



**The project « EULOCAL (Even Us the Little Ones Count A Lot) » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"**

## **Strand 2 – Measure 2.2 "Networks of Towns"**

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## The project

The main aim of our project is to convince people: being in EU is rather advantageous. In a family it is obvious, that even the little counts. What about the society: in a town, a country or in the EU? Do small nations, small countries count? Are they important for the EU? Is the European Union important for us? Will it collapse like Roman Empire has? Will there be new exits? All of us meet these kind of questions day by day. The answer is difficult, if we would like to give it without demagogy and prejudice. It is particularly important to discuss these issues with young people, who are inexperienced, and don't know how the European Union works.

The aim of our project is to help the citizens – particularly the young ones – to think about these questions. Participants will discuss most of the above-mentioned questions in detail, but instead of explicit methods we rather use implicit ones, using proper methods we hopefully can give right answers. The proper methods are the most efficient ones: workshops, simulations, debate, exhibition, or in some cases lectures, study visits. These actions all will help participants to realize that in EU also the small countries are important. With different activities we also will prove how important the cultural diversity is, and how the decision makers support small, almost forgotten languages, like Maltese.

The other aim is to emphasize how important each single – even little – action is to reach a common goal in our neighborhood and consequently in the whole Europe. This is true for each individual action (like environment protection, voluntary work – even the smallest one etc.), but also in case of the decision-making process locally or even at European level – like rotation of the EU presidency.

Even the composition of this network reflects our aims: some partners are from large countries, like Germany, Italy, Poland, and small ones like Malta and Hungary. Special target group is youth as their future, life will be in the EU.

## The project partners

**Kőszegi Testvérvárosi Egyesület** acting on behalf of **Kőszeg Town, Hungary** is the coordinator of the project. Besides the coordination and general participants' role they will organize workshop and study visit dedicated to the cleanness of the water and its saving.

**Douzelage Association in Chojna** is the **Polish** partner in the project. Besides the general questions discussed everywhere they show the attitude of the local participants and foreign visitors towards work abroad, and involvement of students in international apprenticeship, as a small step towards being European.

**Marsaskala Local Council** is our partner from **Malta**. Besides the general questions they summarize the attitude of the local participants and foreign visitors towards the importance of a very small, isolated country and the importance of a small, almost forgotten language.

**Tratti**, representing **Velletri, Italy** is a typical cultural and social association with many young members, trained in several international projects. Their special task is to point out the question: How many European have been refugees in the past?

**Stadt Bad Kötzting, Germany** is located within the Nature Recreation Park "Upper Bavarian Forest" on the border to the Czech Republic. Besides the general discussions their special topic will be bee-keeping. This will allow them to present how important the international cooperation is to protect these small animals from epidemic illnesses.

## The Events

Besides preparation and dissemination 5 events have been carried out within this project: one in each partner town.

## Event 1

### Participation:

The event involved 30 citizens, including 14 participants from the city of Marsaskala, Malta; 5 participants from the city of Kőszeg, Hungary; 3 participants from the city of Bad Kötzting, Germany; 4 participants from the city of Chojna, Poland; 4 participants from the city of Velletri, Italy.

### Location / Dates:

The event took place in Marsaskala, Malta, from 19/10/2017 to 22/10/2017.

### Short description:

*The aim of the first event* among the altogether 5 ones was to outline the general topic of the project, and list the consecutive meetings with their main goals, specialties besides considering the advantages of the European Union membership, and the possible effects of the size of an EU state. Also, another aim was to prove through the study visit the importance and the advantage of being little.

The first event was organized by **Marsaskala Local Council**, where *Mayor Mario Calleja* and his colleagues, friends prepared a perfect program for the 30 official participants, 15 of which were from Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland.

The conference was opened by *Mr. Mario Calleja, mayor of town Marsaskala*. In his speech he emphasized the importance of the event and expressed his hope in the common European future. As it was planned, on this first evening (October 19) we had exhibition where participants showed examples for the benefit of being the members of the EU. The photos were placed on posters and remained there in the conference room for a week. Groups had the chance to explain why they chose the given building, part of the town, events for the exhibition. Among them there were photos about international projects organized with EU support, development of a given area in a town etc.

Next morning (October 20) after the daily opening by *Mr. Mario Calleja* the coordinator of the project, *Dr. István Mátrai* introduced the program and its importance. He emphasized, that some people are Eurosceptic and do not want to see the advantage of the existence of the EU. Also, he expressed his belief that the series of conferences, events will contribute to a better reputation of the EU.

The conference was honored by *Dr. Owen Bonnici, Minister of Justice, Culture and Local Government*. In his speech he emphasized the importance of the European Union, and also gave examples for the benefit of the Maltese membership. As a former vice mayor of Marsaskala local council he listed several investments, projects which were carried out with the aid of the EU and expressed his proudness that Marsaskala has been active also in this international project.

After a short break each partner organization gave a short presentation about their “local problems” which will be discussed during their events.

**Kőszeg, Hungary** talked about the importance of involving all entities to save and protect water. In the PPT *Ms. Ilona M. Tólos* outlined the question to be discussed later, and with a few surprising questions she drew the attention of the audience to the importance of the theme. Good answers were even honored with a small gift. Also, she mentioned that there will be “homework” for the Kőszeg meeting, and the Hungarian team will send over them by April.

**Chojna, Poland** presented the attitude of local participants and foreign visitors towards work abroad, particularly in small town. In his PPT *Mr. Janusz Cezary Salamończyk* talked about the benefits of the traineeship abroad, supported by EU funds. He highlighted the most important aspects of the program, and systematically illustrated the difference in a school life before and after internationalization of the school which has been taking part in Comenius, Leonardo, Erasmus+ projects.

**Velletri, Italy** gave presentation about new walls in Europe and new Europeans: young people born in Italy by foreign parents. Ms. *Andrea Chiara Bauco* introduced her summary with the question: “Who is a refugee?” She gave a definition and some numbers to picture the presence of refugees around the world today. She then presented the theme from an historical point of view ending her short speech with her concern, but also hope, for the future and the generations to come.

**Bad Kötzting, Germany** talked about living in a former border area and the remains of the Cold War. In the PPT Ms. *Simona Gogeißl* focused on positive and negative aspects of life in a border area which should be discussed together later. In these areas nature conservation and a sustainable development play an important role. By mentioning the problems of bee keeping caused by parasites, pollutants and pesticides the delegates wanted to highlight the importance of a careful handling of nature for the whole world population.

**Marsaskala, Malta** mentioned the attitude of local participants and foreign visitors towards importance of a very small, isolated country, almost forgotten language. Mr. *Emanuel Casingena* in his presentation he spoke about their language: the origin of Maltese language which is a mix of secular Arabic and Sicilian, a Semitic language with a touch of Roman in it. He said that their language is difficult to understand and write. Their second language is English, a language that nowadays is understood by many other countries. He also added, that during the study visit we will realize this in the everyday life, although we will not be able to distinguish the different dialects of the Maltese language. He mentioned that participants will experience this personally next day, during the study visit to Gozo. For a better understanding he will give some points of views.

After this we had discussion and debate about the questions: **Do little countries count in the EU?** Do they have the same rights? The discussion and debate were organized in groups, and afterwards a spokesperson summarized the opinion of each group. Finally, a common point of view was formed by the participants.

From the overall discussion **‘Even us the little ones count a lot’** the following key points were mentioned: Immigration; Culture/ Folklore, LGBTIQ rights, Students Exchange, Exchange between generations, New input from young generations, Working experience, Strong economy, Social welfare, International Conferences, Rich in History, Lingual Diversity, Voluntary Organisations, Traditions.

In detail the following opinions were presented by the spokesperson: (Obviously, the last group had only a little chance to tell new ideas, but still all groups contributed to the success of the discussion.)

It is obvious that large countries, large cities are stronger, they can influence the others better. However, even small countries can insist on their own opinion. In many countries there are several minorities and they also have their rights – if not, they can ask for help.

Even the EU regulations show that the little countries are also important. Even though smaller countries have less representatives, the EU presidency does not depend on the size, each country holds this position in a rotation. Also, the veto can help smaller nations – until a reasonable point. The small nations can have big activities, remarkable results, and they also can have famous scientists, inventors (like in Hungary). Also, any little actions are important, so even the smaller group of people, associations can have very positive and efficient actions. (Even in our project like beekeepers, disabled people, environment protectors etc. can help to solve serious questions.)

To prove our citizens that even the little ones count a lot, we should talk more about Europe at school, and to prove students that there are differences in EU, but also, there are similarities, and this is obvious. The exchange of generations is important: youngsters and elderlies can learn a lot from each other, and this would be mutually beneficial. The experience of Brexit shows us that big cities feel probably more European, and smaller ones rather keep national traditions, folklore etc.

