

## ACTIVITY REPORT

### CELEBRATING 9 MAY, EUROPE DAY, 2020

#### Introduction

The European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia (EMMK) has a two-decade tradition of holding events to mark 9 May, Europe Day. This year, preparations began in February 2020 when a program of activities was launched that covered a wider segment of the population of all ages. However, the state of emergency declared on 18 March 2020, due to the pandemic of COVID 19 coronavirus, imposed the need for changes in activities, especially in the manner of their implementation. It was necessary to find a way to transform the activities into online events, and still achieve the set goals of the project related to the promotion of European values and strengthening the interest of citizens for the European perspective of the Republic of North Macedonia. During the preparations for the online events, the general public was extremely preoccupied with the new situation, and almost all the topics discussed were related to COVID 19 coronavirus. In order to alleviate the situation of isolation and reduce the feeling of danger of the threatening disease, topics and activities were chosen that would attract the attention of young people, moving them away from such everyday life. However, some of the events related to the celebration of 9 May were related to the analysis of the state of emergency, consideration of the causes and consequences of the crisis, contributing to the understanding of the current situation at national and European level.

#### ACTIVITIES

##### **1. ONLINE STUDENT DEBATE ON THE TOPIC: *THE EXPERIENCE OF ERASMUS PLUS STUDENTS EXCHANGE***

The debate was conducted through the "Zoom" web platform on 5 May 2020 and was attended by students from several universities: "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University - Skopje, State University of Tetovo, International Slavic University - Bitola, American College University - Skopje, and the Faculty of Economics - Prilep. The debate was moderated by Prof. Dr. Makedonka Radulovikj, Vice President of the European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia. The debate was broadcast live on the European Movement's (EMMK) Facebook page.

At the debate, the university students discussed their experiences gained using the Erasmus Plus program. Some of the students expressed their experiences when they were part of students exchange programs and are now back in the country, but there were also students who reside currently in a European country and were directly involved

in the debate. Some of the students regretted that they had to interrupt their student stay abroad and return due to their conditions imposed by Covid 19 coronavirus, but that they were following the courses online.

The following students participated:

1. Mihail Divjakoski, Faculty of Economics - Prilep, UKLO;
2. Diedona Murtishi, Medical Faculty, SUT;
3. Bojan Dimeski, International Slavic University - Bitola;
4. Anastasija Georgievska; International Slavic University;
5. Danche Miteva, International Slavic University;
6. Darko Bunjevac, University American College - Skopje;
7. Sara Cvetanovska, Faculty of Philosophy, UKIM;
8. Mihail Trpchevski, University American College - Skopje;
9. Radmila Utevska, University American College - Skopje;
10. Andrej Popovski, University American College - Skopje;
11. Elena Matlioska, University American College - Skopje;
12. Gadaf Memedi, Faculty of Philology, SUT;
13. Drilon Miftari, Medical Faculty, SUT;

The debate took place in several parts:

- students presenting themselves and their Erasmus Plus experience;
- the way in which European countries deal with the pandemic in light of students who are staying currently in a European country;
- curricula of foreign universities and their experiences;
- culture and acceptance of European values... and recommendations to future students.

The general conclusion from the students' presentations is that they have positive experiences and attitudes towards the Erasmus program, as a program that offers various opportunities for education, teaching, living in a new environment, new friends, socializing. All students spoke enthusiastically about their stay, pointing out mainly the positive aspects. They believe that student mobility and the opportunity to spend part of their education in another country is key to a better and more promising future.

Positive aspects that were mentioned:

- the opportunity of personal development (maturation, independence, raising self-confidence);
- new life experience and gaining independence;
- professional upgrading (gaining new skills, practical experience);

- elimination of language barriers and learning a new language of the host country;
- gaining an international circle of friends;
- in-depth knowledge of a new culture in all aspects (history, art, architecture);

The students noted that the Erasmus program is an excellent tool of the European Union to overcome differences and unite European nations. By getting to know and learning about different cultures and values, young people get rid of stereotypes and understand the concept "We are all equal before the European sun." They would like to have again the opportunity to travel to a European country in the future and spend part of their studies there.

To future university students, beneficiaries of the program have a message:

- Big "YES" for the *Erasmus Plus* program;
- Find out about the student programs offered by the European Union;
- Do a good research of the place where you want to stay;
- Consider the financial aspect and living standards of the country you want to travel to;
- If you are not accommodated in a dormitory, choose a residence close to the University;
- Be patient with the administrative part;
- Take advantage of every opportunity for a student stay in a European country.

This event was presented live on social networks and so far has over 3400 views and 45 positive reactions.

