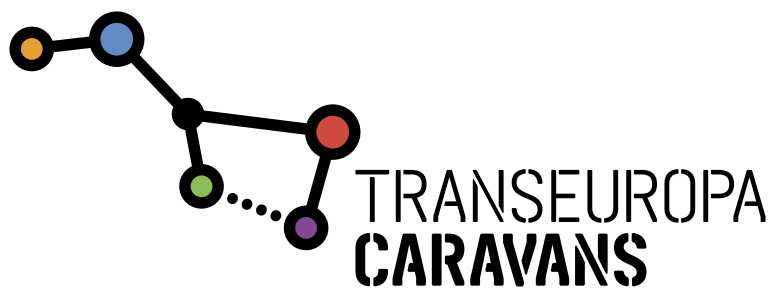


THE ROADS
TO EUROPEAN
DEMOCRACY
**TRANSEUROPA
CARAVANS**



EUROPEAN
ALTERNATIVES



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MEET THE TRANSEUROPA CARAVANS 2019

Freedom of movement is one of the key rights of EU citizens. The population of mobile EU citizens has doubled, with around 16 million citizens of voting age in 2019, but the levels of voter registration for mobile EU citizens in municipal and European elections remains low. The low turnout for mobile citizens is worrying, as there is a real danger they do not exercise their electoral rights, thus being excluded from any democratic participation. As EU mobile citizens face problems in getting information and access to their free movement rights, including their electoral and political rights, they increasingly feel they are losing control over the decisions that

affect their lives, both at the local and at the European level.

With this in mind, ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections, a group of young activists of Transeuropa Caravans travelled throughout 12 European countries on board four caravan cars, reaching out in places of struggle and resistance. They travelled to meet European citizens directly, connect their stories and their struggles, and mobilize together to promote electoral rights and participation of EU mobile citizens throughout Europe. **Together they tell us a story which shows that another Europe is possible.**

«If Europe is a continent of diversity, it is also one of contrasts within and between countries, but everywhere there are creative local projects. Despite a hostile climate and a shrinking civil society space, active European citizens have decided to connect with local initiatives and authorities to find new solutions. They are not alone and can be better connected across Europe».

Marta Cillero, European Alternatives

Transeuropa Caravans are meant to inspire EU mobile citizens throughout Europe to become more active in the democratic life of their place of residence. At each of the stops the Caravan teams engaged with the local people and mobile EU citizens on the theme of European rights and free movement with a number of engaging techniques to attract their attention. They also participated in debates about Europe with local hosts and uncovered interesting best practices. **The aim of all these efforts was to foster political participation of EU mobile citizens and enhance capacity and knowledge of civil servants, activists and citizens on EU citizenship and related political rights.** Before the Caravans set off, its activists, trainers and supporters discussed how to approach the local actors of 12 countries they were to visit. We knew that the positive narrative of Europe can sometimes be understood as EU-centric, or simply not related to local needs. The key was to understand how to connect with the local public, from metropolis in Spain to small villages in Finland.



In this publication, we will be highlighting a range of best practices - local or regional initiatives that the Transeuropa Caravans approached in person in spring 2019, ahead of the European elections. We believe that these stories can inspire people in other EU countries and policy makers - particularly with regard to freedom of movement, migration across Europe and voting rights. Unfortunately, we could not present here all the amazing initiatives the Caravans met. If you wish to learn about them all, visit the Transeuropa Caravans website: <https://transeuropacaravans.eu>



**«Before the Caravan set off,
we wondered: how can we bring
urgency to political culture,
in which the general mood seems
to be that of prosperity?»**

Ninnu, Baltic team



Who is this publication for?

The publication has been created for **local authorities all over Europe, as well as activists, NGOs, and changemakers** who would like to become inspired by the good practices we collected in 12 countries, and which we found worth spreading 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;
- in support of these aims, assess needs for follow-up action and European networking in areas such as communicating Europe, migration and participatory democracy.

«Speaking from the point of view of a journalist, the media tends to report always on the bad news, the bad news is more newsworthy than good news. In that sense, you could argue that this project is probably too much of a ‘good news’ story to report».

Irene, Central Caravan



The routes

The core of the project consists of a group of activists and trainers travelling through all fifteen European countries on five different routes.