Exchange of the citizens, particularly exchange of youngsters can help to prove citizens the benefits of being the members of the EU, and this then also contributes to the better reputation of it. This is even easier if the country is small, as there is stronger connection among people, there is less anonymity, so it is easier to carry out changes.

**The lunch and the short break** also contributed to the aim of the project: The international cuisine was an example of the cultural diversity, and gave the chance to exchange ideas, get acquainted informally etc. Different delegations had the chance to learn other nations' food, how they prepare, why they are important in their culture. Everybody took it seriously, despite the flights all partners brought cooked food. Obviously, also the host town presented its traditional lunch, too. This was also an excellent example that a small idea, a little contribution also was part of the success of the event: during preparation, serving the food, waiting for the last ones people had the chance to continue the discussion.

After the lunch – taking into consideration the healthy lifestyle – **we walked to the Douzelage monument**, where a group photo was taken. At the monument – which was erected five years ago – the mayor of the town, *Mr. Mario Calleja* talked about the importance of the monument, which can be found in one of the main squares. Each Douzelage member town has its coat of arm, and they are joint by metal rods to symbolize the strong connection between the countries of the EU and that of the Douzelage towns. The citizens are already aware of any international project taking place in the town because in the square the flags of the participating countries are raised. Posters also showed the program of the event.

**In the afternoon** the participants took part in workshops in 5 international groups. It was well organized, because each nation was responsible for one topic. The topics were the followings: Advantages and disadvantages of being little (HU); Young ones in politics (PL); Immigration (IT); Young ones in sports (DE); Heritage, development and the young generation (MT). After the workshops each group leader summarized the outcomes and answered the topic related questions of other participants.

**Advantages and disadvantages of being little** was summarized by the Hungarian group. Within the international group participants found in number more disadvantages than advantages for being little. During the discussion the most difficult was to find out: advantages or disadvantages are more important. Finally, we agreed that probably advantages are very important, and their strength compensates the many disadvantages. Advantages are for example the easy communication, that people are familiar with each other, it is easier to build up a team and understand each other, they have the same problems and could more easily be solved, and a very important factor: traditions could be more easily preserved. These were those ones the group found the most important.

Disadvantages – according to the discussion – were the followings: It is difficult to find enough people for certain positions – less choice for certain positions; One has to work much harder to find rewarding jobs and opportunities; Could easily be influenced in their opinion by other more powerful and bigger countries; Overcrowded places, not enough parking spaces and not enough space to develop certain projects; More difficult for talented persons to be recognized abroad; In sports not much to choose from for competition; No one to compete with in small cities and have to go somewhere else to improve your abilities; Big companies prefer bigger cities to operate; In industry more pollution could be felt in smaller countries than large countries.

After the summary of the spokesperson most people agreed with the list of advantages and disadvantages. They also added, that youngsters have to move to bigger cities to improve their talents, and unfortunately, they do not come back to their little home town or country. But despite the disadvantages the advantages are stronger. A common point was that all of us have to emphasise the advantages and find the ways to decrease the negative effect of the little size.

**Involvement of young people in politics** was summarized by the Polish group. The group started the discussion with some statistical data. According to many researches young people are not interested in politics. The participation rate of people aged 18 – 25 in the last election to European Parliament was below any other age group. In Poland only 40% of people aged 18-25 vote in elections and the number has been the same for 20 years. It is said that young people are busy with finishing schools, finding jobs, starting family and involvement in politics does not seem to be an important issue. The number of youth town councils is getting smaller and in the member towns of European Town Twinning Association Douzelage, there are very few councillors younger than 30. There are not many young politicians on national or European levels and a new prime minister of Austria is an exemption. There is even quite popular belief among youngsters which emphasizes lack of any political views or no interest in politics at all. There are various initiatives to change the situation. In Malta there is a discussion of allowing young people aged 16+ to participate in local elections. Similar proposals appeared in other EU countries, some of them are even thinking of lowering the age for candidates in national elections to 16. Voting online can also engage more young people.

Those proposals in our opinion can be only one or two of the ways to involve young people in politics. The main area of activities encouraging youngsters should be education. Schools, NGOs and other civic society organisations ought to make all young people aware that political decisions influence almost every aspect of our lives.

During the discussion after the spokesperson's presentation it was also mentioned that Erasmus+ offers financial support for youth projects, action KA3 focuses on youth policy development and can also be used for structured dialogue projects. Another possibility is Erasmus+ action KA2 – international youth initiatives which aim at sharing good practices projects. Also, Europe for Citizens projects can also help in involving youngsters in politics.

**Immigration** was summarized by the Italian group. In the discussion there were similar and sometimes different opinions. We all agreed that immigration does not mean the same for all countries. Malta and Italy are very much affected by the problem of the immigrants, as these countries are in most cases the first stations for the immigrants. Particularly Malta suffers because the number of immigrants is extremely big compared to the size of the country. They are continuously asking for help from the EU to be able to cope with the problem. Also, at the Italian shore there are too many immigrants and sometimes it is difficult to handle the problem. Germany is rather a final destination for the majority of the immigrants, and they try to help them as much as possible. However, in Poland and Hungary there are not too many immigrants. This is partially because of the stricter rules to let them enter the country, but also mostly because they do not want to stay in those countries where the economy and standard of life is not that high. It was good to realize, that participants did not complain against immigration because of xenophobia, racism, selfish economic reasons. They almost all agreed, that all people should enter another country honestly, with proper documents, proving their age and origin. However, it also was added that refugees sometimes cannot have proper documents with them because of safety reason. All participants could tell positive and negative examples about the integration of the refugees in the society. We agreed that they should not be asked to forget their own culture, language, traditions, but they also have to accept the laws of their new, chosen country. It was also mentioned that in Velletri we will talk about the topics in more details.

**Young ones in sports** was summarized by the German group. The participants all agreed that all forms of physical activity improve physical fitness and mental well-being. Participation in sport also promotes active citizenship. It also has a positive effect on people's social life. It is estimated that there are more than 25% overweight or obese children, and it is expected to rise. Obesity is only one of many medical conditions that can be significantly helped by participation in sport – besides heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis etc.

We also found out that sport is a social activity. It is a great opportunity for young people to meet each other in a safe, healthy environment.

Also, sport activities give people the chance to meet citizens of other nations, and the common interest, the same way of thinking definitely helps them to be an active, European citizen.

**Heritage, development and the young generation** was summarized by the Maltese group. They found out a lot of interesting and important factors which have an impact on all the above. As for heritage, it is always easier to preserve it, if a place is small. Not only the country, but villages and little towns keep traditions alive. However, international events are important, because the traditions must be presented to other nations, too. Historical monuments are important to show own citizens and visitors the past. It is easier to do this if the place is small, and people have to preserve only a few buildings. Each nation agreed, as this is a European program, and the EU supports these local initiations. In Malta e.g. several churches, chapels are renovated, and the history from the Byzantine time through the Romans, Ottomans, Normans etc. Velletri, and Kőszeg is also full of successful excavations. As for the development, we have to consider the development of culture, social and religious activities, not only that of the new buildings and of locality. We agreed that development is more difficult in a small place, however even a small change can be seen easier. Developments on cultural and social field can be supported by the local councils. Each town has to struggle with the problem of the future of the youngsters. It is a common problem that they leave small towns and countries, and they do not come back. Communities try to provide young generation with facilities fitting to their needs, but a university or college cannot be substituted. Malta is an exemption: because of its climate, attractive location it is still popular among the youngsters.

The tiring day was closed by a **gala dinner with cultural event**. We had the chance to listen to Maltese traditional music, and we could enjoy the performance of two young singers. Also, all nations were asked to take their national music, so we could listen to them, too.

The last day of the conference was a **field trip to Gozo**, the sister island of Malta. The whole day excellently proved the advantages and disadvantages of being little and being isolated. All participants admired our "tour guides" Mr. John Baptist Camilleri and Mr. Charlot Mifsud, who talked about the cultural heritage, traditions, geographical and historical features of the small islands.

The extra benefit of the program they prepared for the group was that it completely supported our previous discussion about the positive and negative effects of the small size. We could experience how difficult it is to move from the main island to Gozo, particularly because of the ferry schedule: if you miss the ferry, you have to wait for another 2 hours. Also, because of the small size the towns are so crowded, that it is difficult to move with a big speed. Because of the cars, it takes a long time to embark, one can lose much time.

We could see that most inhabitants live on fishing and farming. Most settlements are on the top of the hills because for orchards and vegetable gardens they need the little amount of good soil of the valleys. Because of the unusual shape of parcels simple methods are used to cultivate the land. So, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century people living in Gozo have to use donkey carts, primitive plows etc. We all really admired the heroic job of the handpicking workers.

