



INTERIM EVALUATION OF THE TRANSEUROPA CARAVANS PROJECT

Transeuropa Caravans 2019 is a high-profile project run by European Alternatives and funded by the European Commission (DG Justice and Consumers). The core of the project consists of a group of 20 young activists travelling through fifteen European countries on five different routes:

- the Central Eastern route (Germany, Austria, Hungary)
- the Western route (France, Spain, Portugal)
- the Visegrad route (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia)
- the Scandinavian and Baltic route (Sweden, Finland, Estonia)
- the Mediterranean route (Croatia, Slovenia and Italy)

The first four routes were completed starting at the beginning of May in the run-up to the European elections of 23-26 May, whilst the fifth will take place after the summer. A final version of this report will be presented at the Transeuropa Festival in Palermo from 7-10 November 2019.

In this interim report we assess the project and the best practices so far selected in the light of the following targets:

- engage with citizens about their rights to freedom of movement and the importance of voting in the European elections;
- learn from and highlight local initiatives and struggles defending European rights and values which are effectively combating racism or extreme nationalism and striving for a more democratic open Europe;
- create a catalogue of best practices- stories of activists and activities of organisations
- which can inspire others across Europe;

-in support of these aims, assess needs for follow-up action and European networking in areas such as communicating Europe, migration and participatory democracy.

The project has been a great success so far in addressing these aims. In the run-up to the elections for the European Parliament, the arrival on a town square of a group of young activists was well received and a powerful visual reminder that the elections are European. At each of the stops the teams engaged with the local people and mobile EU citizens on the theme of European rights and free movement with a number of techniques and street performances to attract their attention. They also participated in debates about Europe with local hosts and uncovered interesting best practices.

The achievements so far are due to internal organisation, but also to the favourable external circumstances in the run-up to the European elections.

Internal organisation. -A huge asset for the 2109 project was that it was able to build on the experience of European Alternatives in running a similar project in the run-up to the 2014 European elections. This meant that from the lessons of the past, the necessary precautions and systems were put in place to ensure that the four routes were completed according to schedule and without risk or accident. A considerable emphasis was placed in the light of experience on recruitment, team building and training of a very diverse and competent group of committed young activists - in many cases themselves mobile EU citizens. In order to guarantee the proper implementation of a decentralised project with activities occurring simultaneously across Europe, it was the right decision by European Alternatives to recruit a project manager - the reader probably rightly assumes - herself also a mobile EU citizen. Her role in organising training sessions in Warsaw in February and Berlin in May with the management team for the project and all the 20 caravaners has been critical. Teamwork has also been strengthened by weekly management meetings with agendas and follow-up action points as well as regular exchanges among caravans' teams on Zoom, Facebook and Skype. There was also backing from European Alternatives in Rome for communication, promotional tools, materials and for financial management. The project cannot only be judged by the output of each ten-day trip by a caravan; that is the tip of the iceberg of the work which in the background goes into setting up and running a project of this kind.

A favorable external climate.- Planning and carrying out activities on the routes were helped by the run-up to the European elections, which this year benefitted from greater public awareness and interest, although with variations from one place to another. The

caravans were able to link with more large-scale and frequent events than would normally be the case on European topics and also to connect with local partners sharing a concern to take the opportunity of the elections to raise the profile of their issues. Ahead of the EU elections it was also easier to connect with the public by spontaneous actions in public spaces. Connections were also made with candidates for election to the European Parliament and the future Presidency of Finland to the EU Council.

This positive assessment is also based on the capacity of a project of this kind to translate easily into news and reach out well beyond the public in direct contact with the caravans on tour and establish itself as a brand with a big social media imprint. This was helped by a number of media partners (Green European journal, Political Critique, VOXeurop, WakeUpEurope,). The project was reported on at least 20 times in other media including an ARTE metropolis special on the European elections. There were also presentations of the project at stands or on platforms at a number of large-scale events. Re: publica Berlin, Europe's largest internet and digital society conference with more than 19.500 participants from 80 countries was one example. Each caravan team included a communications officer who together with the central team and media partners generated a vast body of online and social media material. The Transeuropa Caravans website proved a very successful and catchy visual presence of the project. Whilst Facebook was used for announcing actions and events and also for longer background pieces, Instagram was used to multimedially track the progress of the caravans on the road.

