

The project « How has the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 influenced citizens in small rural communities in Europe? » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.2 "Networks of Towns"

6 events have been carried out within this project:

Event 1

Participation: The event involved 78 citizens, including 6 participants from the city of Lasse (Austria), 4 participants from the city of Bievre (Belgium), 4 participants from the city of Lefkara (Cyprus), 4 participants from the city of Starý Poddvorov (Czech Republic), 4 participants from the city of Polva (Estonia), 4 participants from the city of Hepsted (Germany), 4 participants from the city of Kandava (Latvia), 4 participants from the city of Troisvierges (Luxembourg), 4 participants from the city of Moravce (Slovenia) and 40 participants from the city of Bienvenida (Spain).

Location / Dates: The event took place in Bienvenida (Spain), from 18/06/2015 to 21/06/2015

Short description: The aim of the event was:

- workshops for participants and hosting partner, president/vicepresident and secretary of the Charter
- during the meeting, participants talked about the main topic "How has the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 influenced citizens in small rural communities in Europe?"
- the overall balance between conference and recreational activities was optimal

It was discussed: What opportunities have become available because of and due to our membership in the EU? What difference does it make to us, normal people in rural areas?

- culinary event
- inauguration of main road poster
- national flags parade

Results were the organization of one theoretical and one practical workshop: the theoretical being a set of conferences, group works and informative videos; the practical with elaboration of thematic mural and brochures and visits to primary school and buildings financed with European funds. The European spirit was fostered through 3 work groups created to work on one theme, "Has the impact of the enlargement of the European Union in rural areas been different depending on the period of their membership in the EU?" the results of which were presented in a common session. The participation of the population was assured by the fact that some of the activities were organized in synch with a local festivity which made it natural to melt groups together and improve the level of mutual knowledge and understandings.

Event 2

Participation: The event involved 197 citizens, including 8 participants from the city of Lasse (Austria), 6 participants from the city of Bievre (Belgium), 6 participants from the city of Slivo Pole (Bulgaria), 6 participants from the city of Tisno (Croatia), 6 participants from the city of Lefkara (Cyprus), 6 participants from the city of Starý Poddvorov (Czech Republic), 6 participants from the city of Naestved (Denmark), 6 participants from the city of Polva (Estonia), 6 participants from the city of Kannus

(Finland), 6 participants from the city of Cissé (France), 6 participants from the city of Hepsted (Germany), 6 participants from the city of Nagycenk (Hungary), 6 participants from the city of Cashel (Ireland), 6 participants from the city of Bucine (Italy), 6 participants from the city of Kandava (Latvia), 6 participants from the city of Bienvenida (Spain), 6 participants from the city of Troisvierges (Luxembourg), 6 participants from the city of Nadur (Malta), including 6 participants from the city of Ech (The Netherlands), 6 participants from the city of Strzyzow (Poland), 6 participants from the city of Samuel (Portugal), 6 participants from the city of Ibanesti (Romania), 6 participants from the city of Medzev (Slovakia), 6 participants from the city of Moravce (Slovenia), 6 participants from the city of Ockelbo (Sweden), 6 participants from the city of Desborough (UK) and 39 participants from the city of Žagare (Lithuania).

Location / Dates: The event took place in Žagare (Lithuania), from 30/07/2015 to 03/08/2015

Short description: The aim of the event was:

- network meeting for all members of all the project partners and hosting partner, president/vicepresident and secretary of the Charter (in reality attended the meeting 156 participants from all members of all the project partners, 39 participants from hosting partner which replaced also participants from Greece which apologized, president and secretary of the Charter
- participants talked together about the main topic and related project themes, including conclusions and outputs from previous meetings.
- the overall balance between conference and recreational activities was optimal

The focus was: "How did we experience the fall of the iron curtain and what were the effects on our neighbors and on the rest of Europe? What has Europe done for us and what have we done for them?".

- Culinary evening, press conference to publicise and spread the outcome and advertise the meeting and its results to other citizens.

Hearing how the falling of the iron curtain was perceived by a former Eastern block country was a fantastic opportunity for informal learning and helped develop a sense of European identity among participants. The concepts of tolerance, mutual understanding and solidarity were deeply discussed as foundations for the future active European citizens. It was also discussed the most effective means of communication for a wide spread of the concept. The culinary evening (in which all members presented national foods and drinks) served the purpose of sharing different cultures and fostering informal communication and understanding. Wide coverage of events was made through DVDs, Newsletters and web sites.

Event 3

Participation: The event involved 78 citizens, including 4 participants from the city of Tisno (Croatia), 4 participants from the city of Kannus (Finland), 4 participants from the city of Žagare (Lithuania), 4 participants from the city of Nadur (Malta), 5 participants from the city of Ech (The Netherlands), 4 participants from the city of Ibanesti (Romania), 2 participants from the city of Medzev (Slovakia), 7 participants from the city of Bienvenida (Spain), 4 participants from the city of Ockelbo (Sweden), and 40 participants from the city of Hepsted (Germany).

