

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Participant:	EucA - European university college Association
PIC number:	949079429
Project name and acronym:	VOICES: Migration Stories for Inclusive Policies (VOICES - 101196241)

1. EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	3
Event name:	Echoes of Migration: Documenting Stories and Crafting Policy in Thessaloniki
Type:	Workshops and training sessions
In situ/online:	in-situ
Location:	Thessaloniki
Date(s):	4-7 September 2025
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.euchangemakers.com/voices and https://www.euchangemakers.com/voices-thessaloniki

Participants	
Female:	49
Male:	32
Non-binary:	1
Romania	3
Austria	1
Hungary	7
Italy	7
Greece	36
Poland	2
Sweden	1
Germany	7
Spain	1

1. EVENT DESCRIPTION		
France	1	
Ireland	1	
Slovakia	1	
Ukraine	1	
Albania	4	
Finland	0	
Estonia	1	
Luxembourg	1	
Belgium	4	
Portugal	1	
Croatia	1	
Total number of participants:	81	From total number of countries: 20
Description		
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>		
<p>The third VOICES event took place in Thessaloniki, Greece, from 4 to 7 September 2025. Over three intense and inspiring days, the Consortium convened 81 participants from 20 different EU Member States and CERV-associated countries. Among them, 38 were international university students, including 26 members of the Youth Squads, teams of students selected for their strong civic commitment, leadership skills, and intercultural awareness. These young changemakers are actively engaged throughout the entire VOICES project, contributing not only as participants but also providing mentorship and guidance to their peers. Their presence significantly enhanced the overall atmosphere of the event, ensuring a dynamic and collaborative environment aligned with the project's objectives. The remaining participants included local students from Perrotis College, as well as migrants who took part in interviews conducted by the students. The event also benefited from the expertise of Ms. Iveta Madarova, from the "My House of European History" unit of DG TRAD of the European Parliament, who joined as a trainer. Being a EU official, she was not included in the official participant count.</p> <p>The Thessaloniki event combined oral history with civic engagement to foster a gender-sensitive understanding of migration. Through in-depth conversations with a "living library" approach, students interviewed 21 migrants from the Balkans and the Middle East who settled in Central Macedonia during Europe's third (1990s - 2000s) and fourth (2000s - 2010s) migration phases. Moreover, one person from Pakistan was involved in the interviews. Given that the geographic location is not relevant for the project, his story was counted as additional but will be included in the editorial project anyway. Their stories will be part of the editorial project "Voices from Migrations" on the European Parliament's "My House of European History."</p> <p>Beyond collecting testimonies, students collaborated on drafting a Policy Recommendation on Inclusion and Anti-Racism. Drawing on firsthand exchanges with migrants and applying gender-sensitive planning, the recommendation targets systemic improvements to integration policy and will feed directly into a tangible Local Anti-Racism and Integration Action Plan.</p>		

1. EVENT DESCRIPTION

By pursuing a dual-track approach, combining oral history with civic engagement, the project fostered meaningful intergenerational dialogue while strengthening the role of migrants as active agents of their own stories.

Echoes of Migration: Documenting Stories and Crafting Policy in Thessaloniki

For centuries, Thessaloniki was one of the most cosmopolitan centers of the Eastern Mediterranean. Later, the early 20th century brought another transformative wave: the arrival of Greek refugees from Asia Minor after the population exchange with Turkey. Their presence reshaped neighborhoods, enriched cultural life, and redefined Thessaloniki's urban fabric.

This legacy of migration continues today. Thessaloniki's location along the Balkan route makes it a key hub for refugees and migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. For some, it is a place of settlement; for others, a stop on their way north. Refugee camps such as Diavata and urban accommodation programs like UNHCR's ESTIA have played critical roles in hosting displaced populations. Over recent decades, diaspora communities from Albania, Georgia, Russia, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and various African countries have also made Thessaloniki their home, weaving new cultural threads into the city's social fabric.

Perrotis College, as a division of the American Farm School in Thessaloniki, reflects this deep connection between migration and the city. Founded in the 1920s, it responded directly to the needs of thousands of Asian minor refugees who had lost everything. By offering practical agricultural training and modern farming techniques, the school empowered uprooted families to rebuild their lives with skills, self-sufficiency, and dignity.