At the same time, the limits of any one-off project of this kind have to be recognised and have been highlighted in feedback on the training sessions and a questionnaire to the caravan teams asking them to evaluate their experience.

-a longer preparatory period should have been available to recruit the teams, establish the routes and plan the stops in more detail; in practice once the contract was agreed, this period was limited to four months. For some bookings and agreements with local partners this did not leave enough lead time and in future 9-12 months should be available to set up a project of this kind with no less than some 75 stops or events across Europe.

-more in-depth training would have been desirable not only on European free movement rights, but also on how to connect the EU more generally with citizens' daily concerns in a particular locality. This is seen as essential but challenging. Extensive knowledge is required

to reach the unreached for whom Europe is distant and irrelevant. This is not a problem just for this project but a more general one which is taken up in the recommendations.

-In big cities with audiences of young people projects of this kind can communicate in English as an unofficial “lingua franca”. Communication can though be more difficult in small towns and villages and with a euro-sceptical older generation. More material should be available to distribute in the local language and translators used, even though the offices of the Commission and European Parliament were in touch with the some of the team members and very helpful in supplying material.

The lack of time for preparation was though mitigated: in the run-up to the European elections, the political campaign was throwing up events organised at short notice by associations, parties and other organisations, which the caravan teams could join. Indeed, we chose the right time to bring our motto to life: Connecting struggles; building alternatives!

Within these constraints in mind, the caravans 2019 project should be assessed as an awareness and agenda setting project identifying a number of lines of inquiry rather than one coming up with answers. Hopefully caravans 2019 it will be a catalyst for new ways of defending rights to freedom of movement, encouraging democratic participation and networking across Europe. This is why this evaluation report places emphasis on the follow-up and recommendations.

The overall success of the project should be seen in the light of the fact that average turnout in the European elections was higher than for 20 years reaching over the critical threshold of 50 %. For the first time, Europe had become a political issue. With more analysis of the voting patterns, it will become clearer why turnout instead of being on the decline is now increasing. Politicians tend to point to geo-political concerns with the electorate understanding the need for Europe in a more threatening international climate and internal tensions over Brexit or the rise of extreme right- wing nationalism. No doubt such factors played a role in the decision of many to go out and vote and the fact that support for membership of the EU in opinion polls is at an all -time high. An equally valid explanation is the emergence since the financial crisis and other crises over the last 12 years of increasing civil society grass roots activity in favour of another Europe which is more democratic, tolerant and open. One project is a drop in the ocean but there has been a critical mass of transnational activism which does make a difference. The outcome of projects such as this should therefore be taken seriously as the possible key to increasing interest in Europe and turnout in the next elections to the European Parliament.

2.BEST PRACTICES

Here we make a preliminary selection of best practices according to the three components common to any citizenship including European citizenship: *rights, participation and belonging*. A word should be said about the hazards of selection since the contexts are so different both within and across European countries. A place- based project such as this reveals not so much a Europe of diversity as one of contrasts. The contrasts are being intensified by the rise of extreme right wing nationalism , shrinking civil society space and divergent attitudes to migration across Europe. The Caravans discovered ANVITA (Association nationale des villes et territoires accueillants) in France which deserves support and could be a venture for a more welcoming Europe. Some towns can be very supportive of freedom of movement, migrants in general and democratic participation, working closely with civil society organisations. In other places -often next door or just over the border-civil society organisations create their own space for freedom and democratic participation in opposition to the powers that be. This project and others of this kind offer hope for the future because regardless of often contrasting political and administrative environments, the language and culture of civil society organisation is similar so that in principle their best practices can be replicated and exported.

i) RIGHTS – and in particular European rights to freedom of movement.