## **2. CIVIC DEBATE ON THE TOPIC: "SOCIETIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES"**

Another important event was the civic debate on the topic: "Societies in times of crisis: Causes and consequences". This debate was organized by the European Movement EM-MK on the occasion of Europe Day and was conducted through the "ZOOM" platform. The main topics discussed were the following:

Could the crisis have been prevented; What was North Macedonia's response, especially in the health sector; Has the crisis changed the political discourse; Will it lead to a change in political and social terms, etc.

Participants in the debate were professors from the Faculty of Philosophy at the "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University: Prof. Dr. Ilo Trajkovski; Prof. Dr. Konstantin Minovski; Prof. Dr. Antoanela Petkovska; then Prof. Dr. Mome Spasovski from the Faculty of Medicine; Ambassador Muhamed Halili; and Prof. Dr. Mileva Gjurovska, President of the European Movement and National Coordinator of the National Convention.

According to Professor Ilo Trajkovski, the crisis has shown that all institutions in the country have been undermined, which, as 'safety fuse', should be turned on and off in such situations. "We now know that we have only had 5-6 respirators in the public sector and it is strange that we have managed to maintain control of the epidemic as such. It is a result not of the healthcare sector but of the quarantine, the measures, the fear of the citizens and their responsibility," Trajkovski noted.

According to him, there are two positive elements of this crisis, and the first is that it has strengthened the civic spirit, by respecting more the laws and privacy of others, expressed through social distance. Another positive thing is that, in order to avoid the epidemic, people went to rural areas where the opportunity of social distance is versatile and vast. His assessment is that people should be encouraged to have a spare living space that can be used in such situations, and to become part of some future projects because, historically, all epidemics have spread across cities. The main factor to spread the virus, he noted, was the concentration of the population and the mode of production, which makes cities like containers or hotbeds where viruses multiply. The point, according to him, is that state institutions are weakened in healthcare, education, and even the security sector, as there are stronger private security firms. The epidemic, he said, has now restored the importance of the state, but the question is whether, as taught by it, we will continue to strengthen the state or continue to develop as before.

Ambassador Halili, meanwhile, said it was absurd to expect the development of democratic processes and human rights in times of crisis, and that what we needed to focus on dealing with general health situation, and not on such "unnecessary phrases" as spread by political parties or civil society organizations dealing with the subject. For him, the problem lies in the very fact that we want to solve the crisis with a curfew and a caretaker government, with dissolved institutions and an inactive Constitutional Court, which became active only when the privileges and personal well-being of its judges were endangered and disapproved by the general public. When the existence of citizens is endangered and certain strata want to live on the benefits of money and privileges, it is not democracy as such, Halili said. He then added that it is hypocrisy also if the political parties do not want to return the money they receive from the state budget for political activity and seats won at the Parliament elections, and then expect the very citizens to return the VAT as a gesture of solidarity with the dire pandemic situation in the country.

Professor Minovski expressed his dilemma as to why the world did not react on time to the crisis, even when it initially appeared in China, and why the EU failed where the first reaction was for the states to immediately close their national borders, even as internal borders within the EU. According to him, the pandemic showed that there is a lack of solidarity at the world level and that international institutions have reacted inappropriately, putting in that context the various contradictory statements issued by the WHO. The fact that our institutions have been unprepared for the crisis, according to him, speaks of our irresponsibility as a society.

"Our institutions are undeveloped, our political system is semi-functional, and after every dramatic crisis we see an increase in authoritarianism, such as the curfew. Let's not even mention the marginalization of the Parliament and the solution of the problems through the agreement of the major political parties instead of the institutions," Minovski noted. According to him, the comparisons of the situation with the epidemic in our country and in France and Great Britain do not hold; more precisely about the assessment that we have dealt better with the Covid 19 coronavirus pandemic and crisis than those two countries have done, because the volume of business, tourism, the inflow of foreign students and the like in our country even cannot be compared with the ones over there, and thus there are far less chances to transmit the infection in our country as such. This gives us a certain advantage in dealing with the situation, he said, adding that if we had reacted on time, we would have ended up only in a crisis situation, and not a state of emergency as such. According to him, where there was more trust in the institutions, it was easier to deal with the consequences of the crisis.

