

Report from the Seminar “Reshaping the image of democratic revolutions 1989”

September 22 – September 26, 2021

Thessaloniki, Greece



Reshaping the Image of  
Democratic Revolutions 1989:  
European contemporary Perspectives  
and forgotten Lessons from the Past



Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union

From September 22 till September 26, 2021, Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past together with partner organizations from 7 European countries organized the Seminar for history educators *“Reshaping the image of democratic revolutions 1989”* in Thessaloniki, Greece.

The event brought together history teachers and youth workers from 10 different countries to share their experience and exchange working methods and knowledge. During the seminar, they worked together in several workshops dedicated to the democratic changes that took place in 1989 and the transition to democracy and free market economy that followed in the 1990s.

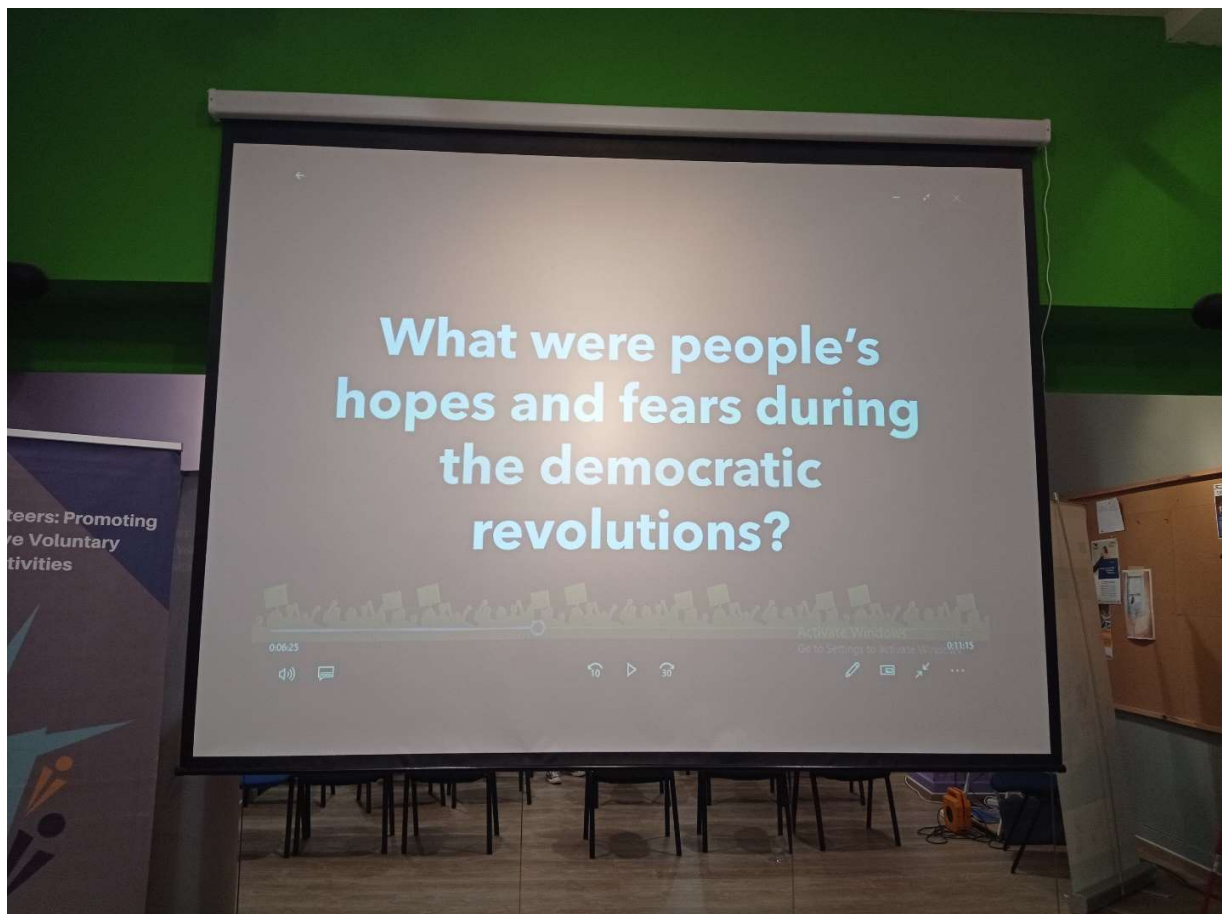


Following an informal exchange in the evening before, on September 23 the official start of the seminar was given. After a round of introductions, all participants got to learn more about the project that brought them all together in Thessaloniki - the project *“Reshaping the image of democratic revolutions 1989: European contemporary perspectives and forgotten lessons from the past”*, co-financed by the European Union through the program “Europe for Citizens”.