An important take away from this project is that thanks to the Visegrad route it was able to shed light on Central to Eastern Europe migration and freedom of movement which has been often neglected in studies and debates about free movement of workers.EU policy making has tended to concentrate on intra-EU migration flows from East to West stemming from the 2004 enlargement or from South to North triggered by the financial crisis after 2008. For those who want to find out more our team did discover a special web portal devoted to migration in Central-eastern Europe (migrationonline.cz).

There is not space here to evaluate all the findings along the Polish- Ukrainian border or in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but some implications for European policy do stand out. It should not be taken for granted that migration and freedom of movement are easily accepted in border regions between former enemies especially when local people are not informed about migration brought about by rapid industrialisation, industrial collapse and re-investment. Part of the problem is that the most difficult areas also appear to be virtual

advice deserts not just remote from EU sources of information but also from the provision of any services by local authorities to welcome newcomers. Freedom of movement was the theme common to all the caravans routes with the teams passing on the lessons learned from the training sessions and collecting signatures to a petition to the European Parliament on “genuine freedom of movement and a European citizenship for all”

Best practices

-Polish Orthodox Church, Walbrzych

The church community consists mainly of people of Polish and Ukrainian origin and is very important in bringing the two together in an area where apparently you can still lose a job just because of what your grandparents generation did during the war. As there are no NGO's or support for migrants organised by the municipality, the church community is the one that collects money for language courses and creates a network of people willing and able to help newcomers organise their stay and get to know the legal processes. The priest in charge is planning to set up an NGO to act in a more formalised way to improve the situation of Ukrainians throughout Southern Poland. This example has been selected because where there is an absence of services it is often a question of backing an institution or an individual to fill the gap.

-Centrum pro Integraci, Mlada Boleslav

This branch of an organisation with headquarters in Prague caters to some 15,000 migrant workers and is an example of a more developed service. The centre provides Czech language courses, social counselling and runs a regular job club. A three-year grant from the EU in 2018 has enabled the centre to widen its offer of support to tackle problems with employment, working conditions, housing, social security, insurance and family status. The centre deals without discriminating between legal and illegal migrants whether they are EU or non-EU. As the representative of the centre put it “Our mayor does not present a positive and open attitude towards migrants. Unfortunately some of our citizens are influenced by his propaganda. We are trying to change this by organising events for migrants and Czech people”

-Skoda management and unions, Mlada Boleslav

It is unusual for a civil society organisation to nominate a company as a best practice, but Skoda visited by the caravans team stands out from other companies and in particular agencies in the region as an employer which treats its workers properly. Arek has been a

Skoda worker for 12 years and seen the improvements: “ workers employed by the agencies and not directly by the company still wear blue uniforms but their rights are almost equal to those that wear white uniforms and are employed directly by Skoda” The equalisation of rights has been largely due to a company respectful of workers’ rights and strong trade unions (Covo pobory) who work also on behalf of migrant agency workers. Mention should be made here of C.O.Z.Z the centre for the organisation of Trade Unions in the Czech Republic.

It should be noted that if Skoda stands out there are also examples of worst practices by agencies and some employers which endure because there is little support for migrant workers out in the community leaving them particularly vulnerable to exploitation because they are dependent on information and advice only from one source at their place of work.

-Mareena association, Bratislava

This is another example of how grassroots initiatives become officially registered and broaden their scope to cater to new needs and changing patterns of migration. Building on the determination to welcome refugees to Slovakia, Mareena was established in 2017 and already has 10 paid workers and an army of volunteers. Now they target all migrants and society more generally. They provide language courses, weekly community meetings, and a 10 -week career mentoring course. The ideas of Mareena about how to include migrants in society were found to be close to those of WolnoStowa in Warsaw where two members of the caravans team work; so, it was decided to create transnational projects together. Without political support from the government, it is an achievement to have been able to set up a stable organisation bringing together newcomers and the local community.