Transeuropa Caravans Spring routes in May 2019:

📍 The Central and Eastern route

Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia

Civic spaces under pressure

📍 The Western route

France, Spain, Portugal

Cities of Solidarity

📍 The Visegrad route

Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia

Culture and Theatre

📍 The Baltic route

Sweden, Finland and Estonia

Sustainability and Climate Change

The Autumn route in October and November 2019:

📍 The Mediterranean route

Italy, Slovenia, Croatia

Migration and borders, on the way to the Transeuropa Festival in Palermo.





The Central and Eastern route

Civic spaces under pressure

Berlin > Dresden > Bautzen > Hoyerswerda >
Munich > Friedrichshafen > Lustenau >
Salzburg > Vienna > Bratislava > Budapest



The Western route

Cities of Solidarity

Lisbon > Porto > Viana do Castelo > A Coruña >
Zaragoza > Barcelona > Marseille > Saillans >
Lyon > Saint-Denis > Sarcelles > Paris



The Visegrad route

Culture and Theatre

Warsaw > Wałbrzych >
Mlada Boleslav > Prague > Bratislava >
Nitra > Warsaw



The Baltic route

Sustainability and Climate Change

Stockholm > Hässleholm >
Mynämäki > Turku > Tampere >
Helsinki > Tallinn

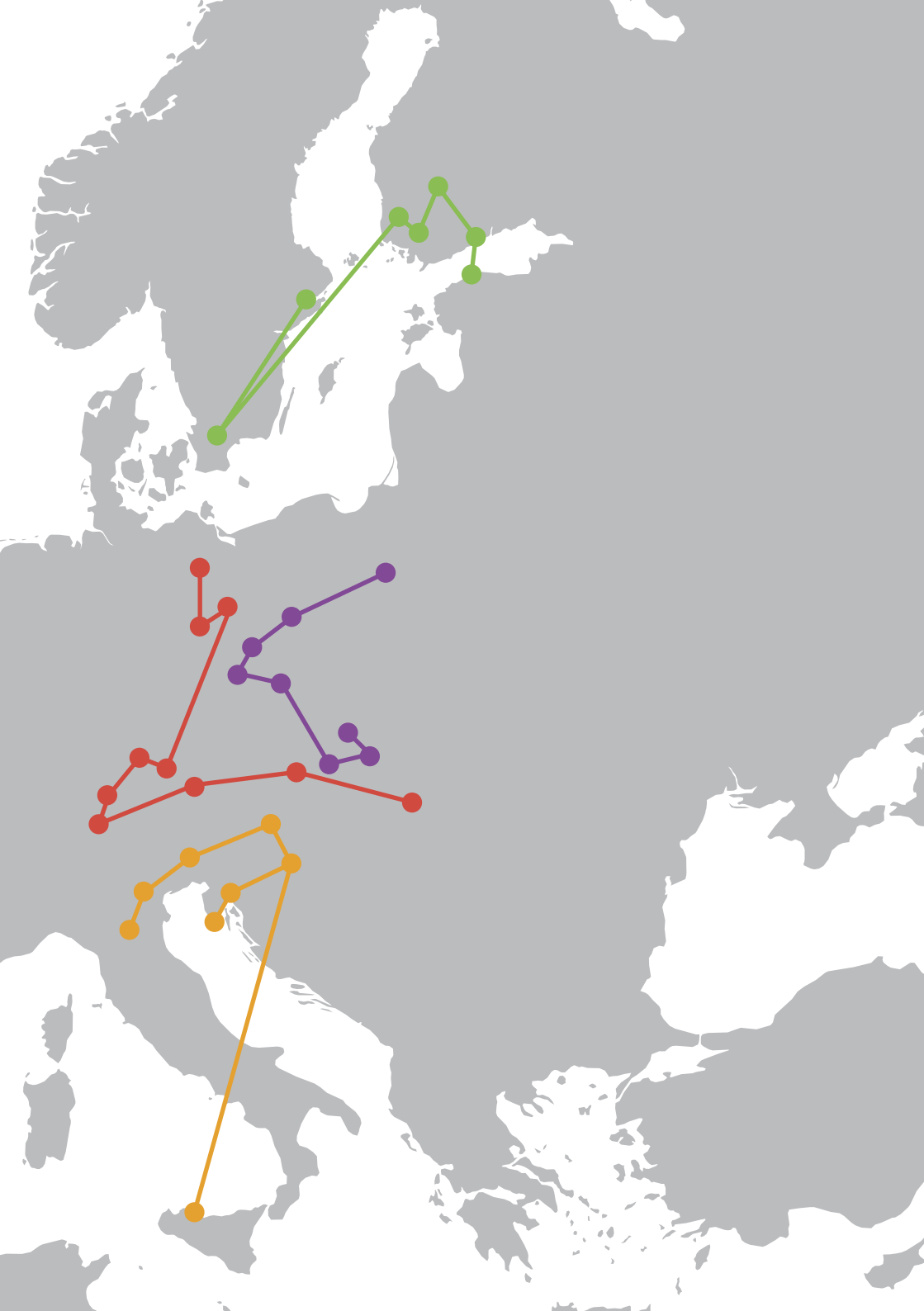


The Mediterranean route

Migration and borders

Trieste > Pula > Rijeka > Zagreb > Ptuj >
Maribor > Udine > Padova > Bologna >
Faenza > Palermo





Trainers and activists

Central route



Katarzyna Deka, coordinator



Lia Hamminga, logistics coordinator



Georg Blokus, facilitator



Irene Dominioni,
communications officer



Antje Scharenberg, support & researcher



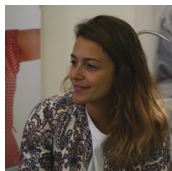
Western route



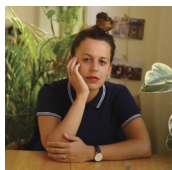
Doina Elena Craciun, coordinator



Emma Esini, logistics coordinator



Claraluz Lannes Keiser, facilitator

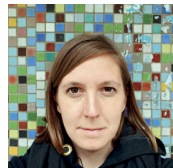


Adriana Díaz Martín-Zamorano,
communications officer

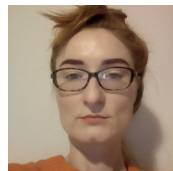
Visegrad route



