PROGRESS REPORT

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

Decision Nr 617771

Short description of the project's results

Event 1 involved **426 participants,** including **80 participants** from the city of Sofia, Bulgaria, **54 participants** from the city of Berlin, Germany, **106 participants** from the city of Vilnius, Lithuania, **32 participants** from the city of Warsaw, Poland, **96 participants in total**, including 34 participants from the city of Prague, 36 participants from the city of Brno and 26 participants from Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic**,** and **58 participants** from the city of Timisoara, Romania.

As originally specified in the application form, Event 1: Remembrance Cinema and History Tours resulted in the implementation of 18 film screenings and six history tours conducted across the partner countries. The selected 18 films are available in the Film collection section on the PFD official website. Film screenings were accompanied by follow-up discussions held with historians, academia and experts on the topics of the films screened.

The film screenings aimed at educating and informing young people and citizens about the exploitations and manipulations of democratic practices during the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. Young people and students aged between 16-19 years old learned about the repressions on dissidents committed by the regimes in each partner country. In this way, the set activities under Event 1 resulted in strengthening the understanding of democracy among youth and contributed to a deeper understanding of the history and values of the EU, as well as, raised awareness of contemporary democratic achievements.

The films examined the role that national dissidents played as instruments of public resistance and disobedience and the emergence and development of dissident movements across Europe. The follow-up discussions in the form of Q&A enhanced the participants' knowledge about the concept of civil liberties and freedoms, their origins, dynamics and ideology. Additionally, the discussions with experts, academia and eye-witnesses promoted dialogue among youth on the fundamental EU values and achievements, active citizenship and youth involvement in democratic procedures. These activities helped participants comprehend and interpret democratic concepts and their meaning today. As in some partner countries, the historical evidence of this period is scant, approaching this period of history from a bottom-up perspective, and the personal stories of dissidents raised vast interest and cogitation among the participants.

The six history tours held across the partner countries aimed at contributing to the authentic experience of totalitarian history in an objective and informative way. They promoted local cultural heritage as part of the common European memory. By visiting the landmarks left from Communist times across the partner cities, the participants felt and experienced the recent history through monuments, outdoor exhibitions and the great Berlin Wall.



The overall result achieved through Event 1 can be summarised as the raised awareness and interest among the younger generation on

recent European history. The film screenings, discussions and history tours helped young people reflect on their current liberties and give themselves a clear assessment of their rights and responsibilities as European citizens. The activities helped participants foster actions to promote democracy and the fundamental EU values, test their morals and values by examining the specific personal stories of dissents, trace their identity and build a better citizenship approach. Additionally, the discussions drew a parallel between civil movements in the past and the contemporary democratic achievements to emphasize the process of change and the lessons learned when tackling present-day issues, especially in post-communist societies.

Description (Please describe the implemented activities - including the preparatory activities, if any - and the methods used. Please ensure coherence with the information published online via the information template and the information provided in the Grant Calculation Sheet.; up to 3800 characters):

The preparatory activities included a kick-off meeting held online on 8 and 9 March and the launch of the project website. The partners contributed to the Film Collection by selecting 18 films to commemorate national dissidents and dissident movements during communist times. The consortium implemented 24 activities (18 film screenings and 6 history tours) with citizens across the partner countries.

In Sofia, three films were screened at the 35th High-school with 9th, 10th and 11th graders. The documentary Breath was screened on 22 April with students from the 9th grade. They discussed with a witness from the period and learned about the first civil movement in Bulgaria. The second and third film screenings took place with the 10th and 11th graders on 27 May. The films screened were an authentic part of the interrogation with the writer-dissident Petar Manolov and the documentary The Files – DRIFTER about the writer and dissident Georgi Markov. A three-hour walking tour to explore Communist memorials was held with young people in Sofia on 1 July.