The isolation of the small island, Comino (there live only 4 persons permanently!) was extremely important during the outbreak of the swine fever, in 1980. This was the only place which was intact, so with the pigs bred there was possible to re-populate the Maltese farms. This way it also was used as a gene bank.

After the fieldtrip – which was an excellent example for informal learning – we got together to summarize our experiences. The conversation continued during the dinner.

All outcomes, the summaries, and photos will be published in the web site of the project: [www.eulocal.eu](http://www.eulocal.eu). Next meeting will be held in Velletri, Italy, in the middle of April.

## Event 2

### Participation:

The event involved 30 citizens, including 15 participants from the city of Velletri, Italy, 4 participants from the city of Kőszeg, Hungary, 3 participants from the city of Chojna, Poland, 4 participants from the city of Bad Kötzting, Germany and 4 participants from the city of Marsaskala, Malta.

### Location / Dates:

The event took place in Velletri, Italy, from 12/04/2018 to 15/04/2018.

### Short description:

*The aim of the second event* was to show local examples of the advantages of the European Union membership, to demonstrate how a large country, one of the founders of the EU thinks about the importance of smaller countries, and to encourage what partnership can be established. Additionally, a secondary aim was to discuss the situation of the refugees, and to initiate discussion about the problems and about possible solutions related to the recent migration crisis.

The event was organized by **TRATTI**, the association of many young university students and citizens with the aid of their mentor, former teacher, *Dr. Alessandra Modio*, and her colleagues and friends. **Tratti**, acting on behalf of Town Velletri in this project prepared an excellent program for the 30 official participants, 15 of which were from Germany, Hungary, Malta and Poland.

Before dinner, *Dr. Alessandra Modio*, mentor of **Tratti** and former councilor, opened the conference. In her speech, she emphasized the importance of young people's participation in public life. She also mentioned that many young participants are still working on the exhibition which would be opened next day. She underlined the importance of the international meetings where very different participants can cooperate. She recalled good memories about the beneficial former EU projects organized with Kőszeg. Afterwards, during the dinner there was a great chance for informal discussion. It is important to mention that the organizers tried to find the best places for the events (library), study visits (museum, winery), meals (pizzeria, agritourism), accommodation (agritourism): either traditional Italian, or international, or EU-supported places.

The next morning (April 13) *Mr. Edoardo Menicocci*, the president of **TRATTI**, opened the day. In his speech he greeted all the participants of the project, and he expressed his satisfaction because many people came to listen to the program, which was publicized at the newsstands. He officially introduced the delegations of the 4 other countries and the host group. He also offered thanks to *Dr. Alessandra Modio* for her assistance on behalf of all 4 visiting groups.

He went on to explain that the site of the event is a very important place for the town: its library. Velletri's library is also called 'House of Culture and Music' because of its central role in the town's cultural life. It was renovated with funds from the EU, so they thought it would be the perfect venue to open the event due to its symbolic status.

We started the program with a movie that we watched: The Great European Disaster Movie, produced by the Italian director Annalisa Piras. The film is about a not so distant future where Europe does not exist anymore and emphasized not only the probable reasons for this, but also the disastrous consequences that a comeback to nationalisms in Europe would create. The whole movie was very moving, and we could find the similarities between the past and the probable future. As the program had been sent weeks before the event, the participants were well able to prepare for it, but we all were very much touched by the sad stories of the movie, which were told by very different people from different countries of Europe. The organizers asked us to think about it, and be prepared for a discussion next day both formally and informally.

The conference was honored by the attendance of Mr. David Sassoli, the vice president of European Parliament. In his speech he highlighted the importance of events like EULOCAL to discuss European problems while gathering people from very different parts of Europe. He was very much impressed by the presence of the many young people among the audience, as youth is usually not interested in politics. He wished them and all participants a very fruitful conference. After his talk there was a chance for the participants to ask questions: is he optimistic about the future of the EU, does he expect other exits etc.

After the questions and answers *Fausto Servadio*, the mayor of the town addressed his thoughts to the audience. He expressed how happy he is that Velletri takes part in this project under the Europe for citizens, network of towns. He told he was very proud in Tratti, because they have done so much for the involvement of the youngsters in the social life of the town. He called to the stage *Dr. Alessandra Modio*, the mentor of the group, former councillor, and underlined the importance of her help she has been giving for the enthusiastic youngsters.

*Dr. István Mátrai* the coordinator of the project briefly introduced the program and its importance. He emphasized that many people are Eurosceptic and do not want to see the advantages of the existence of the EU. Also, he expressed his belief that the series of conferences and events will contribute to a better reputation of the EU. He also mentioned that the first conference was organized in Marsaskala, Malta, and it was very efficient, participants could find new points of views and facts which all highlight the necessity of the cooperation of small and large, old and young EU countries. He expressed his gratitude for the preparation of the event and wished all participants a successful conference.

After a short break the participants and visitors from the town had the chance to listen the words of *Mr. Abdoulaye Mbodj*, who is the first son of African immigrants and who became lawyer in Milan's court. He talked about the life of his family. His father had left his family in Senegal with a promise: to look for all of them for a better future than the native land could offer him. He has never given up, and now they work and live at the gates of Lodi. Their greatest pride is the three children whom they raised with love. *Mr. Abdoulaye Mbodj* stated that he has never felt discriminated against, not at school and not in his work place either. He claimed to be an example of such an Italy that welcomes and does not exclude. As his father, he feels himself a respected person, and he was grateful for the tremendous help he got from many people. Now, he feels is the time for him to repay this, so he does his best to help those ones who need it. His whole speech introduced us to the exhibition we were about to see regarding the 'new Europeans', sons of immigrants who have decided to stay in Italy and change their lives, always keeping in mind the terrible privations their families had to go through.

Together, we then inaugurated the exhibitions, which were open to the public. Fortunately, many students came to see the inauguration, and to listen to *Abdoulaye Mbodj's* words about it. We had the chance to read about successful and less successful stories from different people like famous sportsmen who could not be part of the national team because they were refugees, scientists who could work and were recognized. As *Mr. Abdoulaye Mbodj* told, they all had to work hard to reach their goals. We all agreed that the program was well designed: after the exhibition we had the possibility to talk about the “new Europeans” informally, and in the afternoon, we also could talk about the situation in our countries.

After lunch we returned to the library for our workshop: the main theme was migration, as we understand the centrality of this topic in European recent history. We worked in four international groups. Each group got a statement with a question and they had to present 3 simple suggestions at the end of the workshop. The four themes were migration and integration, sustainable growth and development, defence and security, information and communication. Our conclusions were various: first of all, we underlined the difference between economic and political immigrants, and the importance of media for the perception we have of immigrants and immigration in our country and in Europe in general. We also discussed the centrality of public discussion and critical thinking when talking about themes like this. Secondly, groups talked about our need for immigrants in Europe: because of our aging population, which contributes to our need for a workforce. The question is if this is the real solution? Will refugees work? To teach and train them needs financial help. Finally, we tackled the problem of integration: most participants did this by discussing the problems of integration, problems of violence and divisions in Europe itself, and the difficulty of having people coming from a completely different environment with different rules and traditions. But is it impossible to solve the problem of integration of different cultures? Some of us tried to get to some possible solutions, for example by highlighting the importance of language barrier and education in the process of integration. Also, it turned out that a real integration cannot be expected, and it is impossible. It should be taken into consideration to help these people in the country they come from – if it is a safe country. We all agreed that refugees in real danger deserve all help, but they also have to cooperate, accept the rules and laws of their new countries. It was also mentioned that unfortunately some migrants are criminals and local people tend to put all refugees into the same box, and the attitude towards migrants is not positive at all.

After the workshop questions the delegations of the invited countries briefly talked about their own experience at home.

**Bad Kötzting** delegation mentioned two main points: accommodation of the refugees and job integration education. They had both positive and negative examples. They have about 160 refugees from Syria, Ethiopia, Irak, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine, Mali, Eritrea, Somalia, Nigeria. Most of them live in the former hospital, and only a few “recognized refugees” live in flats in the town. Only 60 of them have the status “recognized as having the right of asylum,” and of them, only 2 work. The children visit open full-time-school or kindergarten and meet playmates.

The key positive fact is, that there is a great refugee support network of active and dedicated volunteers, and they help to integrate refugees in a variety of activities, such as sports clubs and self-reliance training courses. Men and women receive special instruction: for male refugees-- how to behave in contact with women or in the public pool; for women-- language courses specializing in childcare and infant health. Another positive are the collaborative classes for both German nationals and refugees: such as collective cookery courses and knitting courses. There is even a bicycle repair workshop, run by refugees.

However, on the negative side, the state largely depends on the work of volunteers, who can be unreliable. There are housing problems for recognized refugees. A secluded life in the collective accommodation prevents some problems, but doesn't support integration.