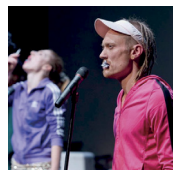
Alicja Borkowska, coordinator



Justyna Chmielewska, logistic coordinator



Magdalena Roszkowska, facilitator & performer

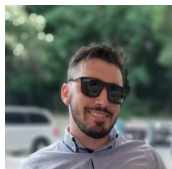


Łukasz Wójcicki,
communications officer & performer

Baltic route



Maria Pia Sternativo, coordinator



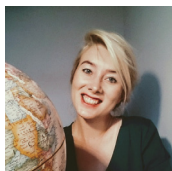
Luca Michele Piscitelli, logistics coordinator



Paolo Pizzolo, facilitator & evaluator



Marie Rosenkranz, facilitator

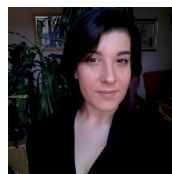


Ninnu Erkkilä, communications officer



Tony Venables, European citizenship trainer

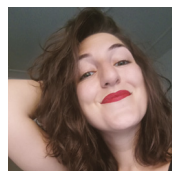
Mediterranean route



Maria Laura Mitra, coordinator



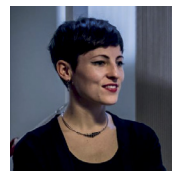
Chiara Organtini, support coordinator



Elena D'Amato, logistics coordinator



Alice Priori, facilitator



Irene Beltrame, communications officer



Jelena Batelić, trainer & facilitator

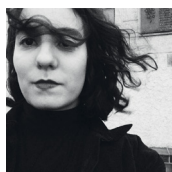
Trainers and coordinators



Gosia Wochowska - European Alternatives,
quality monitoring, coordination



Marta Cillero - European Alternatives,
press and communication



Hana Grgić - European Alternatives,
press and communication



Ana Oppenheim - European Alternatives,
social media coordinator



Federica Baiocchi, financial director



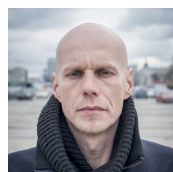
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production coordinator



Petar Marković - ECIT Foundation,
EU mobile citizens



Tony Venables - ECIT Foundation,
European citizenship, evaluation



Igor Stokfiszewski - Krytyka Polityczna,
digital story telling

BEST PRACTICES FROM THE SPRING ROUTES

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. What a place-based project such as this one reveals is not so much a Europe of diversity as one of contrasts. The contrasts are 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 organisations is similar and in principle their best practices can be replicated and exported.