Location / Dates: The event took place in Hepsted (Germany), from 25/09/2015 to 27/09/2015

Short description: The aim of the event was:

- workshop for participants and hosting partner on Cohesion Policy (Art-174 Lisbon Treaty) with its three priorities (Smart Growth-Sustainable Growth-Inclusive Growth) and five targets (Employment - R&D- Climate Change-Reduction of school early drop offs - Fighting poverty and social inclusion)
- visit to the European school in Tarmstedt
- leg propelled train ride for participants from Tarmstedt to Hepstedt: "Pedaling together towards progress!"
- formal opening of the European Path in Hepstedt
- culinary evening
- walk around Hepstedt with a tourist guide
- celebration of the harvest festival with a parade

The sharing of tangible results of EU policies during these years (i.e. accessibility of seasonal workers for harvesting seasons) sensitive to rural areas which fortifies the sense of belonging to the EU and defies the Euroscepticism.

All of the above will contribute to strengthen the trust bond between members and will act as a strong foundation for the continuing of our work together: a bond that will never die.

The European Path is in reality a railway tunnel that was decorated with the 28 flags of all the members of the Charter. At the tunnel you can see the European map with the municipalities of the members of the Charter. The other side of the tunnel shows Taurus with the young lady Europe. The tunnel will remain as an everlasting memory of the event to present and future generations.

The culinary evening and all other recreational events (in which all members presented national foods and drinks) served the purpose of sharing different cultures and fostering informal communication and understanding and saw the participation of local population.

Event 4

Participation: The event involved 82 citizens, including 2 participants from the city of Tisno (Croatia), 4 participants from the city of Naestved (Denmark), 4 participants from the city of Cissé (France), 4 participants from the city of Kolindros (Greece), 5 participants from the city of Nagycenk (Hungary), 4 participants from the city of Cashel (Ireland), 4 participants from the city of Strzyzow (Poland), 5 participants from the city of Medzev (Slovakia), 4 participants from the city of Desborough (UK), and 42 participants from the city of Moravce (Slovenia).

Location / Dates: The event took place in Moravce (Slovenia), from 26/05/2016 to 29/05/2016

Short description: The aim of the event was

The main features of the 4th events were the workshop held in the Cultural Hall, the visits to the low energy nursery school in Moravče and to the Ljubiana Waste Management Centre (both co-financed with EU funds) and the aggregation activities that followed such as guided tours to local picturesque sites and to Ljubiana. Culinary activities were the natural turf for exploring local food and traditions.

Workshop boasted the presence of State Secretary Marjan Podgoršec (invited by Moravče's mayor) who gave an introductory speech on communal infrastructure development in rural communities in Slovenia. He was followed by participants' presentations on the development of their communities that spurred the discussion with the exchange of reciprocal experiences. The debate that followed was instrumental in highlighting the differences and common points in the path each commonality is undertaking to foster development. The conclusion was that each one benefited of the enlargement of the EU in 2004 which helped reinforce the strong European identity.

The two mentioned visits, besides being highly educational and fruitful to the purpose of knowing each others results in depth, showed what amazing results can be achieved for local communities with EU funds and why it is important to maintain European unity.

During the recreational visits, the informal dialogues on the above mentioned continued, adding wealth to the acquaintance of cultural and linguistic differences and acceptance through which the strong sense of European belonging is created and maintained. Strong relevance was also given to the importance in these meetings of voluntary work which gives them a strong local dimension. The hosting of participants in local families creates everlasting bonds, the true essence of EU efforts.

All presentations files are posted on www.medzev.sk while the events were broadcast on local TV ATV Litija (<http://www.moravce.si>) and local newspaper "Novice iz Mravške doline" giving wide reach and diffusion to local population of the events held.

Event 5

Participation: The event involved 212 citizens, including 8 participants from the city of Lasse (Austria), 6 participants from the city of Bievre (Belgium), 4 participants from the city of Slivo Pole (Bulgaria), 6 participants from the city of Tisno (Croatia), 6 participants from the city of Lefkara (Cyprus), 6 participants from the city of Starý Poddvorov (Czech Republic), 5 participants from the city of Naestved (Denmark), 6 participants from the city of Polva (Estonia), 6 participants from the city of Kannus (Finland), 6 participants from the city of Cissé (France), 7 participants from the city of Hepsted (Germany), 4 participants from the city of Kolindros (Greece), 3 participants from the city of Nagycenk (Hungary), 7 participants from the city of Cashel (Ireland), 6 participants from the city of Bucine (Italy), 6 participants from the city of Kandava (Latvia), 6 participants from the city of Žagare (Lithuania), 6 participants from the city of Troisvierges (Luxembourg), 6 participants from the city of Nadur (Malta),

5 participants from the city of Ech (The Netherlands), 4 participants from the city of Strzyzow (Poland), 6 participants from the city of Samuel (Portugal), 5 participants from the city of Ibanesti (Romania), 7 participants from the city of Bienvenida (Spain), 60 participants from the city of Medzev (Slovakia), 5 participants from the city of Moravce (Slovenia), 6 participants from the city of Ockelbo (Sweden), and 4 participants from the city of Desborough (UK),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Medzev (Slovakia), from 14/07/2016 to 17/07/2016

Short description: The aim of the event was

-Conference on "How has the enlargement of the EU in 2004 influenced citizens in small rural communities in Europe" which hosted three speeches: Ing. Smolková (member of European parliament) referred to the situation before and after admission to EU for Slovakia, which were the lesson learned, how children and youngsters must be involved; vice president of Košice region, Ing. Zachariaš, gave the local perspective to the topic and outlined other possible directions of the development of Košice region of which Medzev is part; Medzev's mayor, JUDr. Flachbartová, of the opportunities created for joining countries with the joining of EU in 2004, such as possibility to travel without visa, free movement of workforce and new jobs created by International Investments, free movements of goods and last but not least, education. She also specifically mentioned the results achieved for Medzev, particularly in infrastructures.