Prof. Dr. Mome Spasovski from the Medical Faculty, on the other hand, maintained an opposite view. "I am positively surprised by our healthcare system and the initial measures taken before the peak of the outbreak. I see the trend of decisions made by the Ministry of Health and for the most part, I agree with them, and my opinion is shared by experts from home and abroad. As an example, I would say that the mortality rate in Macedonia and Denmark, compared to the number of inhabitants, is almost the same, despite the difference in the development of the healthcare system. It is good that due to the crisis we have come to the conclusion that indeed we need the very public healthcare system. So far, we have not invested in it, and from the crisis we have seen how important infectologists are, so I think we will come out of it with some conclusions, in the sense that we need to invest more in medical staff, equipment, and hospital facilities," emphasized Spasovski. Now, according to him, Macedonia allocates only 7.5% of its GDP for healthcare, as compared to 15 percent in developed countries.

Whether the pandemic divided the world and whether the closure of EU member states within own national borders would increase nationalism and slow down Macedonia's European integration were dilemmas for Professor Mileva Gjurovska. According to her, the crisis was not foreseen, and the way it appeared showed the way it

should be solved. It cannot be resolved nationally because it is global, so without international coordination and intervention the world will not succeed to eliminate it. Gjurovska, however, did not agree with the assessment that the crisis came suddenly because sociologists have long suggested that the model of development of societies over the past two centuries has significantly encouraged going in this direction, pointing specifically to the practices of neoliberalism. Why the sign of the crisis was left unnoticed, was shown by her with the example of a frog that, when placed in boiling water, immediately jumps, but when placed in cold water that gradually warms up, the frog loses its sense of danger and dies. It is similar, she said, to societies where many things need to change, but the danger is to get used to the situation and not react. According to her, there is no segment of society that does not feel the growing pressure of living and working that leads to the necessity of constantly adapting to the conditions, so much so that human nature itself changes only so as not to change the pace of work. If the crisis changes something in that regard, Gjurovska noted, it can even bring something positive. According to her, there are no countries in which governments have not reacted in a frontal way, but the discourse of politicians has been dominant in our country, although expert opinion has been respected. The public healthcare system, as it is, could not do much, she said, which is why more needs to be invested in it.

Moreover, why isn't the infectious disease clinic well equipped? Why aren't there enough infectious disease specialists? It was further noted in the discussion this is because this medical activity is not profitable, and all those that are unprofitable have been left to the public healthcare system, while private hospitals are highly engaged in developing surgery, cardiovascular departments, childbirth, plastic surgery, etc.

Antoanela Petkovska emphasized that neoliberal capitalism, regardless of its zealous theorists such as Francis Fukuyama, is not irreplaceable. According to her, not enough investment has been made in the causes that led to this crisis and instead great investments have been made in the competition for greater profit, for getting new markets, for greater production...She concluded that due to the distrust in the institutions, the citizens perceive the imposed measures as "unfreedom." In general, she said, the post-crisis response does not necessarily generate positive change, pointing out that no one is wondering what is happening in Africa and the less developed countries of Asia during the pandemic, but everyone is worried about how to save their banks.

In the discussion that followed, Trajkovski assessed that the character of the epidemic is not medical but sociological, due to quarantine and social distance, adding that civic awareness is not a profitable commodity, but it now saves capitalism, so one should invest in it. Capitalism needs individuality, selfishness, greed, and when a crisis comes, then solidarity is sought from the citizens, he said. According to him, the mobilization of the citizens is a guarantee that the pandemic will be overcome.

For Minovski, the crisis may be a test for humanity whether it will go towards greater nationalism and authoritarianism, because nobody raises the question whether a curfew is really necessary, but even people are still demanding it. Then when the pandemic is gone, the curfew will be gone as well, Halili replied. According to Halili, the imposed curfew is in the function of health and not politics, to which Minovski responded with a counter-question: "And who cares about our health in terms of pollution?"

The conclusion was that even in a state of emergency there could still be democracy, that citizens responded to the measures mainly in a disciplined manner, that public healthcare system must be strengthened because the very reasons that led to this crisis still exist and that, although the lesson has been learned, there is no guarantee that definitely there will be a change that will prevent a new pandemic, because the response should be international and not national.

The debate was broadcast live on the European Movement's Facebook page, actively followed by students, professors and the general public having over 1600 views and 27 positive reactions.

### **3. QUIZ FOR EU**

On 9 May 2020 (Saturday) on Europe Day, starting at 2 p.m., a knowledge quiz on the European Union was organized. All universities in our country were invited to participate in the EU quiz. The expert team of the European Movement made sure that each of the participants was acquainted with the criteria for participation, directed them in the preparation of the answers to the numerous questions related to the European Union and preparations for the technical implementation of the quiz competition as such.

The quiz was conducted via the "Kahoot" electronic platform and was broadcast live on social networks. The participants in the quiz had the opportunity to follow the questions via the joint call on the "ZOOM" platform. Quiz contestants answered questions via computer or mobile phone.