2.1. RIGHTS AND IN PARTICULAR EUROPEAN RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

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

There is not enough 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 caused 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 only 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 Caravan routes, with the teams passing on the lessons learned from the training sessions and collecting signatures for 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 your job 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 become familiar with 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 a lack of services it is often a question of backing an institution or an individual to fill this gap.

«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».

*A representative of the
Mlada Boleslav centre*

Centrum pro Integraci, Mlada Boleslav

It is a branch of an organisation with headquarters in Prague. It 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 operates without discriminating between legal and illegal migrants or between EU and non-EU migrants.

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 caravan 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 has 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 of workers wearing white uniforms who 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 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, cases in which there is little support for migrant workers in the community, which leaves them particularly vulnerable to exploitation because they are dependent on information and advice provided only by 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 at large. 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 caravan 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 into two sections. The first deals with immediate basic needs such as food, clothing, rest and leisure activities. The second deals with information and advice: assistance with writing a CV, finding accommodation, accessing health care, advice on how to interact with the legal and tax systems. There are barriers to settling in Sweden: «without a social security number, you're working for a system but you cannot benefit from the services». Delays are due to the large number of applications.

Helsinki

Following the visit to Crossroads, the Baltic 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 to learn on 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. In Helsinki, the Baltic Caravan team also held a meeting with representatives of the prime minister's secretariat and the Ministry of Justice on the topics of responsibility for elections and participatory democracy to see how Finland is addressing these aspects.

—

Transeuropa Caravans recommend
«If mobile citizens are to execute their political rights, local authorities should carry out awareness raising campaigns on EU citizenship rights including mobility electoral rights ahead of the 2019 European elections, as well as all local elections. Information about voting procedures should be provided in several languages».

2.2. 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 run-up to the European elections with Europe on the agenda. There were a number of contexts to be explored relating to European elections:

- engagement with candidates during 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 Caravan teams stressed the importance of voting and the dangers brought on by the rise of populism and the extreme right, but also that involvement with Europe should not be limited to voting. Emphasis was therefore placed on the need for follow-ups after 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 put into practice. **One useful lesson from the project is to visit places where people are already intensely discussing the issues in order to raise a debate about Europe - it will follow more easily.** In the next section we will discuss how to do this in circumstances where the public is disengaged.

Best practices

Voting: when, where and how to choose

In the run-up to the European elections there was emphasis on combating fake news and rising populism, though perhaps not enough emphasis was placed on removing physical barriers to make voting easier. This is especially important for EU citizens voting in European elections not back home, but in their country of residence 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. Indeed in Scandinavia these groups have very few excuses not to vote. Our team stumbled into a public library in Stockholm in early May and were asked if they were there to vote! They also found early voting going on 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 further increase turnout.

—
Transeuropa Caravans recommend
«We recommend that more training opportunities be available for civil servants at all levels who are in direct contact with mobile EU citizens so that the untapped potential for their transformative political engagement is activated. EU citizens on the move can be powerful agents of democratic change provided they understand their dynamic role in shaking up politics across borders. There is a need for training not only regarding techniques but also the content of engagement with the public, which assumes a broad knowledge of European affairs and sources of information».

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 delimited 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 to be 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 well 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 practitioners should not be ignored. The project found plenty of self-help examples of best practices by civil society organisations, networks and resource centres. The following examples go a step further:

The Western Caravan stopped in a particular town in Galicia, A Coruña, well known for its democratic practice. The Caravan took the opportunity to discuss with citizens visiting Marea Atlántica's campaign event the kind of Europe they dream of. **Marea Atlántica** 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 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 very much impressed by the quality of the debate, in which everyone participated, making it evident that those engaged in local level activity are ready to participate in imagining an ideal Europe of equality for all migrants.



—
Transeuropa Caravans recommend
«Ahead of European or local elections, we recommend that political parties provide information about the registration and voting procedures in different languages so that EU citizens can easily inform themselves about the candidates and their programmes».

«So that's who we are, we are normal people who come from social movements, from the streets, taking responsibilities for our cities by becoming part of the institutions while preserving our way of doing politics.»

A representative of the Marea Atlántica



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 a 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 now collegiality, transparency and participation, decisions are taken by consensus at meetings of citizens.

«It is not the Mayor who makes all the decisions, but the whole municipal team together.»

A citizen from Saillans

Friedrichshafen and Fridays For Future in general

The Caravan 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.