As for education there are 11 classes with about 180 students, distributed according to their level, and most of them are willing to learn. Punctuality was a problem in the beginning, but now the students are not less reliable than Germans.

There is a positive example: A recognized refugee from Syria (wife and 2 children) who had studied Arabian Literature got involved as an interpreter at the job agency and was employed as a social worker at the vocational school. Meanwhile he is a full-time social worker and placement officer for refugees at the county administration. He is interested in integration; also, his children speak German.

However, there are negative examples, too. A Syrian student, who showed deviant behavior and didn't follow any rules, even dealt with drugs, had to leave school and has no future in Germany.

The companies in the county are willing to educate and train refugees and employ them after the apprenticeship. They are especially interested in students from Afghanistan. Most of them are interested in learning and integrating. Their chances to stay are minimal, because the Federal Government considers Afghanistan a safe country, which is not undisputed in Germany. So, there is a constant fear of deportation. It even happened that a student was caught by the police right away from a class at school.

There is still a long way to integration. The procedure for granting the right of asylum or deny it takes too much time. It is difficult for recognized refugees to find a job or accommodation. The attitude of many Germans towards refugees is not positive.

**The Kőszeg delegation** could not give too many examples. They explained that Hungary also hosts many refugees, and they – if they deserve it – live in good circumstances. Also, in Kőszeg there are people coming from Armenia, etc. Many professionals, such as doctors, architects, and other workers come to Hungary, in County Vas, and they have really good reputation. However, not too many people would like to stay in Hungary, mostly they want to use it as a transit country, and they want to move to Germany. Definitely, one of the reasons is the higher standard of life in Germany.

Hungary does not deny help to those who live in danger, but the Hungary government requires legal entry, with an ID. Those ones who illegally would like to enter the country – and in this way access Europe – are sent back. It is also true, that the Hungarian Government strongly believes that help should be given there where they are coming from, Hungary has already sent much money to improve living conditions, to build hospitals, schools, etc.

**The Chojna delegation** also could talk about very different situations. As a good example they mentioned concerned a 17-year-old immigrant from Syria. Because of the constant uncertainty and fear, the family decided to move to Poland. The biggest challenge faced by refugees is learning Polish. Without this skill, it was difficult for a teenager to find new friends or to learn in high school. Another problem was the negative attitude of school youth to refugees. After three years of living in Poland, she states that her schoolmates changed their attitude towards her, but they did not change their attitude towards refugees in general. In her opinion, this is not right, because everyone deserves help from others and safe, peaceful living conditions. They plan to stay in Poland until the end of hostilities in Syria or even longer.

The procedures in Poland are complicated and last several months, and people from several countries are placed in the same center. There are a lot of people frustrated in one place because they are kept in limbo for a long, and uncertain amount of time. The cultural diversity in the refugee centers also gives rise to conflicts. In addition, less than a quarter of refugees want to learn Polish. The procedure of admitting immigrants and granting them refugee status in Poland is very long. According to the rules, it should last a maximum of six months, but in reality, it reaches even two years. During this time, foreigners are in special centers. They have a flat, food, medical help, pocket money and learn Polish. As long as they do not have permission for a legal stay, they cannot work or leave the center. Poland has big problems with integration and preparation of foreigners for independent functioning in society. Although they are applying for refugee status or have already received it, most of them are not interested in learning Polish. There are almost four thousand people in the centers. In recent years, only about 100 adults and about 500 children used language classes. There are no consequences for refusing to participate in classes. Another problem is, that there are no experienced teachers. Maybe the situation will change soon, because one company has recently been selected to be responsible for education throughout the country.

After receiving refugee status, foreigners may stay in the center for a year. After this time the help ends, and they have to become independent. A year is not enough time to recover from the mental, physical, and emotional demands of living through a war, to learn a language, and at the same time to find a job. After leaving the center, refugees receive little or no support.

**Marsaskala delegation** talked about their problem: they would not exclude people coming to Malta, but the size of the island and its relatively high population causes serious problems. Because of their geographical situation many ships embark, and even if only temporarily so many refugees cannot be handled.

**The evening** also contributed to the success of the whole event. Dinner was served at the Agritourism hotel where we slept. We also could see the traditional dishes being prepared. We then enjoyed traditional Italian music played by a local group. Besides this, we could share our ideas informally, although the day was full of discussions and hard work.

**On Saturday** we had a walk in Velletri and visited the museum and a temple. At both places we had a detailed guide including the description of the archaeological work. After lunch in a restaurant where we sampled dishes that blended traditional cooking with contemporary flair, we had the pleasure to visit Velletri's experimental winery. There the supervisor explained the centrality of these facilities in Italy not as producers of wine for profit, but as a scientific subject that interacts with producers to achieve the maximum possible from these wonderful natural sources.

We had the chance to observe how many projects were carried out with EU funds in Velletri, which gave us the opportunity to discuss about essential topics in European recent history not only during our workshop and meetings, but also in our free time!

The next meeting will be held in Bad Kötzing, Germany at the beginning of June.

## Event 3.

### Participation:

The event involved 35 citizens, including 13 participants from the city of Bad Kötzting, **Germany**; 6 participants from the city of Kőszeg, **Hungary**; 9 participants from the city of Marsaskala, **Malta**; 3 participants from the city of Chojna, **Poland**; 4 participants from the city of Velletri, **Italy**.

### Location / Dates:

The event took place in **Bad Kötzting, Germany**, from 7/06/2018 to 10/06/2018.

### Short description:

The aim of the third event was to deepen the theme of "Europe" in general and to discuss the issues of "**Why to be in the EU?**" and "**Do we respect the EU?**" in panel discussions and workshops. The workshops took place in a former military base near the border with the Czech Republic, which was used as a listening station during the Cold War and today, so to speak, is a "memorial" for this period. Before the fall of the Iron Curtain, this was the border of the EU. In preparation of the discussion, that is part of the EULOCAL-meeting in Bad Kötzting, students of the Benedikt-Stattdler-Gymnasium prepared an exhibition about their idea and questions: What is EU at all, how does it function, what is its present and future, its fate.

The other theme of the meeting was "Beekeeping and the Aspect of World Bee Mortality", which highlights the importance of these little insects to people around the world. This topic is treated in a theoretical and a practical part. Not only the project participants from the partner cities should have the opportunity to participate in the workshops and discussions, but also the citizens of Bad Kötzting. This topic was prepared and worked out in cooperation with the local high school Benedikt-Stattdler-Gymnasium under the direction of the teachers *Karsten Nasdal* and *Simon Haselbauer*.

In preparation of the workshop, that is part of the EULOCAL-meeting in Bad Kötzting, students attending the 10th grade of the Benedikt-Stattdler-Gymnasium conducted a preliminary project, that investigated different types of grassland with a focus on biodiversity and accommodation of bees.

The background was the recommendation of various environmental interest groups to build strips of flowers alongside fields, in order to increase the ecological value of those landscapes and provide nourishment for bees. During this project said flower strips were compared to a conventional meadow, a two-year bee pasture and a lawn, measuring biodiversity and accommodation for bees, in order to answer the question, which form of management is the most meaningful. The projects and its results were presented to the EULOCAL-participants during the bee-workshop.

### Preliminary activities:

March 2018: A flower strip was created by the students of the tenth grade. Beginning of June: Investigation of the four different areas described in section above. In those areas the vegetation was documented and biodiversity (of fauna and flora) was measured.

In addition to the vegetation surveys, the accommodation of bees was also investigated. To achieve this, the number of blossoms, that are pollinated by insects was counted and compared. Those investigations were followed by a survey of the number of pollinations and species that pollinate the blossoms.

The data collected was refined during regular classes and interpreted for the EULOCAL-Workshop. Finally, the results were presented to the participants of the workshop.

### Running of the event:

**Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2018** - After all participants arrived in Bad Kötzting, they met for an initial conversation for dinner. *Mr. Wolfgang Pilz*, 2nd mayor, city councilor in Bad Kötzting and county council in the district of Cham welcomes the guests, emphasizing the importance of their friendship with their partners in Europe. Afterwards the project manager, *Dr. István Mátrai* welcomed the participants and described in a short speech the topics of the event in Bad Kötzting. The main theme is beekeeping and the worldwide extinction of the honeybee. Other topical issues besides the ones already mentioned will be the future of the EU in terms of refugee issues within the EU and the border area before and after the fall of the so-called Iron Curtain. The workshops, which cover these topics, are carried out on a study trip to the former Nato towers on the mountain Hohen Bogen because of the border proximity to the former states of communism.