This mission continues today. Perrotis College now serves students from Greece, the Balkans, the Middle East, and Africa, while also responding to the more recent refugee crisis. Its programs in agriculture, food systems, and environmental stewardship provide practical pathways to employment and social inclusion. More importantly, the school fosters values of respect, sustainability, and community, helping newcomers integrate into Greek society.

Thessaloniki's story shows that migration is not an interruption in its history but its very essence. The city has always been renewed by the people who arrive, and institutions like Perrotis College embody this spirit of resilience and integration. Through education and opportunity, they demonstrate that migration is not only a challenge but also a source of strength, creativity, and coexistence for Thessaloniki.

Description of the Event

The event was organized as follows:

Pre-event activities

In preparation for the event, our collaboration with My House of European History, a unit within the European Parliament's DG TRAD, was further strengthened. In this framework, Iveta Madarova's mission was approved to provide an on-site training on Storytelling, Oral History and Interviewing Techniques and support the students during the interviews, offering her guidance and expertise when needed.

As part of the Thessaloniki event, we placed strong emphasis on outreach to migrant communities through meaningful partnerships. In this framework, we collaborated with the **Greek Forum of Migrants**, the **Albanian Club "Mother Theresa"**, **SOS Children's Villages in Thessaloniki**, and the **Alumni Office of Perrotis College**, whose support was instrumental in engaging diverse groups and fostering active participation. These collaborations created crucial bridges between the event's European dimension and the everyday realities of local communities, ensuring that the voices and contributions of migrants were at the very heart of the program.

On 1 September 2025, from 15:30 to 16:30 (Thessaloniki Time Zone), we hosted an online onboarding session via Zoom for participants. The session began with an introduction outlining the background, objectives, and impact of the project. Participants were then invited to take part in an interactive ice-breaking activity, designed to foster early connections and a sense of community among the group. The session concluded with a practical overview of the event's agenda and logistics, followed by a Q&A segment that allowed participants to clarify their doubts and prepare for their active engagement in Rosarno.

1. EVENT DESCRIPTION

Event activities

Day 0 - 4 September 2025: Participants' arrivals

The first day was dedicated to arrivals.

Day 1 - 5 September 2025: Opening Ceremony, Knowledge & Skills Building

The event started with a welcome speech by Dr. Jeffrey Lansdale, President of the American Farm School and Perrotis College. Perrotis College staff, with the support of EucA, then presented the project's objectives and the agenda of the day, mostly focused on training and skills development.

The first training session of the day was delivered by the Coordinator of Student and Alumni Affairs, Pantelis Chantzaras who, with more than 10 years experience in migration and integration, offered a lecture about Emigration and Immigration in Greece from the early 1900's till nowadays. His lecture offered students a rich historical and socio-cultural overview of migration in Thessaloniki, providing essential context for understanding the complexities of the local community and the challenges faced by the migrant population.

Following this session, participants took part in interactive ice-breaker activities facilitated by Theodosis Tasios, Career Counselor and Psychologist for Perrotis College. These activities created a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged students to connect, exchange perspectives, and begin building a collaborative spirit.

The morning continued with three hands-on workshops facilitated by EucA's Projects and Communications teams:

- "How to Write a Policy Recommendation", equipping participants with practical tools to produce concise, high-impact proposals;
- "Gender Mainstreaming", discovering how inclusivity and equality should be embedded across policies and community initiatives;
- "Content Creation and Video Techniques", outlining production guidelines and audiovisual/communication strategies to produce content for the editorial project.

To encourage diversity and collaboration, participants were arranged in 8 working groups balanced by gender, nationality, and language proficiency. At the same time, five Youth Squads members formed a dedicated taskforce to draft the Third Policy Recommendation on Anti-Racism and Inclusion.

After a lunch break, EucA staff introduced the afternoon training session, designed to equip students with the practical skills needed for the interviews and content creation activities scheduled for the following day. The session was conducted by Iveta Madarova, from "My House of European History Unit" (DG TRAD, European Parliament).