-Crossroads, Stockholm

An organisation of the same size as Mareena, Crossroads has a strong record as a reception structure for newcomers to Sweden catering to all their needs and also in finding them jobs. The organisation is divided in two sections. The first deals with immediate basic needs for food, clothing, rest and leisure activity. The second deals with information and advice: assistance with writing a CV, finding accommodation, accessing health care and how to interact with the legal and tax system. There are barriers to settling in Sweden: “without a social security number, you’re working for a system but you do not receive services” Delays are due to the large number of applications.

Following the visit to Crossroads, the team met in Helsinki with Markus Lyra and Kimmo Sasi respectively manager and board member of Info Norden. Kimmo Sasi is a very experienced

politician and provided interesting insights into the work of the Nordic Council grouping the Scandinavian countries. There could be lessons for the EU in how the Council tackles barriers to freedom of movement with an action plan established on the basis of evidence from complaints, working closely with civil society organisations.

ii) *PARTICIPATION-and in particular European political rights and examples of advanced democratic practice in the run-up to the European elections.*

As pointed out in the overall assessment, the project benefited from the period in the run-up to the European elections with Europe on the agenda. There were a number of contexts for the voyage of discovery about the European elections:

-engagement with candidates for election at street actions, picnics, pre-arranged meetings or chance encounters;

-discussion with different political parties at their stands during public events and in city centres;

-participation of team members in events especially organised in the run-up to the European elections.

The teams stressed the importance of voting and the dangers coming from the rise of populism and the extreme right, but also that involvement with Europe should not stop with just voting. Emphasis was therefore placed on the need to follow-up the elections by linking up with like-minded activist groups in other countries, lobbying the new European Parliament, and making use of tools such as petitions or European citizens' initiatives whereby 1 million EU citizens can ask the European Commission to present a new law. The European elections also provided the right context for the teams to go to places where advanced forms of democracy are being practiced. One useful lesson from the project is to go to places where people are already discussing intensely if you want to raise a debate about Europe-it comes more easily. In the next section we will discuss how to do this in circumstances where the public are disengaged.

Best practices

-Voting when, where and how you choose

In the run-up to the European elections there was emphasis on combatting fake news and rising populism and perhaps not enough on removing the physical barriers and making it easier to vote. This is especially important for EU citizens voting not back home, but in their

country of residence for the European elections and where turnout is traditionally below 10%. In a meeting with the Justice ministry in Helsinki we learned that in this cutting-edge country there is a targeted effort to enhance electoral participation of categories traditionally apathetic about voting, including young people, migrants and those without higher education.

The issue can also be approached from the other way round by making voting much easier for everyone including hard-to-reach groups. They have less excuse not to vote in Scandinavia. Our team stumbled into a public library in Stockholm in early May and were asked if they were there to vote! They might also have found early voting in an administrative office, a school and even a supermarket. The team concluded: "The early elections system simplifies the life of electors allowing them to vote whenever they want within a certain timespan and wherever they want..." The team was in Estonia on the day electronic voting was opened for the European elections. Maybe these practices should be better known in the rest of Europe and taken up for the next European elections to increase turnout still further.

-Europaforum Hassleholm

A successful and inspiring experiment was presented to our team by Freja Hagsund, project manager of the Europaforum Hassleholm- a small town in Sweden. Founded by an Austrian this annual event brings political party leaders together with some 700 ordinary people in a confined space and in a non-hierarchical way."It also tries to fill the potential gap between the EU Institutions and ordinary people, who often perceive the European union as distant and out of reach". Despite different party political affiliation, debate is well-mannered. The formula has been adopted by Turku in Finland but appears unknown in the rest of the EU. The 2019 edition was attended by our team which was given a stand and the opportunity to talk extensively to candidates and civil society organisations dealing with migration. The forum was entirely devoted to the European elections and presented a unique opportunity for us and voters to understand what different political parties were doing and promising. In Sweden, all the people working on EU related issues know about this established institution and use it as an opportunity to meet and share ideas.