The EU Knowledge Quiz involved the following participants:

1. Mitra Jankula, Faculty of Law, "St. Clement of Ohrid" University - Bitola;
2. Nikola Chamovski, Faculty of Security Studies - Skopje;
3. Viktorija Mitevska, Faculty of Law - Kichevo;
4. Alen Umer, University of Southeast Europe;
5. Bojan Lazarevski, Faculty of Philosophy;
6. Mihail Divjakovski, Faculty of Economics - Prilep;
7. Mario Paunov, Faculty of Economics - Skopje;

8. Julijana Dojchinoska, Faculty of Law, "Gavrilo Romanovich-Derzhavin"  
International Slavic University / Department in Bitola;
9. Hristo Pop-Dimitrov, American College;
10. Angela Mirchevska, Faculty of Philosophy;
11. Neda Markoska, University of Southeast Europe;
12. Nesibe Qamili, Tetovo University;

The members of the jury that were present at the quiz were also taking care that everything be done in appropriate manner:

1. Prof. Dr. Mileva Gjurovska, Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy at UKIM in Skopje and President of the European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia;
2. Prof. Dr. Makedonka Radulovikj, Faculty of Philosophy at UKIM in Skopje and Vice President of the European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia; and
3. Elena Gacheva, Deputy Secretary General of the European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The members of the jury presented their introductory speech, whereby they informed the quiz participants on the activities of the European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia.

In addition to answering the questions, in between the blocks of questions the participants in the quiz had the opportunity to present themselves, to get to know each other, to exchange experiences related to the EU, to share their visions and thoughts on the prospects of our country in the EU, to present what the EU means to them.

In order to get more points in the quiz itself, in addition to the correct answer, speed was also required. Each faster correct answer received more points. Each question was given 30 seconds to think about, after which the points were awarded and the contestants had the opportunity after each question to see the current situation with points, as well as who has the most accurate answers in a row.

According to the rules of the quiz, in the end the participant, who has scored the highest number of points, is declared winner of the organized quiz.

The top three participants were awarded by the European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia, while the total prize fund was 350 euros.

After the quiz, the winners were formally announced. The first place was won by Angela Mirchevska, from the Faculty of Philosophy - Skopje, with 29 correctly answered questions out of 30 possible; the second place was won by Mihail Divjakovski, from the

Faculty of Economics - Prilep with 28 correct answers out of 30 questions; and the third place went to Nikola Chamovski, from the Faculty of Security Studies - Skopje, with 25 out of 30 questions answered correctly.

The first-ranked participant won a cash prize of 200 euros; the second-place participant won a cash prize of 100 euros, while the third-ranked participant won a cash prize of 50 euros.

At the very end of the quiz, all participants had the opportunity to share their views on participating in the organized quiz; congratulations were also extended by the members of the jury who took the opportunity to greet them and wish them success in their further EU perspectives.

The event was broadcast live on the European Movement's Facebook page and aroused great interest among the audience with 22 positive reactions and over 2100 views.

#### **4. BEST STUDENT PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION ON TOPIC "*BEST EUROPEAN CITY*"**

The Best Photography Competition aimed to involve young people (university students) in celebrating 9 May as Europe Day, in a way that is very close to today's youth subculture - choosing a photo of a European city they had visited and that had left the best impression on them. This activity, titled "The Best European City," attracted great attention and had the largest number of followers. All universities in our country (by a separate invitation) were invited to participate in this competition, but the opportunity to invite a larger number of university students by means of an open competition call on the Facebook page of EMMK was also offered. The expert team gathered the arrived photos, which were then posted on the Facebook page. The criterion for choosing the best photo was the number of likes received.

The competition involved 47 students from different universities who sent photos of various European cities (Paris, Berlin, Munich, Split, Rome, Venice, Stockholm, Budapest, Porto, Ankara, London, Barcelona, etc.). These photos aroused great interest and got over 5,000 likes and other reactions. The results were changing over the course of the competition, but at the end of the competition, the winners were:

1. Nikola Chamovski - Munich, Germany, with 1947 reactions;
2. Teodor Miceski - Potsdam, Germany, with 1268 reactions;
3. Mihail Divjakoski - Split, Croatia, with 792 reactions.

The winners will receive cash prizes with a total prize fund of 250 euros. 125 euros for the first place, 75 euros for the second place, and 50 euros for the third place.

The photo album for this competition was visited by over 112,000 visitors.