In the Czech Republic, all three film screenings were held via the Zoom platform. On 27 April, the film Two Ways to Dissent was screened at The First Czech Grammar School in Karlovy Vary. The Grammar school Židlochovice in Brno hosted the second film screening on 7 May. The projection of the animated film The Story of Miluška Havlůjová was accompanied by a discussion lead by Tomáš Spáčil, facilitator and historian from the Masaryk University of Brno. The last film session (13 May) was organised in cooperation with the Grammar School Porg in Prague. The historian Michal Šmíd, chief editor of the Memory of Nations archive, hosted the program and presented the edited version of witness interviews from the '89 Velvet Revolution. On 16 June, a history tour was held in Prague, engaging participants with the interactive outdoor exhibition Nikogda ně zabuděm! that brings stories of people who lived through the communist era in former Czechoslovakia.

In Romania, the movies Hawaii (5 June) and Between Pain and Amen (6 July) were screened at the Romanian Institute for Adult Education in Timisoara. On 20 June, the film Tales from the Golden Age was held outdoors, near the riverside of Timis. During the history tour, organised on 16 July, young people visited the most important landmarks of the communist regime in Timisoara.

In Poland, the first and second film screenings were held in the Kolegium św. Stanisława Kostki on 22 June. The films screened were the documentaries December 1970: the Memory of the Dead, the Memory of the Living and And the Tank Drove in. Following the film screenings, Norbert Woźniak, historian, conducted discussions in the form of workshops. The third film, Kwatera Ł, was screened on 2 July. The history tour in Warsaw (15 July) was around the outdoor exhibition The Unbowed: Women in the Opposition of the 1980s.

In Vilnius, the three film screenings were held online and engaged students from the 8th through the 12th grade from the Shalom Aleichem School. On 3 June, the 10th graders watched the animated film Delta Zoo. On 8 June, the film When We Talk About KGB was presented to 11th and 12th graders. On 10 June, 8th and 9th graders reviewed the film How We Played the Revolution. The Mile of Freedom walking tour (a symbolic mile on the main avenue Gedimino prospect) took place on 9 July.

In Germany, the three film screenings were held in Berlin. The first film screened was The Lives of Others (19 June), the second documentary about the story of Manfred Krug – the well known dissident and the star of the GDR, was held on 26 June. The film Back in the Days- Hip Hop in GDR was screened on 3 July. The history tour (17 July) was conducted by a walk around the East Side Gallery of the Berlin Wall and finished at the Wall Museum.

Changes in relation of the original application (Please describe the changes and the reasons for these changes, if any; up to 3800 characters)

In the course of the project implementation, the project consortium had to make several changes to the format of the predefined activities in the application form due to Covid-19 pandemic new waves, measures and restrictions.

After discussions among the partners, the consortium decided to hold the kick-off meeting online (through the Webex platform) on 8 and 9 March. EACEA was notified officially of the change on 22 February 2021. The reasons behind that decision were the rising numbers of the new Covid cases in Bulgaria and our inability to guarantee the safety of the representatives of the partner organisations, especially in considering international travels, social and work meetings.

In spring 2021, many schools across the partner countries remained closed. It was forbidden to gather youngsters in indoor spaces for the film screenings. These problems led to changes in the format of the film screenings and discussions in Czech Republic and Lithuania - the activities there were held online (via the Zoom platform). The respective partners followed the requirements for reporting online events given by the EACEA (on 16 April).

Another change request was related to the organisation of the history tour in Prague. In the application form, the history tour was originally planned to be held at the Museum for Communism in Prague. We requested to change the venue of the event to the outdoor exhibition: "Nikogda Ně Zabuděm!", Náměstí Interbrigád in Prague, which was thematic for the project. The fact that it was outdoors facilitated participation. EACEA accepted the change of venue on 8 June.



Impact and Citizen Involvement

Please indicate:
- what do you consider to be the most important achievement(s) and the biggest challenge(s) for the project?
- in which way the programme priority(ies) was/were tackled? How did you manage to involve the participants in the debates on this/these topic(s)?
- did your project generate or contribute to generate any policy initiative at local/regional/EU levels?
- how do you see the future of the project and its partnership?
(up to 3800 characters)

During the months of the implementation of Event 1, the partner consortium experienced difficulties in conducting the activities, as set in the initial application form, due to Covid-19 restrictions across the partner countries. The biggest challenge for the whole consortium was to conduct the activities (film screenings and history tours) in person and indoors. Nevertheless, the partnership engaged directly over 400 young people and citizens across the partner countries, both in person and through digital platforms. The feedback received from the partners and participants on the raised interest in recent European history reflects on this achievement.