Two place-based examples of advanced democratic practices and alternative governance

One of the priorities for the new European Commission is to organise a citizens' conference with the European Parliament on the future of Europe. Plenty of experts will offer their services but practioners should not be ignored. The project found plenty of self-help

examples of best practice by civil society organisations, networks and resource centres. The following examples go a step further:

A -Coruna, a town in the Basque country , is not so well known as larger cities such as Barcelona for its democratic practice. Marea Atlantica is a political party which won the municipal elections in 2014 and which is running for a new mandate this year. The governance structure of this different style of political party is horizontal and citizen participation is at the core of its action. The caravans' themes of freedom of movement and European rights were discussed in working groups. The team was really impressed by the quality of the debate in which everyone participated and showed that those engaged in local level activity are ready to participate in imagining an ideal Europe of equality for all migrants.

Saillans is a village south of Lyon that in 2014 elected a citizens' list rather than a political party to govern on the basis not of any programme but on the basis of a specific methodology for citizen participation in decision making. It began when the previous mayor supported the construction of a supermarket which would have destroyed local commerce and so was voted out. Instead of a programme there is collegiality, transparency and participation with decisions taken by consensus at meetings of citizens.

Friedrichshafen and Fridays For Future in general.

The caravans team participated in the action and spoke in support of the way young people are uniting across the continent at an important moment in the run up to the European elections. "We were really impressed by the energy ,motivation,enthusiasm and engagement of young people in the topic of climate change or-according to the new naming -climate crisis". Not only was this particular event a success because of the demonstration but also because there was opportunity for question and answer sessions and debate. Fridays for Future can spark the motivation for activism more generally in the young generation. Not only in Germany but on some other stops as well, particularly in Scandinavia, the climate crisis was very much central to the European election campaign and one of the factors which could help explain the increase in turnout among first time voters. In Finland for example the European elections came just after national elections in which a coalition of environmental organisations campaigned successfully for stronger commitments to protect the climate. The level of awareness and the priority of climate issues for the EU was though by no means the same throughout all routes.

iii) BELONGING- a sense of common identity, being an active European citizen and sharing best practices across Europe.

This third part addresses freedom of movement as a much broader concept going beyond rights to create a sense of European belonging and solidarity. At a conference on 7 May in Dresden, the birth place of Pegida, hosted by an adult education organisation “Weiterdenken” these issues were addressed. In an interview with the team, Stefan Schonfelder from the Heinrich Boll foundation said that “people are really unaware of how the EU is connected to their lives however accurately we can explain how the Institutions work.” They are aware of the practical advantages that the EU has to offer such as freedom of movement and no roaming charges when they travel, but a true sense of “belonging” as European citizens does not find much more substance. A weak sense of European identity is also being hampered by the resurgence of nationalism and the normalisation of far- right discourse. The whole aim of the caravans project is to open peoples’ eyes to a broader vision of Europe and links across borders. This requires a multiplicity of different techniques, opportunities and places to make it possible to engage with people and plant messages about being European. These messages are not just about explaining the Institutions in Brussels but also about appealing to common values in support of democracy, human rights and the protection of minorities, which should underpin them. Projects like caravans and others taking young people on journeys across borders are both practical and idealistic promoting a European space for freedom and sharing human endeavours and struggles for a better life.

Best practices

The caravans project as a whole for the range of engagement techniques.

Reading through the reports of some 20 stops on each of the four routes, the variety is striking. It should be possible to draw up a catalogue of techniques and places used for public engagement with Europe so that future projects do not need to reinvent the wheel . First there are the events and organisations which projects such as this can join and which are tailor- made to promoting debate about Europe. Across Europe in addition to the European spaces created by the Commission and European Parliament there are think tanks, cultural institutes and others which organise numerous events and consider themselves as venues for debate about the future of Europe. It is also possible, however, in cooperation with a local host to reach a wider audience by bringing in some product -a book or a film about Europe- which helps to get the audience thinking before launching a discussion. All caravans mixed pre-prepared events with spontaneous action in streets, city squares or parks to reach all sections of the community. Performances, games, gadgets, sharing food and drink break the ice. The teams used opportunities to raise issues at open

days or at markets. A very important and underused network are the numerous non-profit resource and co-working spaces, former factories and abandoned buildings taken over by civil society and social enterprises. The caravans teams held European debates in such centres in Budapest, Marseilles, Barcelona. Europe should be present in all places where people connect.