**Friday, 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2018** - The day is devoted entirely to the topic of "beekeeping" and "worldwide bee mortality from diseases and epidemics". This topic was prepared and worked out in cooperation with the Benedikt-Stattler-Gymnasium Bad Kötzting. The project participants as well as the pupils and the citizens were already prepared in advance for this topic and local beekeepers were invited to this event. Already in the spring of 2018, a flower strip was planted by the students of the high school as a reference area in contrast to the usual forms of cultivation in this area.

After welcome speeches by the director of the Gymnasium, headmaster *Ms. Birgit Maier*, and the first mayor of Bad Kötzting, *Markus Hofmann*, the teachers *Karsten Nasdal* and *Simon Haselbauer* introduced the topic of the day, which consisted of a theoretical and practical part.

The intention of the workshop is to raise awareness for the difficult situation of the honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) and the resulting problems for mankind. In the context of the EULOCAL-project the focus was on the possible contribution of small municipalities (the little ones) to solve this problem.

Next two speakers (*Mr. Simon Haselbauer* and *Mr. Karsten Nasdal*) were conducting a bilingual public lecture with information about the basics and current state of research concerning the honey bee. The content of this lecture included the achievements of the honey bee in everyday life, its ecological value and problems concerning bee mortality. The lecture was adjourned for a coffee break to discuss this complex issue. Special focus was set on the contributions each individual and each municipality can make, leading to focused discussion.

After the lecture, and a public discourse of the topic, the EULOCAL participants were invited to a lunch, providing additional opportunity for further discussion.

The second, **practical part of the workshop** focused on beekeeping and the results of the investigation, presented by the students on location. The participants were split in small groups introduced to basic beekeeping, having a chance to do some of the work with their own hands. This presented an opportunity to repeat the content of the lecture in a practical sense, working with the animals themselves.

Afterwards the students had an opportunity to present the findings of the preliminary project to the participants of the workshop. This was done on location visiting the different areas described. The students elaborated on the methods used, how they designed their experiments and all of their findings visible on the objects at hand. The participants of the workshop were encouraged to do some of the practical work themselves, for example identifying plants and animals, to deepen their knowledge further and go beyond a pure theoretical approach.

After this scientific part of the day we had the chance to have a closer look at the posters exhibited. It was very useful for all of us to see how youngsters see the EU and its future and we all were happy about their positive attitude.

In conclusion of the day a social gathering with coffee and cake offered an opportunity to discuss the impressions and recap the events of the day.

**Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2018** – That day the project participants dived into the past. Bad Kötzting is only a few kilometers away from the Czech border and was thus directly affected by the so-called Iron Curtain and the accompanying border surveillance. With the chairlift the group reached the mountain station of the Hohenbogens before a 20-minute walk led the participants to the former NATO listening towers – telecommunications sector F.

The European group was already expected there by two former soldiers, *Mr. Franz Treml and Mr. Hubert Wenzl*, who today act as volunteers to explain visitors the history of this area. The participants learned that the first tower was built in 1965. In addition to members of the Bundeswehr, American units (until 1992) and French units (until 1994) were stationed there. 2004 the system was shut down. Inside the towers, the visitors were able to examine original equipment and learned from the two experts more interesting things about life in the border region during the Cold War. Some of the older participants reported how they perceived the Cold War. The young people could hardly imagine a life in the "unfree, divided Europe". All visitors were impressed by the equipment of the towers, even if the techniques of that time today are considered obsolete.

A highlight was the (voluntary) ascent to the 50m high view platform, which has been attached to one of the towers in 2014. From there, the participants had an impressive view of the region. The transition between Germany and the Czech Republic is flowing – there is nothing to see and feel of borders.

In the ensuing workshop, the participants discussed the following questions in small groups: *Why to be in EU? Why do we respect the EU?* The groups should consider both pan-European and concrete examples of the participating countries.

*The delegation from Marsaskala (Malta)* argued that Malta as a small country is confronted with problems that it can only cope with the support of other EU countries. Countries can benefit from one another in cultural, economic and social areas. Only through close cooperation and mutual respect it is possible that the long period of peace can be maintained.

For *the guests from Velletri*, the focus was particularly on the freedom of movement. The young people could not imagine living in a Europe with borders. Nowadays, it is no longer a problem to shop, travel or study abroad in Europe. Because of these benefits, it is important that countries respect and work together.

*The Polish participants* stressed that Europe is looking back on a turbulent past. Especially the Second World War was a formative phase. Such a tragedy can be prevented by cooperation, mutual respect and control in the European Union. A consistent exchange can solve conflicts more quickly. As a further point, the group mentioned a mutual support, particularly in economic matters. Weaker countries receive help from economically stronger nations.

*The Hungarian delegates* joined the previous speakers and added that there are also problems outside Europe that can only be overcome together. With a view to the (foreign) policy of US President Trump, a strong Europe is more important than ever. Each country has its strengths and weaknesses. In the EU, each country can make its important contribution to a peaceful, stable and successful Europe.

*Wolfgang Kerscher* (Bad Kötzting) summed up all the answers. The participants agreed that life in Europe offers many advantages and it is worth fighting for a united Europe. Through the exchange, people can learn a lot from each other.

After the participants returned to Bad Kötzting, they had the opportunity to prepare for the final event at the European Stone Circle in the spa gardens.

In the spa gardens in Bad Kötzting in 1999 the so-called European stone circle was inaugurated. At that time, the Douzelage town twinning had 15 members and the circle also consisted of 15 landmarks, each representing a Douzelage twinned city and thus represent the unity of Europe. Because today the Douzelage has grown to 28 members, it was agreed in the context of this EULOCAL event, this "European Monument" to complete by the missing 13 landmarks and to transform the circle into a spiral - "Europe does not stop". This was an excellent opportunity to involve many local citizens in the project serving both visibility and dissemination.

After the local music group played the European anthem, the stones were unveiled and the 1st mayor Markus Hofmann greeted the guests in his address:

*I am very glad to receive all the guests who came to visit us, regardless of the long distance, from the Baltic Sea to Malta, from Romania to the Netherlands. Your presence at this event is a great honor for us. Special greetings for the Europe for Citizens supported EULOCAL project participants from several Douzelage towns and Velletri.*

*Welcome on behalf of the town of Bad Kötzting!*

*Today our lovely spa gardens are again the location of the installation of a work of art. We are happy, to set a symbol now for all the twenty-eight Douzelage towns by placing their boundary stones in the park's lawn. The idea of this installation of land-art was conceived by Bad Kötzting's artist Alois Öllinger. Unfortunately, he is not able to take part in the final realization of his concept personally. He has to stay in hospital due to a disease. From here I wish him all the best for his recovery.*

*In 1999 Alois Öllinger had the idea, to place 15 boundary stones from the 15 partner towns of the Douzelage at that time in a circle in the spa gardens. Harmony and solidarity between the partners should be emphasized by the symbol of a circle, recumbent in itself and overcoming boundaries. In 2016 the boundary stone of our Czech partner town of Sušice was added.*

*Since that time the Douzelage has grown. Meanwhile many new partners have joined the Douzelage. Twenty-eight partner towns, one of each country of the European Union, are intending to foster Europe jointly. It motivated the artist to upgrade his concept. The recently added boundary stones form a spiral. It stands as a symbol for the dynamics of the partnership, which overcomes boundaries without obliterating the characteristics and specifics of each partner town. The original meaning of the boundary stones therefore is changed playfully. The physical presence of the stones from all over Europe makes this work of art a special experience. Let us unveil the new boundary stones today.*

*Let me say thanks to all those who helped to realize this project. First of all let me mention the team of the local building yard, the Fuchs Marketing Company who created the labels, and my staff in the town hall who helped preparing this event and last but not least Mr Wolfgang Kerscher, our Douzelage-Manager.*

*Dear friends, in these days the European Union faces a lot of challenges. We experience a plenty of criticism on the EU, sometimes qualified and not the least because of a sometimes exorbitant bureaucracy. Yet in some states of the EU we see the growth of a nationalism, worrying us because of its challenge or even fundamental denial of the values of the EU.*

*We are a **small community** and we don't go for the big politics today. In fact, our answer is: We have become a partner of the Douzelage because we believe in a Europe for citizens. We will live Europe, with projects with partners, with mutual visits, with personal friendships beyond all boundaries. You, who are celebrating this event today, you are welcome as citizens of Europe and our friends.*

*Let us now unveil the boundary stones.*

*Vivat Europe!*

The meeting in Bad Kötzting ended with this event and a small barbecue party.

**Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2018** - Farewell and departure of guests from Italy, Malta, Poland and Hungary.

Next EULOCAL event will take place in July 2018 in Chojna/Poland.

## Event 4

### Participation:

The event involved 37 citizens, including 17 participants from the city of Chojna, Poland; 6 participants from the city of Marsaskala, Malta; 8 participants from the city of Kőszeg, Hungary; 3 participants from the city of Bad Kötzting, Germany; 3 participants from the city of Velletri, Italy.