The film screenings and history tours tackled one of EFC's main priorities under the European Remembrance stand: Civil society and civic participation under totalitarian regime. Moreover, the implementation of Event 1 raised awareness of remembrance and tackled the general and specific priority of EFC to contribute to citizens' understanding of the EU, its history, values and diversity.

The partners did well in selecting 18 films and involving historians, academia and eye-witnesses for the follow-up discussions. The facilitators succeeded in engaging the participants through various starting points and assumptions. They used the Q&A method and asked participants how they understood the terms related to the project (for example, dissident, totalitarianism, dictatorship, repressions, etc.) to engage them in further discussions. Participants activated their existing knowledge about recent history and increased their awareness of democratic values such as equality, freedom and justice.

The facilitators shared reflections on the screened films and engaged the participants to share their opinions on the topics covered by the films and the project as a whole. In this way, the facilitators raised young people's interest by asking critical questions and giving them examples in expressing their opinions. In Bulgaria, one of the discussions has evolved into a workshop for creating acrostic poems by the youngsters to express their thoughts and attitudes towards freedom and democracy. The role of the facilitators was also to create a safe space for dialogue between the participants, which was crucial in revealing their honest opinions on the topics covered. Additionally, as most films were screened before students, the role of the class teachers was also important as the participants were more confident to share their opinions and prompt deeper discussions on the topics of the project.

To this moment, the project has not generated any specific policy initiatives at an EU level. However, by receiving feedback from the schools involved and other stakeholders at a national level, the topics of the project tackle issues still relevant for contemporary societies, especially in post-communist countries. In this way, the director of the 35th High School in Bulgaria welcomed with great interest and motivation the screening of films to commemorate civil movements in the past and raise awareness of democracy and human rights amongst the students. The feedback from Lithuania attests for more activities and actions to be adopted by educational institutions to contribute to citizens' understanding of the shared European history.

We are motivated and confident about the continuation of the project activities. As the following events are more participatory and engaging, the consortium is looking forward to implementing

them. If changes are necessary due to Covid-19 restrictions, FECE will communicate with EACEA accordingly.

Direct testimonies/stories from project participants collected during the events. (up to 3800 character)

Few testimonies from the participants in Event 1:

Bulgaria: During the discussion with the 10th graders, some participants answered the question - Why do you think it is important to remember the past?

"The past helps us shape our national self-consciousness. It is necessary to know and remember those who have contributed to the homeland and history".

"So, we keep history alive and we don't stop progressing".

The Czech participants answered the question - Do you think that nowadays a person could get into a situation where they are a danger to society?

"I think they could, to a certain degree, but it is a bit different. Not that they would be at risk, but if they are somehow labelled by some authorities, that can be dangerous within the group, because the person can become isolated from other people. But it is a different sort of danger than under the previous regime."

"I don't think it's an expression of freedom to do anything, anywhere, to anyone. The fact that we feel some limits to what can be expressed in various situations and that we just don't say some things even though we think them, that doesn't always have to be an expression of total subjugation."

Participants from Lithuania shared:

Ditė (8th grade): "I feel patriotic towards my country and its democratic Constitution, but those late soviet events and people – my grandparents and parent's age – seem so distant and different now, I think my generation who uses YouTube, Instagram and TikTok are much freer and we cannot understand fully those repressions and fear that older generations were living through. I can understand the late soviet generation, but generally, I would not trust them fully in matters of democracy and civic freedom, I think they lived under occupation too long."