- Comprehensive workshop with the participation of all members who worked on presenting the point of view of each municipality on the conference topic;

- Preparation of an anonymous questionnaire on 8 wide range questions on EU hot topics.

- Visit to the industrial part of Medzev

- The launch of an Art competition based on the project theme with three categories: below 16 of age, up to 20 and over 20 and the following award ceremony

Recreational activities were intertwined and started with a holy mass; a procession preceded the opening ceremony held in the town park with welcoming speeches; the unveiling of the memorable monument of the event, highly evocative; the culinary event with all delegations represented by traditional dishes and costumes; a mini marathon sport event; a highly appealing visit to Medzev pride, the blacksmith's water powered forges; the visit to the observatory; a dance party; a visit to capital of Eastern Slovakia, Košice, with transportation supplied by historical train; the closing "Goodbye" dinner.

The comprehensive and massive offer of educational events, recreational events, sport events and culinary events definitely reached the main goal of the project itself which is to:

- provide opportunity to exchange experience, cooperation, common problems and solutions

- get together people of different age, nationality and with different interests, connected by the common idea of European citizenship and enhancing tolerance and mutual understanding

- bring together people speaking different languages, outlining the diversity of today's Europe.

The speeches mentioned above gave the real dimension of the benefits of the joining of 2004 for the new Member States and served the educational purpose. Particularly new and interesting was the idea of the questionnaire that helped gauge the real engagement of participants on the future ahead and trust in the EU (pitched and questionnaire results can be found at <http://medzev.sk/indexhold.php?go=charta>).

The large participation of local population in all events served itself the purpose to give maximum visibility to the project and solidify the bonds with other States members providing numerous chances to discover habits, customs, cultures.

Event 6

Participation: The event involved 149 citizens, including 3 participants from the city of Lasse (Austria), 2 participants from the city of Bievre (Belgium), 2 participants from the city of Tisno (Croatia), 2 participants from the city of Lefkara (Cyprus), 2 participants from the city of Starý Poddvorov (Czech Republic), 2 participants from the city of Naestved (Denmark), 2 participants from the city of Polva (Estonia), 2 participants from the city of Kannus (Finland), 2 participants from the city of Cissé (France), 2 participants from the city of Hepsted (Germany), 2 participants from the city of Nagycenk (Hungary), 2 participants from the city of Cashel (Ireland), 2 participants from the city of Bucine (Italy), 2 participants from the city of Kandava (Latvia), 2 participants from the city of Žagare (Lithuania), 2 participants from the city of Troisvierges (Luxembourg), 2 participants from the city of Nadur (Malta), 2 participants from the city of Ech (The Netherlands), 2 participants from the city of Strzyzow (Poland), 2 participants from the city of Ibanesti (Romania), 2 participants from the city of Bienvenida (Spain), 2 participants from the

city of Medzev (**Slovakia**), 2 participants from the city of Moravce (**Slovenia**), 2 participants from the city of Ockelbo (**Sweden**), and 100 participants from the city of Desborough (**UK**),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Desborough (**UK**), from 14/09/2016 to 17/09/2016

Short description: The aim of the event was

- Workshop 1: the presentations of the Adults programme meetings of the two-year period and the main outcomes; presentations from other municipalities invited to the meeting on the theme.

- Workshop 2: it consisted of further and deeper consideration on the outcomes of WS 1 on Investments & Infrastructure, Globalization, Free movement, Open view (understanding other cultures), Rules & Regulations. In the later part participants worked on a series of advises to other municipalities on future expansion and to Charter Presidium for future events & programmes.

- BBC Radio held live interviews with main participants which were broadcast in the region.

- Speeches from Chairman of Desborough's Europe Group and Hepsted's Presidium Member

- Culinary event with live band

- Exploring "The Desborough 1940s Day" annual event.

The results achieved lied on the recapitulation of all main outcomes and topics discussions results of these two years. Ample agreement was on the success factors of the meetings i.e. the open sessions and workshops, the speeches and lectures of experts, Professors and EU officials; the culinary events; the excursions and leisure time; the hosting of events coinciding with local annual/religious events; the participation of local population fostered and welcomed.

More specifically during the meeting an in-depth analysis with pros and cons was made on Investment & Infrastructure, free movement to live, work & study, understanding other cultures, Rules & regulations.

The brochure was completed and updated on the website, the DVD as well -

<http://www.europeancharter.eu/index.php/videos/>

We had also the press conference of the project results.