Taping action in front of the theatre in Bautzen and on Marienplatz, Munich on Europe Day

This technique, by no means the only one used by the caravans teams has been chosen because it can have a really big impact and reach a lot of people in a relatively short time. Everything depends on the choice of statements written on the tapes to attract attention and strike a chord with the public. The benefits of this facilitation technique are : anybody can do it; strong tapes of different colours are available; choosing the statement is good for team building ; it's very visible ; it's attractive –“our experience shows that many people were interested in and intrigued by our statements” Other examples could have been chosen from other routes. One used street performances, another a “wheel of fortune “ quiz game and picnics, whilst red ribbons or “red lines” against racism were also popular.

Omas gegen Rechts in Austria. This can be translated as grannies against the far right. The group operates with a smile but a clear warning about how voting for the extreme right can be dangerous now and in the future. It has been chosen as a best practice because it can easily be implemented in other European countries. The message is that however old you are you can and should act for positive change and protest against inequality, discrimination and violence. The image is effective and backed up by a trademark knitted hat and other promotional materials. OGR members show impressive dedication, open-mindedness and knowledge and are in general very warm and likeable. Something similar may be going on in Lisbon where the caravans discovered a group of old ladies who are working with the younger generation to produce traditional garments in new ways which can sell. They engaged in a debate with the team about the threats to Europe and the European elections.

Cargonomia, Budapest

This is another example of an organisation with a formula which could well spread to the rest of Europe. Cargonomia is the formalisation of pre-existing cooperation between three socially and environmentally conscious small enterprises with complementary roles: a DIY bicycle repair shop and social cooperative; an organic vegetable farm and sustainable agriculture education center which provides weekly vegetable boxes and a self-organised bike messenger and delivery company. The team says: “ The amazing thing about

Cargonomia is that they operate steadily in such a complex high pressure and politicised context. They manage to stay autonomous and influence their surroundings showing alternatives are possible because of their small- scale operations". They also attract international volunteers and make a great impact on the local community.

W*ORT-Lustenau , Austria

Located in a small city this place is open to people of different generations and nationalities. Children will find toys, books, and a modern functional play area; older children may join workshops on diverse topics (art and culture, ecology and more); adults and seniors may enjoy poetry evenings, concerts or workshops. W*ORT also operates in schools and makes a point of asking people with migrant backgrounds to share their skills and in this way is contributing to the integration of the local community. Generations work together and volunteers organise creative writing sessions whilst a number of other activities focus on education and confidence building. The team writes that "not infrequently good products are created from this interaction". The organisation is a member of the International Alliance of Youth Writing Centers.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The value of this scoping and overview project lies in its ability to point towards a set of proposals where further action is necessary. The limits to a one- off project carried out over a short period have to be recognised. On the other hand, a quick and intense test over a significant geographical area is a good basis on which to recommend follow-up action.

A. Facilitation and engagement with the public

- i) Find ways to keep the team of facilitators together.

The first stage of the project was to recruit the teams to go on the caravans. There were xxx applicants from whom the 20 were selected. The profiles of the team were published on the webpages for caravans 2019 .They are being asked to fill in a questionnaire about their experience and in parallel to the evaluation report, Anje Scharenberg a PHD candidate, has carried out extensive interviews. On the basis of their studies and professional experience candidates were selected for particular functions: coordination, logistics, facilitation and communication. A striking feature was the high level of skills, professional experience and

knowledge of Europe displayed by the candidates. Given the conditions of a tough assignment not particularly well paid, one would have expected more students and first-time job seekers to be applying whereas most team members already had a significant portfolio of achievement. This suggests that projects of this kind do inspire. A strong motivation is that most applicants are inevitably European citizens with experience of growing up and studying in different countries. Caravans was like a return to Erasmus and a reason to get out from the office and engage directly with the public. There can also be more to it than that. Many young professionals clearly see Europe as potentially a better opportunity than their current activity. For some team members this was a potentially life-changing experience they would like to see repeated. One conclusion therefore is that civil society organisations, EU institutions and other public authorities do have a huge pool of talent on which to draw and which they should try to keep active- not just in the run-up to a European election but on a more regular basis.

ii) Scale up facilitation techniques.

