

# EUROPEAN ACADEMY NETWORK ENCOURAGING DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AT EU LEVEL

Programme: Europe for Citizens

Strand: Strand 2 - Democratic engagement and civic participation

Project budget: 148.680 euro

Project number: 615496-CITIZ-1-2019-2-BG-CITIZ-NT

## PROJECT LEADER

BULGARIA Veliko Tarnovo Municipality Project partners

AUSTRIA Institute of the Regions of Europe

BELGIUM ECIT Foundation

BULGARIA Bulgarian Centre for LL

CROATIA Agencija za ruralni razvoj Zadarske županije

HUNGARY Szodliget Municipality

ITALY Soveria Mannelli

LATVIA Social Innovation Centre

MALTA Luqa City Council

MONTENEGRO Municipality of Kolasin

POLAND Local Action Group „Dolina rzeki Grabi”

PORTUGAL Municipality of Torres Novas

SLOVENIA Občina Benedikt

SPAIN La Palma del Condado Municipality

Start date: 02 March 2020

End date: 17 July 2021

PROJECT PRIORITY Debating the future of Europe and challenging Euroscepticism

NETWORKS OF TOWNS shall:

- Integrate a range of activities around the subject(s) of common interest to be addressed in the context of the Programme's objectives or multiannual priorities;
- Have defined target groups for which the selected themes are particularly relevant and involve community members active in the subject area (i.e. experts, local associations, citizens and citizens' groups directly affected by the theme, etc.);
- Mobilize citizens across Europe: a project should involve a minimum of 30% of invited participants. "Invited participants" are international participants sent by the eligible partners.
- Serve as a basis for future initiatives and actions between the towns involved, on the issues addressed or possibly on further issues of common interest.

## SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

"The project will be in line with European agenda 2020-2021 – new Commission, new European Parliament composition, new policies and programs. New opportunities for municipalities across Europe, and new possibilities of democratic participation. Development of training modules and creation of good practices on how to "teach Europe".

With the reappearance of demands for national borders, the four EU freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital and persons) and EU multiculturalism are under threat. With this in mind, and with respect to the priority to challenge Euroscepticism, the partners of the EUROPEAN ACADEMY NETWORK aim to provide European local and regional policy makers and citizens with knowledge and tools that support active citizenship and democratic Union. The unique composition of the partnership will allow a group of 1270 citizens to get engaged in a process that includes real-life SIMULATION ACTIVITIES to experience how EU institutions operate and to understand the subtleties of EU policy making (European Parliament, European Council, Commission, Committee of the Regions, Council of the EU). This will allow different groups in society to personally engage in Union policy processes, as well as internalize democratic values that unite Europe. The ACADEMY moreover will spread good practices of how policy makers and citizens can engage in EU matters, and participate in its making. The project activities will take place between March 2020 and July 2021, engaging partners from 13 countries: Bulgaria, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Malta, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, Montenegro, Poland, and Latvia. By facilitating exchange and policy learning among participants, the project will increase institutional capacities in long-term - a fundamental asset for the future of democracy, taken into consideration nationalistic tendencies in Europe. With the intention to broadly support European

civic education and engagement in shaping the EU agenda, a POLICY TOOLKIT will be published and disseminated as a tool with pan-European relevance containing reviewed methods and worked out approaches. We expect a 70% increase of volunteering of 1270 people directly involved. Through dissemination (eg. visuals, BLOG) the project aims to reach 100.000 people across Europe.

The main objective of the European Academy Network is to provide European local and regional policy makers, associations and citizens with tools that will support their informed civic and political participation at EU level. European Academy Network will connect towns and organizations across Europe willing to participate in a series of international events where they will experience policy training modules – simulation games which will allow them to better understand procedures and standards that constitute Europe and active European citizenship. The Network will also collect good practices on how local policy makers and citizens can “approach Europe” and participate in its making. This will raise awareness about democracy in partners’ own municipalities and countries, and in the EU as a whole. The project will create opportunities for mutual understanding, intercultural learning solidarity, societal engagement and volunteering at Union level.

"The EUROPEAN ACADEMY NETWORK is a large and diversified partnership of 14 towns and CSOs willing to organize together a series of international and local activities where over 1270 citizens get PERSONALLY engaged in innovative policy process. It includes SIMULATION ACTIVITIES which enable to reduce a subjectively perceived distance between the EU and citizens through a positive, intercultural experience of making EU politics relevant and understood. The Network moreover spreads good practices on how policy makers and citizens can “approach the EU” and participate in its making in this new phase - post 2019 European Parliament elections, after Europe 2020.

In line with general objectives of EFC, the project reinforces European citizenship at grass-root and EU level. It engages 1270 citizens directly and 100 000 indirectly by creating a collective space for policy makers and citizens from 13 countries to:

1. Organize big-scale international meetings and local activities where they investigate EU policy areas and increase their understanding of the dynamics of European policy making and through a variety of methods. The ultimate aim is to influence policy decision making processes at the Union level (EC consultations, petition, informal meetings)
2. Reconnect with grass-roots level initiatives counteracting Euroscepticism and share them as good practice
3. Design collectively project results to further support European civic education and bottom-up engagement in shaping the EU agenda (Toolkit)