Jokūbas (8th grade): "I think people then, in the late 80s, were quite brave enough, especially those who stood up to the KGB in support of national independence, though not necessarily to our new democracy. Our generation has very different challenges and the story of Greta Thunberg speaks much more to me than these old-time dissidents, who seem very narrow to me in what they were fighting for. Greta and alike are standing for all of us, for our future – this is our democracy now."

Romanian participants gave feedback on the film screening:

Temciuc Andrian: "The film Between Pain and Amen is an amazing image projected on a screen about the communism in Romania and how harsh that period was and affected so many areas in this country, especially the Christians and people who have believed in God".

Ciovnicu Andrei: "I could not imagine how people were struggling to exit Romania. After I watched the film Hawaii, I realised how valuable our freedom is".

Sebesan Dorian: "After seeing Memories from the Golden Age, I have to admit that communism had its funny part, but also a sad one".

Participants from Poland shared:

“I don’t want communist times to come back, I enjoy my freedom, I want to be free in my choices, I don’t want to be forced by the regime and repressions.”

“I find it very disturbing that during those times people were repressed, they couldn't travel, or to develop themselves, people lived in fear that if they differed, they would be put in prison or labour camp. This is very terrifying, I love democracy and never want to have regimes again”.

Participants from Germany shared:

“My grandmother Vera told me what it was when the great Berlin Wall started to shake and fall. It was a big event, people gathered in front of it and started tearing it apart, piece by piece, just the way it was built. Both of my grandparents were there to witness this, my grandfather passed away, but my grandmother Vera is still alive to tell the story of the night of the 9th of November 1989.”

“I remember walking through Berlin’s art neighbourhood, there is a lot of graffiti art and artists that gather there. When I watched the movie *Back in the Days, Hip-hop in GDR* my first thought was how back in the day such movements and music was forbidden and how today we are free to express what we think and feel, even though graffiti art and labelling our feelings on the Berlin Wall. For me, this is the biggest achievement of my country and time”.

Key message(s) of citizens involved in the project

What was/were key message(s) of citizens involved in the project? If possible, please summarize it in one sentence. (up to 3800 characters)

During the follow-up discussions with students and participants after the film screenings, there were several moments when the participants expressed their opinions and views in an innovative and inspirational way.

The following are summarised in short key messages.

“Dictatorships have been seen as a degrading element in national awareness, social and economical structures.”

“History is to be investigated to learn from it.”

“It is important to look back to the past not only to understand how and why specific events happened but also to understand that nothing is given or granted, and we must work to implement our values and achieve our ideals.”

“There is a difference between what we consider to be socially dangerous today and what was considered to be socially dangerous in the past. What has changed a lot is the manner in which the definition of dangerousness is negotiated. More people are involved, it is somewhat predictable and although we could find problematic examples and cases, those can be reviewed and there is the heightened sensitivity for differentiating between what we don't like, what isn’t close to us, or we consider abhorrent or immoral, compared to what is not allowed and must be prevented by force.“

Another important theme of the discussions was the perception of the sense of freedom for the young generation.

“What matters is the inner freedom of the individual. How that is manifested externally is another matter. We simply can’t all write articles to express our opinions, but the ability to maintain one’s own freedom is of greater importance for the individual.”

“Everyone has a right to personal life.”

“We should always have a choice and have options to defend our independence and rights of freedom.”

“Free society is a moral achievement too because it is impossible without certain values, such as respect for the dignity of others, for human rights, etc.”



“**D**uring history
Everything changes
Much happens
Oppressions and repressions
Cultivations and
Revolutions
Apart from that
Citizens fight to remain
Yet, Free!”

Acrostic poem on DEMOCRACY from Teodora Borisova and Lora Dinkova, 9th grade. The dissident Petar Manolov used acrostic poems to present his nonconformist views during the totalitarian regime in Bulgaria. After the film screening with authentic footage of the interrogations on Petar Manolov, young people participated in a discussion and workshop for creating acrostic poems.

Dissemination and visibility of your project

Please indicate:
- how the visibility of the event and the dissemination of projects' results were ensured;
- types/number of communication tools produced by the project, if any (please provide the link to those tools)
(up to 3800 characters)

During the preparatory activities, FECE, with the support of the partners, has created a dissemination plan to be followed for guaranteeing maximum visibility of the project events and results. The plan was presented and discussed during the kick-off meeting (8-9 March).