A useful practical exercise based on this project and others would be to create a resource on facilitation techniques which help to bridge the gap between people's everyday concerns and Europe. These range from games to draw in passers-by and test their knowledge, the "red lines" in the public place, picnics, street performances and film shows. European Alternatives has always worked on the interface between political engagement and culture, so the project attracted real expertise in this area, which can be spread more widely. There is a strong case for pooling experience and different techniques in this area. It should not be necessary to invent new ones for each project, but on the contrary to scale up the use of existing ones and make them freely available. Of course, one project is not enough to provide a representative source of facilitation techniques- there were others in the run-up to the European elections which could also provide examples

iii) The need for training on "you and EU"

In an interview for this report one of the coordinators said that "to engage with the public about Europe you avoid the EU and start by asking them first about their own concerns and those of their community. You keep an open mind, so you attract questions from a wide range of political viewpoints and don't exclude anyone. It's only after listening to people that you can explain how Europe is relevant to their everyday concerns – but that's an incredibly hard thing to do". Gadgets and performances can be designed to make at least a first link. There are also sources of information which people see all the time such as food labels and examples such as free roaming charges in the EU. In the run-up to the European elections

sources of information on “Europe in your region” were one response to this need for Europe to be seen as less “distant”. All this remains though on a superficial level and does not explain how the decision -making process actually works or EU funds arrive through various stages to the local neighbourhood. Nor does it explain how individuals and communities can influence the EU. To counteract many lies or misunderstandings about the EU it is also necessary to have a good sense of the scope and limits of EU competence across different policy areas. There is a need for training not only on techniques but also on the content of engagement with the public which assumes a broad knowledge of European affairs and sources of information.

B. European Networking

lv) Building from the local level network to the European wide network and campaign.

The project produced good examples of where local action can be scaled up across Europe. The Conell Nacional de les Dones de Catalunya is a body working on programs for gender equality and female empowerment covering specific topics such as the inclusion of migrant women or the promotion of female entrepreneurs. The report stated “ It was really interesting to see how these women are connected and how they really work towards the same aims with 400 organizations in this network and on a transnational level” The Caravans team held a meeting with a group of different women’s rights organizations hosted by Fondacio Aroa which has recently launched a platform for a Feminist Europe (fem_eu.org) with support from a consultancy called Eurolocal. Other womens’ organisations met on the tours could well benefit from connection with a European initiative which may succeed because it has such a strong local base -ie Grannies against far right in Austria, or their contemporaries in Lisbon “A avo veio trabalhar “ which held a meeting with the caravans team to share their concerns about the growing racism and xenophobia in Europe.

v) Connecting organisations working according to the same methods for the same people-the example of freedom of movement and migration.

This can apply to almost any sphere of activity but it is particularly evident in the area of European rights to freedom of movement and migration. Whether it is the Centrum Pro Integaci in Malda Boleslav (Poland) , the intercultural centre in Prague or Crossroads in Stockholm there are some similarities to what the organisations actually do with naturally differences of context and emphasis. To a large extent these organisations are based on the principle that their door is open to all migrants whether they are EU citizens or third country nationals. They may have been set up to respond to a particular need -for example the

organisation in Slovakia which was created in 2015 to welcome refugees and counteract the negative policy of the government – but like this organisation they end up catering to all those on the move which is inevitable as patterns of migration shift and become more global. There is also a trend towards providing under one roof a comprehensive range of services from immediate emergency help and shelter for destitute new arrivals to advice about language courses and running them, housing and local services, legal advice about residence rights and employment contracts.