During her training, Ms Iveta Madarova introduced the "My House of European History" platform and the Oral History methodology, clarifying standards for collecting testimonies ethically and rigorously. She then focused on Interviewing Techniques, guiding students offering examples of well-crafted questions and strategies tailored to sensitive contexts such as migration stories. A hands-on peer-interview workshop followed: students paired up to practice the interviews using guidelines and mock questions. During the workshop, students gained firsthand insight into the challenges of asking sensitive migration-related questions while sharpening empathy, attentiveness, and cultural sensitivity. Each pair rotated roles (interviewer/interviewee) and received personalized feedback from Ms Madarova.

After a short break, Ms. Madarova delivered a concise storytelling module on shaping material into clear outputs aligned with platform guidelines with emphasis on the format and the structure. The session covered Storytelling Techniques, equipping students to turn interviews into clear, engaging outputs by following the platform guidelines. During the training, they practiced drafting written testimonies up to 2000 characters and editing video excerpts shorter than 2 minutes.

After day one, attendees left with enhanced project understanding and a practical blend of theoretical and creative competencies. Guided learning and hands-on work equipped them to carry out the next day's interviews with professionalism and empathy.

Day 2 - 6 of September 2025: Content Creation

1. EVENT DESCRIPTION

The second day was fully devoted to fieldwork. Building on Day 1, students were divided into eight groups and conducted interviews with two key communities in Thessaloniki:

- migrants from the Balkans (primarily Albania)
- people from the Middle East who arrived after 2010
- one additional story (Pakistan);

This division allowed teams to capture the diversity of local migration experiences and to map multiple facets of integration in the city.

Using a “living library” format, students held conversations that highlighted migration journeys, integration issues, and future aspirations. The process followed a gender-mainstreaming approach, including testimonies from women and men to highlight gender-specific pathways and barriers. Interviews took place in Albanian, Greek, and English, enabling participants to speak in the language they felt most at ease. Each team met two or more interviewees, gathering 21 testimonies in total. Beyond the interviews, students documented the process through photography, video, and audio to collect content for the “My House of European History” platform.

In the afternoon, teams worked on content creation: editing recordings, selecting video excerpts, and drafting concise written narratives. Outputs were delivered via a shared repository on Google Drive. Drawing on lessons from the field, each group drafted a Policy Recommendation addressing anti-racism, social inclusion, and community integration. A dedicated team of Youth Squads then synthesized these inputs into a single document: the Third Policy Recommendation on Anti-Racism and Integration, incorporating a gender analysis and embedding gender-responsive actions. This proposal will inform the Local Anti-Racism and Integration Action Plan that will be adopted by the Municipality of Rosarno in 2026.

By the end of Day 2, participants had produced concrete deliverables: stories, multimedia content, and a policy recommendation while experiencing the practical skills of collaboration and intercultural dialogue in responding to Europe’s migration and integration challenges.

Day 3 - 7 September 2025: Remembrance Festival

During the Closing Ceremony of the event, students had the chance to present the testimonies collected during fieldwork through the “Remembrance Festival”. Each group showcased their work screening short video clips, telling stories, and displaying photos from the “living library” sessions. Moreover, the dedicated group of Youth Squads could present the Policy Recommendation on Anti-Racism and Integration. The Ceremony was attended by the students, Perrotis College officials, a delegation from the Municipality of Rosarno and representatives of the Albanian Club “Mother Theresa”. The ceremony closed with Greek food and refreshments.

To assess the event, **Perrotis College submitted two feedback questionnaires** to participants: the EU Justice, Rights and Values Questionnaire and the Event feedback form evaluating the event. Participants were asked to rate the overall organisation of the event on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score.

The feedback form gave positive results. 87.9% of participants rated the overall experience during the event as 4 or 5, confirming the success and its alignment with the project’s goals.

Qualitative comments underscored three key assets: meaningful contact with migrant communities, an intercultural environment that nurtured friendships and collaboration, and practical skill growth in interviewing, storytelling, and policy writing. Several students added that the experience was transformative: 87.9% of participants rated 4 or 5 out of 5 the improvement on their understanding of EU values.

HISTORY OF CHANGES

VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).