

The project «EU Future Challenges – Diversity is our advantage» was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.1 "Town-Twinning"

Participation: The project involved 373 citizens, notably 148 participants from the city of Klanjec (Croatia), 24 participants from Sremski Karlovci (Serbia), 16 participants from Heviz (Hungary), 22 participants from Novi Sad (Serbia), 28 participants from Bihać (Bosnia and Herzegovina), 22 participants from Lupuc (Romania), 14 participants from Dolní Benesov (Czech Republic), 20 participants from Starše (Slovenia), 17 participants from Rajecke Teplice (Slovakia), 39 participants from Nikitsch (Austria), 23 participants from Bistrica ob Sotli (Slovenia)

Location/ Dates: The event took place in Klanjec, Croatia, from 01/10/2021 to 03/10/2021

Short description:

The day of 01/10/2021 was dedicated to arrival and gathering of participants, accommodation and short informal acquaintance with refreshments before the start of project activities. On the first day, an introductory conference was held in the presence of the media and representatives of the City of Klanjec, the Mayor and the President of the City Council. There was a presentation and debate "Conference on the Future of Europe – my civic contribution to shared success" where participants were introduced to many ways they as citizens can engage in discussion and share ideas and thus contribute to shaping our common future in the EU. A digital platform was presented through which citizens, but also local institutions and civil society, can present their ideas in various fields, express their opinions, but also organize events. Participants, including younger and older generations, showed great interest in the opportunities offered by digital tools, but it turned out that they did not have enough information about the ongoing Conference. An interesting discussion "I'm not xenophobic if I'm worried citizen" was held and there was a lot of talk about the migrant crisis on the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia as participants from Bihać shared their personal experiences. At the debate "Solidarity = Inclusive Europe" there was a discussion on the protection of minority rights. Participants from Austria, Serbia and Romania spoke about their experiences as members of a national minority and the differences in the protection of human rights within and outside the EU. On the first day, a seminar was held to discuss the connection between citizens standard of living and growing Euroscepticism as well as the impact and importance of EU cohesion policy. Young participants were working on online promotion of the project, taking videos of participants and their involvement in the programme.

The day of 02/10/2021 was dedicated to the seminar and debate "Elections for the European Parliament and the right of citizens to decide on the future of the EU" which was held in the rural area Lučelnica in order to encourage residents who are less likely to participate in activities of the project to engage in programme and also in civic participation that include EU elections. At the presentation "I volunteer in civil society, join me!" participants shared and exchanged their good personal experiences of volunteering in various civil society organizations to encourage others who may not yet be volunteering. The "European Green Deal" debate presented one protected area of nature in the EU and outside the EU and the differences between them. Climate change, good and bad practices in the local communities of the partners were discussed. In the school three different workshops were realized for young participants with the common theme "Xenophobia and racism are not cool". There was a workshop on tolerance towards people of other religions, gender, political and sexual orientation. Participants viewed how intercultural exchange and this kind of citizens meetings influence acceptance of diversity. Later on the second day of meeting a public program of intercultural exchange was performed at the town square with lot of indirect participants.

The day of 03/10/2021 was dedicated to debates and discussions about the future of the EU that participants would like to see, how well informed they are about EU policies and possibilities to influence them, and how much their views are formed under the influence of lobbying and interest groups within the EU. In addition to survey questionnaire, participants also discussed the extent to which they support EU enlargement and the attitude of the communities they come from, as well as whether the migration crisis is an economic threat to EU citizens. A workshop was held to evaluate the activities, results, to share testimonies of participants and to talk about opportunities for new collaborations and meetings of citizens in Klanjec, but also in other partner environments. At the final conference, joint activities on the dissemination of the results of this meeting were agreed, and a joint statement on the promotion of tolerance, solidarity, and other fundamental values on which the EU is based was signed.