## **5. BEST ESSAY COMPETITION ON TOPIC: *TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN UNION***

The topic of the competition was taken from the general thematic framework for the celebration of Europe Day set by the European Movement International (EMI) based in Brussels. Namely, after Brexit, EMI had an intensified civil campaign for joint action in promotion of European values and for increasing the civic participation in the further construction of the European project. This new approach was accepted by all national councils and adapted to the specifics of national conditions. Knowing the specifics of our national context and the preoccupation of citizens with national problems, the Best Essay Competition aimed to focus the opinion of young high school students on the European Union, bringing them closer to this perspective.

In order to increase the interest of high school students in essay writing, new motivating things were considered. Thus, in February 2020, contact was made with the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Skopje, and in the conversation with Mrs. Urska Potocnik (Minister Plenipotentiary at the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia), the Embassy was asked to support this event for which an agreement was reached. The opportunity for the winners to stay in Slovenia at one of the summer youth schools was a real motivator for the youth. Thus, 14 essays arrived for the Best Essay Competition, all of them having high quality and relevance. Consequently, the Commission did not have an easy task regarding the final selection. The commission composed of: Prof. Dr. Mileva Gjurovska, Prof. Dr. Makedonka Radulovikj and Dr. Maja Manchevska, announced the following awards:

By re-reading the essays several times with independent assessments of the commission members, the three best essays were selected.

**First place:** Marko Ingjilizov, "Kocho Racin" High School - Veles (Score: 14.5/15);

**Second place:** Elena Ugurova, "Gjorgji Dimitrov" High School - Skopje (Score: 14/15);

**Third place:** Kiara Lazikj, "Rade Jovchevski - Korchagin" High School - Skopje (Score: 13.5/15).

The essays express the extremely positive attitudes of young people towards the European Union, which has developed a functional formula for living and working together. Ingjilizov and other essayists focused on the question: Why is the Republic of North Macedonia not a member of the EU, even though it is part of Europe, shares the

same values, and has been an aspirant country since 2001? Elena Ugurova saw the reasons for the slow progress in the attitude of the Europeans that we are "engaged in and carry too many unnecessary problems," which, according to her, would automatically disappear with the EU membership of the Republic of North Macedonia as such. However, "the reasons are not in external factors," but Ingjilizov points out the slow implementation of the necessary reforms, delving deeper into the analysis of the social context. Implementation of laws and policies will bring the country closer to the EU, and citizens in their own country will live in European manner. Devoting himself to a full analysis of the position of young people and their role in strengthening democracy, Ingjilizov called on young people to be more active, and on politicians to leave more space for young people, by using a language and simple style - appropriate for his age and level of education. This, in turn, brought him the most points. Ugurova's introductory approach was impressive: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." This was closest to the concept of the given topic. In her essay, the third-ranking participant elaborated many historical facts and topics about the European Union, written in a perfect style and language that conveyed several ideas about the importance of human rights and democracy, youth, existing problems in society, and other relevant contemporary issues.

List of other students who submitted essays:

Alma Ferizi,	"Ismet Jashari" High School - Lipkovo;
Dejana Dimeska ,	"Georgi Dimitrov" High School - Skopje;
Despina Vangelova,	"Ljupcho Santov" High School - Kochani;
Dimitar Stojkov,	"Georgi Dimitrov" High School - Skopje;
Evgenija Paunovska,	"Nikola Karev" High School - Skopje;
Elena Kuzmanoska,	"Mirko Mileski" High School - Kichevo;
Kudret Ferizi,	"Ismet Jashari" High School - Lipkovo;
Marija Janeva,	"Georgi Dimitrov" High School - Skopje;
Marija Onchevska	"8 September" High School - Tetovo;
Simona Blazheska,	"Ss. Cyril and Methodius" High School - Ohrid;

Stefanija Angelovska,	"Naum Naumovski Borsche" High School - Probishtip.
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***All events were organized under the motto "We promote European values"!***

In order to increase the visibility of the event, we used Facebook ads. These ads were used so we could promote several posts, but also video clips intended to bring more attention to the values of 9 May as Europe Day.

Advertising	Views from facebook ads	Organic views
Best Essay Competition	5467	1249

Call for participation in a student debate 1	2503	1709
Call for participation in the EU Quiz	6546	2749
Call for participation in the best photography competition	3996	2570
Call for participation in a student debate 2	3887	1343
Video clip 1 - Freedom is to be yourself, wherever	119,046	3684
Video clip 2 - The future is ours, and it is equal	183,119	2155
Video clip 3 - The right side of history	198,832	1852
Video clip 4 - The best remedy is solidarity	76,198	720

Note: Some of the posts were advertised to different target groups for better reach.