Not only was this particular event a success because of the demonstration but also because there was an opportunity for question and answer sessions and debate. Fridays for Future motivates activism more generally in the young generation. Not only in Germany but in some other stops as well, particularly in Scandinavia, the climate crisis was very much central to the European election campaign and it is one of the factors that might 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, however, by no means the same throughout all routes.

«We were really impressed by the energy, motivation, enthusiasm and engagement of young people in climate change or - according to the new naming - the climate crisis».

Katarzyna, Central Caravan

2.3. 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 birthplace of Pegida, hosted by an adult education organisation called «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 is not generally the case.

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 people's eyes to a broader vision of Europe and create 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, that take 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 a range of engagement techniques

The variety of training and facilitation techniques used by the four teams of the Caravans in Spring 2019 was striking. It would actually 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 restart from scratch. Firstly there are the events and organisations, which projects such as this one can join and which are tailor-made to promote 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 other initiatives which organise numerous events and consider themselves as venues for debate on the future of Europe. It is also possible, however, in cooperation with a local host, to reach a wider audience by bringing a 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 breaks the ice. The teams used opportunities to raise issues at open days or at markets. A very important and underused network is constituted by the resource of numerous non-profit and co-working spaces, former factories and abandoned buildings taken over by civil society and social enterprises. The Caravan teams held European debates in such centres in Budapest, Marseilles, Barcelona. Europe should be present in all places where people connect.

—
Transeuropa Caravans recommend
«Education about the functioning of the EU and EU citizens' rights is not compulsory in most of the EU countries. Civil society organisations, with their creativity, transnational approach and experience in non-formal education can help fill these gaps. This will be possible only if public authorities at all levels provide the necessary support: national authorities are well-placed to coordinate systematic outreach, while local authorities are closer to and have easier access to citizens».



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 caravan teams, was chosen because it can have a very big impact and reach a lot of people in a relatively short time. Everything depends on the choice of the statements written on the banners to attract attention and strike a chord with the public. The benefits of this facilitation

technique are: anybody can do it; banners 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, Austria

«Omas gegen Rechts» can be translated as «Grannies against the far right». The group operates with a smile but sends 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 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 they can sell. They engaged in a debate with the team about the threats to Europe and European elections.

Cargonomia, Budapest

This is another example of an organisation with a formula that could be successfully implemented in the rest of Europe. Cargonomia is the formalisation of a 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 a sustainable agriculture education center which provides weekly vegetable boxes and a self-organised bike messenger and delivery company. They also attract international volunteers and have a great impact on the local community.



«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».

Team of Cargonomia

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 this way it 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.



CONCLUSIONS

For some members of Transeuropa Caravans 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.

A useful practical exercise based on this project and others would be to create a resource on facilitation techniques to help bridge the gap between people's everyday concerns and Europe. These range from games to draw in passersby and test their

knowledge, to «red lines» in the public place, picnics, street performances and film shows.

Gadgets and performances we designed for the project can be expanded as ice-breakers to make contact with citizens in public. 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. There are also sources of EU-related information which people see all the time such as food labels and examples such as free roaming charges in the Union. All this, however, remains at a superficial level and does not explain how the

decision-making process actually works or how 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 with techniques but also with the content of engagement activities with the public, which requires a broad knowledge of European affairs and sources of information.



Transeuropa Caravans recommend
«To engage with the public about Europe, it is best to start off by avoiding the EU and asking about people's concerns and those of their community. It is necessary to keep an open mind, so as to attract questions from a wide range of political viewpoints which do not exclude anyone. It is only after listening to people that it is possible to explain how Europe is relevant to their everyday concerns – which remains, however, an incredibly hard thing to do».



3.1. EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2019

Planning and carrying out activities on the routes was made easier by the run-up to the EP elections, which this year benefitted from greater public awareness and interest, although to varying degrees this depended on the place. 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 with spontaneous actions in public spaces. Connections were also made with candidates for election to the European Parliament.

«The project has been a 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 it was a powerful visual reminder that the elections are European».

Tony Venables, ECIT Foundation

3.2. EUROPEAN NETWORKING

Building from the local level network to the European wide network and campaign

The project produced good examples of local actions that can be scaled-up across Europe. The *Consell 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 Western Caravan's team said: «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 at a transnational level». In Barcelona, the Caravan 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 women's organisations engaged during the tours could well benefit from connection with a European initiative, which may succeed because it has such a strong local base - i.e. *Grannies against far right* in Austria, or their counterparts in Lisbon, «*A avo veio trabalhar*», which held a meeting with the Western Caravan team to share their concerns about growing racism and xenophobia in Europe.