### Location / Dates:

The event took place in **Chojna, Poland** from **28<sup>th</sup> June** to **1<sup>st</sup> July 2018**.

### Short description:

The aim of the fourth event was to show local examples of the advantages of the European Union membership, to demonstrate how an Eastern European country, one of the former communist countries, thinks about the importance of membership, and to encourage local communities to actively take part in European issues. Additionally, a secondary aim was to discuss working and studying across borders, the attitude of the local participants and foreign visitors towards working abroad, and the involvement of students in international apprenticeship, as a small step towards being European, and to initiate discussion about the problems and about possible solutions related to these issues.

The event was organized by **Douzelage Association in Chojna**, a local NGO. On behalf of Chojna Town they prepared an excellent program for the participants. The organizers did their best to find the most suitable places for the events (for example the school involved in EU projects), study visits (museum, lake, market, etc.), meals (Piastowska, Bielin horse farm, etc.), accommodation (local hotels and hostel) to make sure the event will be beneficial and memorable for all participants.

**On Thursday 28<sup>th</sup>**, after the delegations arrived, *Cezary Salamończyk* greeted the participants on behalf of **Chojna Douzelage** (Poland) and outlined the importance of the project. He officially introduced the delegations the host group. He stressed how important the international meetings are, where EU cooperation is realized between very different participants. He underlined the idea of this project, under the Europe for Citizens program. He also mentioned his good memories about the former EU projects carried out by partner towns in the Douzelage, from which many participants he had already met before. He also mentioned that a part of the Polish delegation is very young, and we all need their cooperation for the sake of their future.

Afterwards the groups of the partners were also introduced by their leaders with a few sentences. *Ms. Ágnes Lepold*, the leader of the **Kőszeg group** (Hungary) emphasized how important the involvement of young people is. She introduced the group, most of them just graduated from high school, and start their university studies – some of them even abroad.

*Ms. Andrea Chiara Bauco*, the leader of the **Velletri group** (Italy) joined to the previous speech, and talked about their association, **TRATTI**, where the average is like theirs, around 23. She also added that she is lucky to be able to spend one semester in Portugal with Erasmus+ support.

*Mr. Wolfgang Pilz*, vice mayor, the head of the **Bad Kötzting** delegation (Germany) explained that unfortunately they could not take youngsters with them for this meeting because of the school exams, but they will report about the meeting at home. Also, one of the participants is the journalist of their local newspaper, he will make sure the project meeting will be known by their citizens.

*Jean Carl Cassar* introduced the **Marsaskala delegation** (Malta). He told that many youngsters study and work abroad, so the local theme is definitely interesting for them, and all information will be very useful for them, too.

Still on the first evening, before the dinner the event in Chojna continued with a **debate ‘To be or not to be – in EU?’**. The debate was open so apart from project participants from host and partner countries there were some local people present. In the introduction main advantages of EU membership were mentioned such as right to live and work in any EU country, social security, freedom and liberal democracy. There were also remarks on current problems like immigration crisis, lack of solidarity among EU countries, not enough democracy in decision making process on European level.

The most controversial issue was immigration crisis. Some people emphasized negative sides of the process, especially cultural differences and possible dangers connected with terrorist attacks. However, there was also strong voice of the need of solidarity and help towards people in need like refugees. Debate participants were in favor of distinguishing refugees and economic migrants. Financial help received by farmers and improvement of infrastructure in Eastern European countries were also listed as main advantages of EU membership. The debate initiated further, informal discussion during the dinner.

**On Friday 29th** in the morning participants attended a **workshop on Erasmus+ apprenticeships for vocational school students in the EU**. The workshop was held at the local secondary school, **Zespół Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych** where *Ms. Adriana Salamończyk* head of the school greeted the participants. She explained that she is very proud because the school has been taking part in EU projects since 2004.

*Mr. Cezary Salamończyk*, the coordinator of the international projects explained, that Zespół Szkół Ponadgimnazjalnych (complex of upper secondary schools) in Chojna has a Quality Charter of Vocational Mobilities. It has organized about 300 vocational mobilities for its students in Malta, the UK, Germany, Hungary and Luxembourg. The coordinator of vocational mobility projects in ZSP in Chojna showed a PowerPoint presentation about apprenticeships of IT, hotel management, catering and construction students. There was some information of commercial companies which cooperate with school and accept students to have work experience there, ECVET (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training) implementation, Europass Mobility document and advantages of this initiative for school and individual students.

After the presentation participants of the workshop asked questions to find out how to prepare successful project application, financial rules of the project and which institutions are eligible to take part in this EU programme. As some of the participants and invited other local youngsters also took part in the above program and spent their apprenticeship abroad, they also could answer the questions of other participants. They all agreed that the month spent abroad with work was a lifelong experience and determined their future. *Mr. Cezary Salamończyk* ended the conversation with the promise that during and after the exhibition there will be more time to continue the discussion with the youngsters.

Then participants of the workshop worked in groups and tried to prepare some ideas for the vocational mobility project for technical schools from their municipalities. They had to consider if their schools are eligible for these kind of mobility projects, or if they could host vocational students. After that each group presented their ideas which were evaluated by the workshop leader.

After a short break the group started the **moderated discussion: EU labor market for inhabitants of small municipalities**.

Before the event organizers asked the partners to be prepared for this discussion. As they told, either a PPT, Prezi, poster, oral presentation will do in order to contribute to the success of the event. Representatives of Velletri, Kőszeg and Bad Kötzting showed PPT presentations – obviously with plenty of information not written in the slides. Marsaskala and Chojna had oral introductions to the topic, but Chojna underlined that there will be a practical part of this topics. (PPT-s can be found among the **Materials**.) Each town described the local situation regarding labor market trying to answer following questions:

- are there many foreign workers in the municipality?
- what are their main areas of employment?
- are there any conflicts between them and a local community?
- do people from the municipality try to find work abroad?
- do they leave the town permanently?
- does this work migration cause problems on the local labor market?

After each presentation there were questions and a short discussion. In the end the moderator concluded the debate repeating some points from the discussion:

- There are a lot of foreign workers in Marsaskala and Bad Kötzting, most of them work in municipal services, gastronomy and do low paid jobs, there are many Ukrainians working in Chojna, while many workers come from the Balkan to work in Kőszeg.
- Many young people from Kőszeg commute to work every day to Austria, there is a similar situation in Chojna where people go to work in Germany.
- In Velletri foreign workers do low paid jobs, whereas local young people try to find work in specialized professions in countries like Switzerland and the UK.
- It also turned out that inhabitants of small municipalities do not feel endangered by foreign workers.
- Young graduates from Velletri, Bad Kötzting, Marsaskala, Kőszeg and Chojna feel that they have the same opportunities regarding finding work abroad as inhabitants of big cities.

*Mr. Cezary Salamończyk* summarized the discussion and added that next day when participants will visit the market at the border will see the situation in the real life.

*Mr. Salamończyk* announced that Prof. Dariusz Rosati (MEP) addressed a letter to the participants of the project event in Chojna. He read this letter for the participants:

*“Thank you very much for the invitation to the "Europe for Citizens" event. Unfortunately, the planned obligations and the obligations of the service in Brussels make it impossible for me to accept your invitation.*

*I welcome the initiative to start discussions about the benefits of EU membership for small towns. I am convinced that the rich thematic program, the participation of eminent speakers and foreign partners and the commitment of the organizers will make the event very popular.*

*I say thanks for the organizers for their effort. At the same time, I wish you other equally valuable initiatives, unflagging energy for further action and implementation of your plans and intentions.*

*All gathered, please accept the wishes of a good atmosphere of the meeting, conversations rich in interesting observations and satisfying results of the discussion.”*

After this he as the Chairman of the Douzelage Association in Chojna, the local coordinator of the event introduced the guest, *Mr. Norbert Obrycki* (MP). He informed the guest and the participants of the meeting, members of the project partners organizations and inhabitants of Chojna of the main ideas of the Europe for citizens project: ‘Even Us Little Ones Count a Lot’. He shortly summarized the themes and results of the previous meetings.

In his lecture *Mr. Norbert Obrycki* (MP, member in international affairs committee in Polish Parliament). He proposed that his lecture will not be very long in order to spend more time on questions and a discussion; participants of the meeting approved his proposal. He gave the title of his presentation: „**Is EU for citizens?**” In the beginning of his speech he described his professional and political career, his private life and interests as well as current political areas of involvement. He also talked about his experience in international relations, Regions Committee, Euroregion Pommern and cooperation between Polish Parliament and European institutions. Participants of the meeting asked *Mr. Obrycki* many questions concerning the role of European Parliament, relations between smaller and more powerful countries in EU, relations EU – USA, decision making process on national and European levels, populist parties in EU, next European election, future of EU and immigration crisis. Many of the participants were concerned about populist governments and how they reflect on EU issues, others wanted to know how local communities and NGO’s could act to improve and encourage EU citizenship locally.

