg/D, a city-wide appeal brought together very different contemporary witnesses. Here too, two workshops were held: on 5 and 6 June 2019 workshops. In the interviews with contemporary witnesses, the following topics were given priority: Departure from the GDR, flight to West Germany/FRG, opening of the border on 9/11/1989, Mauerspecht, experience with Stasi and surveillance, handling by the Treuhand ... - but also joy about the "reunification" are in the reports. Europe's largest education trade fair DIDAKTA was the destination for the multiplier event and the international panel discussion in Stuttgart. But Covid-19 unfortunately only made a cancellation and postponement to 2021 possible for the organizers. The consortium plans to hold the presentation and the panel discussion from 23 - 27 March 2021.

## **6. Event IMPULSE PAPER**

**Participation:** Content and ideas for the impulse paper were collected from the very beginning in all cities at all events. At the internal meeting on November 7, 2019 in Jena, the coordinator's proposal was discussed, corrected and further processed. The final version was finally discussed and decided on 17.03.2020 via Skype. The paper was distributed to political representatives in all national languages and can be found in all national languages on the project homepage.

**Short description:** From the very beginning of all workshops, the participants started to collect comments and impulses on the topic from all partners. They were each exchanged during the Skype conferences and recorded for the impulse paper. In addition, important contributions and lessons learned from the debates were included, which were considered important. This enabled the coordinator to prepare a draft and to discuss it conclusively at the meeting on 17/03/2020. In this impulse paper the importance of contemporary witness dialogues for understanding history and the present was emphasised. It is against a background of history that the meaning of Europe's values becomes particularly clear and can be understood and internalised by young citizens. Through WITNESSES young citizens were able to participate actively using different methods. They showed themselves and became "citizens". Challenges for Europe remain in all countries: Racism, nationalism, populism and anti-Semitism. The representatives were addressed and encouraged to develop measures. The political representatives almost unanimously expressed the need to do more in the field of education to promote democracy-building and to combat racism and anti-Semitism. The message from the workshops is particularly important: It can be learned from history - best of all through contemporary witnesses who emotionally make Europe's values shine and appreciate them.

## **7. EVENT - Evaluation**

**Participation:** For evaluation purposes, an evaluation meeting was held at the internal meeting on 7.11.2019 in Jena. All partners - represented by 2 participants from Pleven, 1 participant from Kifissia and 3

participants from Lüneburg - were involved. In addition, a Skype conference was held on 18.03.2020 with all partners.

**Short description:** The aim was to evaluate the events and activities in the four partner cities. All partners are very satisfied with the implementation of the planned activities and objectives. These were wonderful encounters, impulses and insights that were brought together. The compilation of the reports and the completion of the project homepage with its contents were discussed and appropriate arrangements made.

The meetings and the reports from the countries and cities promoted the understanding for the respective different situation in Europe. In Greece/Athens, the lack of European solidarity with the Mediterranean countries on the issue of migration was particularly evident; in Bulgaria/Pleven, a headmaster appealed that there has been no political education since the democratic turnaround. This is urgently needed; In Germany/Lüneburg and Jena, populism and radicalism were discussed and the struggle for citizens to be heard. This understanding has allowed tolerance and respect to grow and the attitude that we are all EUROPE. Young citizens in particular need democratic maturity to help shape Europe's future.

Besides the impulse paper and the many publications, the most important dissemination factors of WITNESSES were the actively involved citizens in schools, universities, in the workshops and in the debates and exchanges. They have been involved, they have participated and will continue to participate. They have spread WITNESS and will continue to do so for themselves and their environment.