All partners prepared service maps for engaging key experts and stakeholders in project activities. The service maps were used for inviting historians and academia for the film screenings and discussions.

In March, FECE worked on the project visual identity (logo, header, banner, poster and website design).

At the beginning of April, the PFD website (https://pfdproject.eu/) was launched. In the news section, all implemented activities have been published. The partners have prepared short descriptions of the selected films, which were added to a dedicated page on the website - Film Collection (https://pfdproject.eu/film-collection/).

Partners created a mailing list of 800 contacts. Every partner provided 100 contacts of youth and cultural NGOs from its country. FECE added 300 stakeholders' contacts.

During the first six months of the project, two newsletters were designed (https://pfdproject.eu/2021/04/03/pfds-first-newsletter/; https://pfdproject.eu/2021/06/24/elementor-1574/). FECE sent the newsletters through the MailChimp platform and also posted them on the PFD and FECE websites.

The partners used their social media accounts to disseminate information on the project and activities in their countries. The consortium published 28 posts on different social accounts

(Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) during the first six months of the project. The posts reached more than 3900 users.

Additionally, the partners have promoted the PFD project through other youth activities. Fundacja Inkubator Innowacji presented the PFD project during the Training Course "Training - The basics of leading a youth group and MediaLab specificities" (9-16 July 2021) and during the Youth Exchange "Patchwork dances vol. 2" (1-9 August 2021). FECE presented the PFD project and its activities during the Youth Exchange "Don't Fear to Differ: Empowering Intercultural Dialogue in Europe" (12-18 July 2021).

Visibility of the Europe for Citizens Programme

Please explain how the visibility of the Europe for Citizens Programme was ensured and list any outcome produced within the project displaying the EU flag and acknowledging the support received within the Programme. /(up to 3800 characters)

The visibility of the Europe for Citizens Programme was ensured by adding the EU flag and acknowledging the support received from the European Communication to all promotional materials.

In the footer of the PDF website (https://pfdproject.eu/), the EU logo and disclaimer have been added. The EU logo is also added to the newsletters, banners and posters. The support provided by the European Commission has been mentioned in social media posts. The EU logo on the PFD website contains a hyperlink to the webpage of the Europe for Citizens Programme.

Venues of the activities

Country/City: Bulgaria/Sofia; Lithuania/Vilnius; Romania/Timisoara; The Czech Republic/Karlovy Vary, Brno and Prague; Poland/Warsaw

Citizens' understanding of the EU: To which extent your activities have increased the citizens' understanding of the EU? **VERY GOOD**

Please give an example (up to 3800 characters)

The film screenings and history tours aimed at contributing to young people's understanding and knowledge of recent European history. Although the activities have been conducted on a national level, the shared past of the post-communist countries involved in the consortium attests to the European dimension of the project's topics. The discussions after the films raised questions about democracy, human rights and fundamental EU values. The prompt dialogue with the participants fostered a sense of active citizenship and involvement in democratic procedures.

Event 1 contributed to the understanding of the shared European past and stimulated reflections on the state-of-the-art in the field of democracy, civil liberties and the needed assessment of civil rights and their importance for contemporary youth and society as a whole. After the discussions, the participants are more aware of their rights and responsibilities and can comprehend and interpret democratic concepts and their meaning. Additionally, participants recognise the fundamental EU values such as human dignity, human rights, democracy, equality, rule of law, and are ready to embrace and safeguard them.

Although the 18 films selected and screened commemorate past events and dissidents of totalitarian regimes, during the discussions the questions revolved around the achievements of the EU, namely to promote peace and the wellbeing of its citizens and offer freedom, security and justice for all.

Participants are informed and educated about the violations of democratic practices in the past. They are encouraged to participate in the democratic life of their communities and embrace their shared responsibility as European citizens to safeguard the democratic legitimacy and stability in the EU.