After the lecture and questions the lunch and the short time to relax also gave opportunity to continue the informal debate among the participants.

The next step was the **Photo exhibition: Erasmus+ apprenticeships of ZSP in Chojna students in EU countries.**

Participants of EULOCAL event in Chojna visited a photo exhibition of Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus+ vocational mobility projects for students of ZSP in Chojna. There were presented not only photographs but also short descriptions of the projects, project partners and financial support given by European Commission. This was kind of the practical part of the presentation of the Polish group. Here participants could ask further questions like reputation of such a project among the school mates, among the teachers. Students were really talkative, they underlined that the month spent abroad opened their mind, they improved both their English and vocational skills, and they really got more Europeans. Also, their self-confidence and they became more independent, more responsible.

As at all event venues, also in Chojna organizers included some free time and cultural experience. Although after the exhibition not too much time was left, it was essential to get impressions about the neighborhood. The group had the chance to visit Moryń where the local ancient fauna was displayed. After that participants had some recreational time in Bielin, on a horse farm, with cart rides, walk in the forest. The long workday was finished with a barbecue dinner.

**On Friday 29th** in the morning there was the **study visit to the market at the Polish – German border in Osinów Dolny.**

Participants of the EULOCAL project event in Chojna took part in a study visit in a market near the border crossing in Osinów Dolny. Market in Osinów Dolny is the closest place for shopping in Poland for inhabitants of Berlin. There are hundreds of small shops with food, clothes, shoes, plants, ceramics, many hairdressers, petrol stations, bars, cafes and restaurants. There Polish vendors have been selling their products to German customers (as well as locals), for whom the goods are fairly inexpensive and not only Polish zloty, but euros too are accepted as payment.



The study visit was a very good opportunity to experience the unique atmosphere of the place where there are no language obstacles and just like in Harrods almost anything can be sold if there is a customer for it. Project participants were able to talk to shopkeepers, customers and shop assistants including immigrants from Ukraine and Vietnam. Kőszeg group explained that also in their town there are many tourists coming from Austria, but instead of buying goods they come because of the cheaper service, so wedding ceremonies, dentists, restaurants, photographers etc. are full of Austrian clients.

In the afternoon participants took a cultural trip to Szczecin, with sightseeing and some free time before.

The farewell dinner was wonderfully organized with a local band playing live music.

Next meeting, the last event will be held in Kőszeg, Hungary between 18<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of October.

## Event 5

### Participation:

The event involved 59 citizens, including 31 participants from the city of Kőszeg, Hungary; 8 participants from the city of Marsaskala, Malta; 9 participants from the city of Bad Kötzting, Germany; 6 participants from the city of Chojna, Poland; 4 participants from the city of Velletri, Italy.

### Location / Dates:

The event took place in Kőszeg, Hungary, from 18/10/2017 to 21/10/2017.

### Short description:

*The aim of the fifth, i.e. the last event* among the altogether 5 ones was to summarize the general topic of the project, i.e. to list as many advantages of the European Union membership, as possible and analyze the Euroscepticism. Also, another aim was to show the advantages of being the member of the European Union through both the “theoretical part” of the event and the study visit.

The fifth event was organized by **Kőszegi Testvérvárosi Egyesület (Kőszeg Town Twinning Association)**, where members prepared a very tight but beneficial program for the 59 official participants, 28 of which were from Germany, Italy, Malta and Poland.

The conference was opened with a folk-dance performance of two members of the association, *Anikó Horváth* and *András Sudár*. After this *Dr. István Mátrai*, the president of the association greeted the participants and asked *Mr. László Huber*, mayor of town Kőszeg to share his thoughts with the audience. In his speech he emphasized the importance of all those events where representatives of more nations get together to discuss remarkable questions of the European Union. He summarized the rich and challenging history of the town underlining that being at the border taught us to respect other nations. He gave examples how well we live together with the minorities in our area. He told, this makes our town colorful and successful.

After the speech of the mayor the guest groups gave the organizers the paintings, drawings, photos they brought for the exhibition. The organizers afterwards have set up the exhibition. (The opening ceremony was next day.) The dinner gave a good opportunity for the participants to get acquainted with each other.

**Next day, October 19, Friday** morning the program started with introductions. Some of the participants already knew each other, but many of them were unknown for most people. That’s why the heads of the delegations introduced them shortly. The vice-mayor of **Bad Kötzting**, *Mr. Wolfgang Pilz* introduced the 9-member-team, 3 of them youngsters. *Mr. Mario Calleja*, Mayor of Marsaskala introduced the 8-member-team. *Mr. Janusz Cezary Salamończyk* the president of **Douzelage in Chojna** talked about the Polish delegation, while the **Velletri** delegation of 4 participants were introduced by *Mr. Edoardo Menicocci*, town councillor. Finally, *Dr István Mátrai*, the president of the association introduced not only the Hungarian team from Kőszeg, but also warmly greeted *Ms. Annigje Kruytbosch*, the president of the **European Douzelage from the Netherlands**, who joined to the meeting. She gave a very nice, useful lecture during the meeting, and will help us with the wider dissemination of the project, as well.

*Dr István Mátrai*, the coordinator of the project introduced the website of the project which contains the most important information about the project and showed how it works, what files are already uploaded. Also, he showed the Kőszeg website, where the project events are already partially uploaded. He emphasized, how important this is, and it is compulsory for all towns involved in the project to create the same place in their towns’ website in order to get the financial support from the EU. He also underlined that the final report will be sent by the coordinator, but he will ask help from the partners.

After this session participants took part in the Water Workshop, which was prepared by *Ms. Ilona Tálos-Mátrai* and *Ilona Mátrai-Halász*. In the preparation phase they made large posters with some information about the water footprint in general and in some special cases. Also, to inform the participants (particularly those who came from other countries) about the world-famous Hungarian thermal waters, spas, they prepared an exhibition about them.

The work began with solving a test with 13 multiple choice questions. The first 10 questions related to water footprint. Among them there were questions like “What amount of water is needed to produce 1 cup of coffee?” (the answer shocked people: 140 liter), or “What amount of water is needed to produce 1 kg of beef?” (the answer was even more shocking: 15500 liter). Only some of the participants were well informed in this topic. The last 3 questions related to the fresh water: what % of the fresh water is used for the household, industry and irrigation. (The test questions can be found among the “Materials”)

Participants worked in groups. After the answers were checked the best group got chocolate, called “Balaton szelet”.

The second part of the workshop was moderated by *Ms. Ilona Tálos-Mátrai*. Five short dialogs were given to the five groups – one for each. They discussed the topics in 15 minutes and one spokesperson presented the result of their discussion. Each paper started with some pieces of information about water footprint, direct and indirect water use. (E.g. in Europe **the average person directly consumes between 100-150 liters of water a day** - as drinking water, for washing clothes, bathing and watering plants, but **each person also indirectly consumes between 1,500 and 10,000 liters of per day** depending on where they live and their consumption habits. (The discussion topics can be found among the “Materials”).)

**Group A topic** was eating meat or being vegetarian. Conversation of John (vegetarian) and a Tom (carnetarian) at a restaurant. Having the information about the water footprint of different foods the group had to discuss the topics and give their opinion. The spokesperson of the group talked about the advantages of the former eating habits of people: they ate meat once a week. However, the group did not suggest that all people should be vegetarian, but they suggested the balanced diet for everybody. This is not only because of the smaller water footprint, but we all should remember that the human being is omnivore.

**Group B topic** was food at school canteen. In the dialog two parents, Kate and Ann talked about the quality of the food at school canteen. The key question was how delicious the food at school canteen is. After the discussion they agreed that a balanced freshly prepared food would be healthy for the children. Using chemicals might make the food more delicious but different E-# components can cause health problem, e.g. they extremely increase appetite. Besides these factors *their water footprint is very big*.

**Group C topic** was a situation at a store. The key question was: what the consequences of banning plastic bags might be, particularly if we consider that trashcans should be cleaned with much more water. The group took into consideration of both factors: saving water and being environmentally friendly. They agreed with banning it in supermarkets (particularly the very thin ones), but they would still use them for trash. Also, they mentioned, even for trash recycled paper bags would be the best solution as it will be decomposed in the nature, but *we save water* to clean them.

**Group D topic** was to discuss the advantage of buying local products instead of transporting them from long distances. After the discussion the group listed the advantages and disadvantages of the use of local products. Taking into consideration the sustainable development it is better to use the local goods, because it does not require transportation, during which a lot of poisonous gases are released, fuel is consumed etc. Besides these, much *less water is wasted* for the unnecessary transportation.