Connecting organisations working with 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 Integacji in Malda Boleslaw (Poland), the intercultural centre in Prague or Crossroads in Stockholm, there are some similarities regarding what the organisations actually do, despite the obvious differences due to 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, something inevitable as patterns of migration shift and become more global. There is also a trend towards providing a comprehensive range of services under one roof, from immediate emergency help and shelter for destitute new arrivals to advice about language courses and their organization, 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 for the

integration of third country nationals and other programmes and will occasionally take up a case with EU authorities.

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Transeuropa Caravans recommend
«We would like to see a European eco-system and operational means for transnational networking among local organisations and resource centres providing services to migrant citizens and defending their rights. We believe that 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, beyond SOLVIT».



Networking for democracy and a new politics

A key success of the Caravans tour was to uncover a wide range of highly advanced practices - not just participatory, but also direct democracy ones - which, actually, range across a much wider array of different types of settings and organisations than is generally thought. Reclaiming of abandoned factories 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 - Salon for European Civil Organisations (SECO). When it comes to participatory democracy, most people think about the major «rebel» cities such as Naples or Barcelona, participatory budgeting or citizens' assemblies drawn by lot. There is much more to it than that, as the examples of A Coruña and Saillans have shown.

«Most issues we face cross borders and, therefore, the solutions to them must cross borders too. On our roads to European democracy, we discovered that 'together we stand, divided we fall'».

Petar Markovic, ECIT Foundation

3.3. BLACK SPOTS

The risk of painting too rosy a picture and the need to pay attention to the advice provided by deserts and places where people rarely go

Although it is right to show that across Europe there are far more advanced practices than are generally believed to be, which are reasons for optimism, there is also a retreat to nationalism, a shrinking civil space and resistance to change which can take on extreme forms. How to explain such phenomena, such 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 critical situations identified by the Caravans should be mentioned and here action is required, not just by civil society but also by public authorities including the EU institutions:

— **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, not even where there are important inflows of foreign workers from across the border and enterprise zones to attract new investments. The only support is management provided by trade unions. In the case of temporary agency workers, exploitation is strong, with many living in substandard housing and working under near slavery conditions. Even in places where there is a reputable employer such as 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 Caravan teams 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 with reference to availability of advice. There is a need for further research across Europe to identify the zones of significant migration movement without any corresponding institutional support.

— **Support for civil society under pressure.** The impression from the Caravans routes is that there are initiatives across Europe which are springing up continuously to counteract anti-immigration or racist rhetoric. **In areas of migration organisations are seen badly by governments 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. We believe that a new EU programme on rights and values should be designed to provide structural support to such organisations.

— **Migration seen locally.** The fifth Caravan this autumn (Mediterranean Caravan) 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 Ukraine, Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The past may be a root cause for opposition to migration.

4 - ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to warmly thank ALL the local hosts who welcomed the Transeuropa Caravans in May 2019. It is thanks to your work, determination and expressions of solidarity that the Transeuropa Caravans project could be so inspiring and interesting for a broader public across Europe.

We unfortunately could not describe each place visited by the Caravans in this small publication but you all have a place in our articles, blog posts and in our amazing memories from the routes.

This document was published thanks to the collaboration and contribution of hundreds of volunteers and activists encountered by the Transeuropa Caravans in 2019, and trainers and activists engaged in the Transeuropa Caravans Central, Western, Visegrad and Baltic routes.

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European Alternatives is a civil society organisation working to promote democracy, equality and culture beyond the nation state. To find out more about European Alternatives, check out our website www.euroalter.com or follow us on our social networks.

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Krytyka Polityczna

Krytyka Polityczna (Political Critique) is a large-scale Central and Eastern European liberal network of institutions and activists. It was established in 2002 following the publication of an Open Letter titled, “The Open Letter to the European Public Opinion”, demanding a more open and integrated European policy from the Polish elites. www.krytykapolityczna.pl

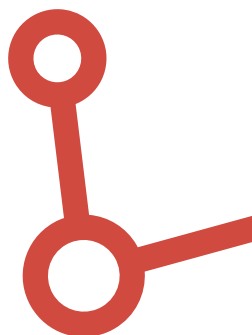
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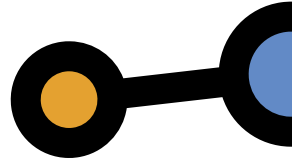
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PHOTO CREDITS

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