A trend observed on the tours was towards initiatives to break down barriers between migrants, European citizens and local people. Sometimes these initiatives are a reaction against anti-immigration rhetoric by the mayor and other politicians, sometimes they are introduced with the support of more enlightened local authorities. The organisations are in some cases getting support from the EU fund for the integration of third country nationals and other programmes and will occasionally take up a case with EU authorities. There is though no European eco-system and operational means for networking among local organisations and resource centres providing services to migrants and defending their rights. More extensive mapping is necessary than was possible for just one project. The EU could also learn from the Nordic Council which has established a partnership approach to working with NGO's to remove barriers to freedom of movement.

vi) Networking for democracy and a new politics.

A key success of the caravans tour was to uncover a wide range of highly advanced not just participatory, but also direct democracy practices, which in reality range across a much wider range of different types of setting and organisation than is generally thought. Reclaiming of abandoned factory or other spaces and putting them to new uses on a participatory basis (Marseilles) , the womens' movement (Barcelona) and other examples should be compiled which could inspire social entrepreneurs in other places. This includes Brussels where a project is starting to create an incubator for organisations working in the area of citizenship and democracy and a public space or agora in and around an underused office complex just opposite the European Parliament. Only by learning from and connecting to the local level can this project contribute to turning the European quarter from an institutional to a citizens' quarter. An on-site event connected to this project is planned for 2 September. When it comes to participatory democracy most people think about the major "rebel" cities such as

Naples or Madrid, participatory budgeting or citizens' assemblies drawn by lot. There is much more to it than that as the examples of A Coruna and Saillans have shown.

The caravans team held a meeting on 13 May in Helsinki with representatives of the prime minister's secretariat and the ministry of Justice which has responsibility for elections and participatory democracy. For the preparations of the Finnish presidency of the EU from 1 July our hosts showed interest in what the project was uncovering. This meeting should be followed up because a danger with projects such as this is that once finished, they are forgotten.

C. Black spots

vii) Be aware of painting too rosy a picture and pay attention to the advice deserts and places where people rarely go

Another danger is that although it is right to show that across Europe there are far more advanced practices than are generally thought and which are reasons for optimism, there is also retreat to nationalism, a shrinking civil space and resistance to change which can take on extreme forms. How to explain such phenomena as the city in Poland where every second bus driver is Ukrainian, but where the dominant political discourse is that foreigners should go home, for example?

Three black spots revealed by the Caravans should be mentioned and where action is required, not just by civil society but also by public authorities including the EU:

-advice deserts. There is a contrast between the capitals where some services exist for migrants and small or medium sized cities where there is nothing even when there are important inflows of foreign workers from across the border and the setting up of enterprise zones to attract new investment. The only support is the management or trade unions. In the case of temporary agency workers, the scope for exploitation is clear with many living in substandard housing and working under near slavery conditions. Even in places where there is a reputable employer like Skoda, it is not right that the company should be the only source of advice. Family members of the workers also need advice about schools, housing and integration in the local community. The caravans team met a number of workers who having had to fight for their own rights were prepared to defend the rights of others. With support they may be encouraged to fill the gap in advice provision. There is a need for further

research across Europe to identify the zones of significant migration movement without any corresponding support.

-migration seen locally. The fifth caravan this autumn will cover more frontier regions so this point might be developed. A European network of frontier regions or another forum could help to encourage a more informed debate about migration and free movement of people seen from different local perspectives. Networking and comparison of best practice on migration is developed among major cities. There needs to be a better understanding of the turbulent history of some European border areas whether between Poland and the Ukraine, Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The past may be a root cause for opposition to migration.

-support for civil society under pressure. The impression from the caravans tour is that there are initiatives across Europe which are springing up all the time to counteract anti-immigration or racist rhetoric. In the area of migration the organisations are seen wrongly by the government as acting against the national interest. Even a multicultural resource centre in Warsaw where one of the training sessions for this project took place is under threat. The new EU programme on rights and values should be designed to provide structural support to such organisations.



This project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

The content of this material represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.