**Group E** had to suggest ten water saving methods. They also had to decide, what age is the best to start to talk about water saving. This group was the last to give their summary where they stated that even at an age of 5 we have to teach our children to save water. All ten listed methods can be seen in the “Material” part.

The moderator, *Ms. Ilona Tálos-Mátrai* summarized the theoretical part of the workshop. She mentioned, that in 1960s only two-thirds of the Earth’s resources were used by people. October 21, 1992 was the day of global overconsumption, from which the resources of the next year were consumed. To maintain our current lifestyle, we would need 1.7 Earth, but we have only one. Water use is growing at twice the rate of population growth. Unless this trend is reversed, and we come up with a way to share water fairly and sustainably throughout the planet two-thirds of the global population will face water stress by 2025. If all people will think about this responsibly as we have done this morning, water stress will come much later. During the study visit we will see tomorrow; how local actions did improve the quality of some springs.

After the water workshop *Ms. Ágnes Lepold* opened the exhibition prepared last evening. She explained why we chose water as the theme of the youngsters’ paintings, drawings and photos. She also distributed little disks and asked the participants to decide later, during the day whom they would give the first prize. The opening ceremony was followed by a short coffee break.

After the coffee break, we continued our work with the **European values**. The first step was a lecture given by *prof. Dr George Schöpflin*, the Member of the European Parliament. Our invited guest was introduced by *Mr. Béla Básthy*, the vice mayor of the town.

The professor gave a talk about integration from the viewpoint of Hungary and other small countries and/or those that formerly belonged to the Eastern bloc. He also shared his views on the sources of Euroscepticism.

First, he stressed the fact that Hungary’s place in the EU is determined by its size and population and that the weight of large countries tend to dominate in the EU. However, when the EEC became into being after World War II the aim was to lead Europe out of the trauma not only economically, but also politically and to achieve this goal the equality of respect towards all members was established by creating institutions that would prevent large states from dominating small ones.

*Dr Schöpflin* explained that after WWII in the socialist-communist sector the development of these countries was artificially held back, the peasantry was transformed into city people and people were oppressed. However, oppression can never be 100% successful as examples of upsurge already signaled in the 1960’s. At last, with the peaceful revolutions in these countries there was a chance for them to rejoin Europe. After 1989 Hungary also had high expectations of being integrated.

So, the question is whether small states are parts of only a new empire in the EU, whether they have any means to validate their concerns. The professor underlined that the EU should be a forum for small states as well to sort out their problems. *Dr Schöpflin* stressed that EU membership has not fulfilled expectations in Eastern Europe in many aspects. For example, on an economical level it is obvious that the ranking of countries has not changed much in terms of living standards. Also, while 1989 was a move towards democracy, it was also a large step in national emancipation and with the rising popularity of nationhood, preserving national identity has become growingly important for small states.

Although it is obvious that EU integration is a success because it is possible to find compromise, with the growing importance of human rights normative in the last decade the question arises whether nationhood will get in the way of possible compromise in the EU.

After the lecture there were some questions, for example on the feelings of the Dutch, and maybe other Western European people too, who often feel that they pay high taxes to support Eastern Europe and ask how the EU is beneficial for them. The professor answered that the majority of EU-funded projects in Eastern Europe are carried out by western companies, so they benefit from these projects as well and about 90% of the funds go back to the west in this way. Before and after the lecture we distributed one of the newest articles written by professor Schöpflin: “The small states of Europe and large whirlpools. The implications of a multi-polar world.”

After the lecture and questions the lunch gave the opportunity to relax a bit and allowed participants to prepare for the afternoon session.

The afternoon session began with a moving speech. We asked *Ms. Annigje Kruytbosch*, the president of the European Douzelage to answer the question: “What does the European Union mean for me?”

*Ms. Annigje Kruytbosch* first talked about the life of his father, as all 18-year-old men, should go to work for the Nazi’s. Instead, he went into hiding. After the war he went to University. With all his fellow students he dreamt of a strong, stable and foremost peaceful Europe. They all tried to look forward and the memory of a scattered Europe drove them to rebuild their Europe together in peace. After his studies, he got a job at Foreign Affairs and was quite quickly on his way to Paris to work for the European Coal and Steel Community. As we all know, this was a precursor of the Common Market and the EU. The Treaty of the European Coal and Steel Community was signed in 1951 and became effective in 1952, only 7 years after the war had ended. It was the most important initiative for European Integration and peace. She was just a baby when they moved to Paris, and 15 years later they moved to Brussels. In 1944 Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg decided to establish a Customs Union: free movement of goods and persons within these 3 countries.

I often hear: “Yes, but Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are so alike!”. I dare to dispute that. We speak different languages, we are from different religion, have a different history and different mentality. But it works and that is the most important!

Last fact about my father I am quite proud to say that he was the architect of the Treaty of Schengen. It was his dream to have open borders – as those within the Benelux – for the whole of the European (Economic) Union. It was signed in Schengen in Luxembourg in 1985.

So, what does the EU mean to me? I was clearly brought up in a pro-European environment. I did my final school exams on the European School in Brussels in 1980 where at that time 9 nationalities were gathered. We had fun with the Italians, tried to understand the Danish, because our languages are close, enjoyed perfect education from the English and were one big united family of friends. I grew up with the idea that we from Europe are united in diversity.

Western Europe has known nearly 75 years of peace. That is a very, very long time. I am aware of the fact that this does not go for our Eastern European friends: their recollection of uncertain and frightening times lies in a more recent past. We all have the responsibility to keep on walking the road of peace together! I am proud of the fact that my dad contributed to some European pillars that make us united today. His Europe, my Europe, your Europe: let us work together to keep Europe united, to educate and to respect one and other. I know we can do it!! (The whole speech can be found among the Materials.)

After this speech the participants started the workshop about the Euroscepticism. The whole workshop consisted of three parts.

First all participants got a 6-question-multiple choice test. They should find out if when Euroscepticism started, which are the most Eurosceptic countries, what % of the population had a positive image of the EU in 2015 etc. It turned out that only 2 of the answers were 100 % right. The moderators, *Ms. Marietta Nagy* and *Ms. Claire Strasbaugh* discussed the answers in detail and gave evidence for them.

The aim of the second part was to check how well participants know some terms, like nationalism, soft/hard Euroscepticism, Euro-rejects, Euro-enthusiasts etc. The groups were given the terms and their definitions on different papers and they had to pair them. It was not a difficult task, but it was important to make sure they know these terms. (The task can be found among the Materials.)

The last part was more interactive: participants had to stand up and move to the right side or left side of the room or even stay in the middle depending upon their agreement or disagreement with some statements they could read in the screen. As they moved, they could / should discuss their decision with the others. The statements were related to their feelings about the EU membership. Just a few examples:

- Taking into account, my country benefits from EU membership
- I personally feel like a European citizen as well as a citizen of my country.
- Immigration weakens nations as they have to focus on new citizens' needs.

It was interesting to observe the answers of the delegations. It was important that all participants thought that their countries benefit from the EU membership. However, some participants rather felt themselves as citizens of their country, and being European citizenship came only after. We all agreed, there is nothing wrong with this feeling, if they also respect European values. The attitude towards immigrants has divided the participants a bit more. After a short summary the moderators closed the workshop.

After a short break, participants walked to the Castle Cultural Center to listen to a folk music concert, then the day finished with a dinner in the castle.

On Saturday morning the foreign participants were accompanied by the local ones for a guided tour where they had the chance to see the historical town center and its renovation. They could see how many buildings are renewed with the aid of European funds or government help. After this we visited the mountains. This study visit was partially a support of the benefits of being European Union member: as we drove and walked everybody could see the memories of the former iron curtain. As a European citizen, our path led sometimes in Hungary, sometimes in Austria. Very few people can imagine, that earlier we had to stop a few kilometers from these places.

On the other hand, this was the practical part of our water project. During the trip we could see several springs which all were clean, many decades ago. Later, the pollution (both in Hungary and Austria) destroyed the good quality of these springs. However, the common effort was successful, we could proudly show them, we can drink from the famous Seven Spring.

After the lunch participants had a short free time: they had the chance to visit the market in the main square. The day and the whole official event were finished with a farewell party, where we also announced the winners of the photo and drawing competition.

On Sunday morning some delegations still could stay for the so-called Ursula Market. This time associations, groups, schools etc. offer their food they prepared. We asked our partners to bring some local food, and besides the cakes, etc. prepared by the members of the association we also took those dishes to the market. We also prepared leaflets about the project and distributed to the visitors who enjoyed the international table. This way not only the local citizens, but other visitors – even from many other countries – had the opportunity to learn about our project.