Then followed the screening of the educational film *“How did 1989 change Europe?”*. The film collects personal memories of the period and is designed both for use in formal and informal education. It is a product of the discussions held at the International Spring Forum (June 16 – June 18, 2021) which focused on 5 key topics:

- Living in divided Europe before 1989
- Democratic revolutions 1989
- Living in transition
- Legacy of the democratic revolutions 1989
- The future of Europe

After the screening all participants were given time to reflect and comment on the film. The history teachers and youth workers were welcomed to incorporate the film in their work and provide Documenta and the other partner with feedback from their practice.



The following working session focused on a presentation of the manual *“1989: a lesson from the past”* which collects didactic materials aimed at improving the working methods of history educators who deal with the topic. The history educators commented on the didactic materials and exchanged suggestions about ways in which they can use the manual in their work. The manual is written by Miloš Vukanović and Igor Radulović from HIPMONT (Montenegro).

A short presentation about the so-called „generation of transition“ in Eastern Europe gave impulses for a group discussion about the realities of teaching about 1989 in different European countries. Each history educator gave a short overview of the curricula they follow and the way

it incorporates 1989 and its aftermath. The last working session of the day was dedicated to the sources available for history educators to use when they work on the topic of the democratic revolutions of 1989.

On September 24 the work program of the seminar started with the workshop „*The untold stories of 1989*“. The participants were divided in national teams and were given the task to detect the aspects that are left out of the mainstream narrative about 1989 in each country. The groups had time to brainstorm and debate and then they presented their findings to the other participants.



The second session of the day was built around another workshop, „*The day that changed everything*“. The task was to describe an event which is symbolic of 1989 and the transition to democracy for each country and to do so in 10 sentences and 1 photograph. The participants were presented with an example of a similar text and spent the rest of the afternoon brainstorming, preparing their texts and searching for photographs.

In the evening, a public presentation of the project and the educational film was held in the center of Thessaloniki. The event was hosted by United societies of Balkan in their public space BalkanHeart.



On September 25 the participants began the day by presenting their work from the workshop „*The day that changed everything*“. Each group presented their text and provided insight on the background of the story they chose to tell. After the comments and questions regarding the presentations, there was a final round of evaluations during which each participant could share their impressions from the exchange of experiences and perspectives during the seminar.

The last working session of the seminar was designed to define the next steps for the implementation of the project and the responsibilities of each partner organization.

The Seminar is organized in the scope of the project “Reshaping the Image of Democratic Revolutions 1989: European contemporary perspectives and forgotten lessons from the past”. It seeks to remind European citizens about the democratic revolutions 1989-1990 as a period of arduous struggles for pluralistic democracy and peaceful coexistence in Europe with the aim to strengthen the contemporary commitment of the European citizens to the preservation of democratic pluralism and democratic institutions.

The project brings together 8 partner organizations - 4 NGOs, 2 universities, 1 research institute and 1 guild - from 8 European countries. The project is coordinated by Documenta – Centre for

Dealing with the Past (Croatia) and brings together the following European organizations and institutions:

- Aarhus Universitet (Denmark)
- BLOCKFREI – Verein für Kultur und Kommunikation (Austria)
- Centrul Roman pentru Inovatie in Dezvoltare Locala (Romania)
- European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (Poland)
- Hipmont – Udruženje profesora istorije Crne Gore (Montenegro)
- Tartu Ülikool (Estonia)
- United Societies of Balkans (Greece)

While fostering the transnational dialogue of European citizens about 1989 and its consequences, the project increases knowledge and awareness among the citizens about the similarities of European countries and thereby contributes to the strengthening of European identity.

The project is co-financed by the European Union through the program “Europe for Citizens”.

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