

**EPIRUS**  
KENTPO NEQN



**MEET OUR  
NEIGHBOURS 2**



Co-funded by the  
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# **MEET OUR NEIGHBORS 2**

## **IO1 Results**

**YC EPIRUS, Greece**

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## WORKSHOPS “IMAGINE EUROPE”

The organisation YC EPRUS conducted two Imagine Europe workshops, of which the first one was with 25 high school students aged from 17 to 18, with participation also from 5 history and other relevant teachers who took part in the interviews conducted right after the workshop. The second workshop was with 12 young adults (university students and active individuals) aged 18-24.

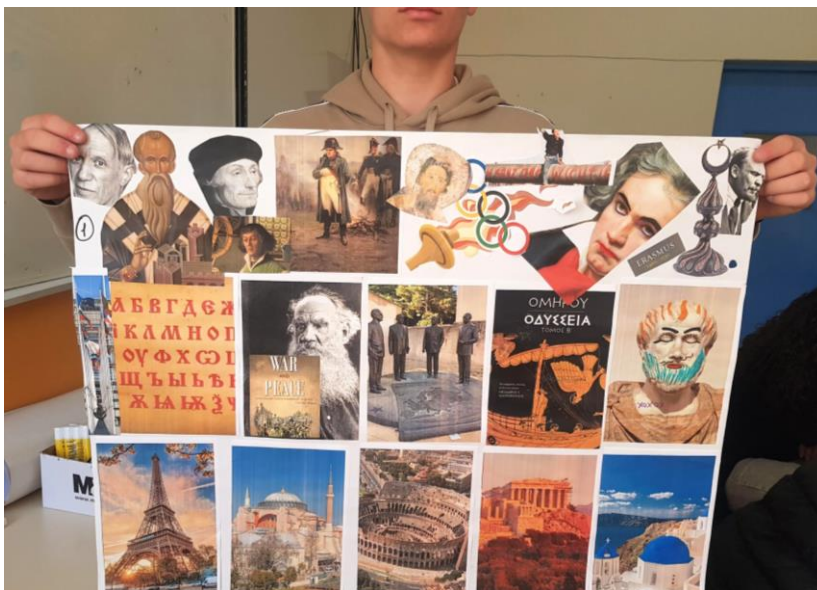
### The first workshop with high school students, conducted on 20/3/2023 at a local high school, was led as following:

1. Two facilitators of the workshop introduced students with the project, aims and structure of the workshop and invited students to a short ice breaking activity.
2. Students were then explained more about the activity, they were then separated in 4 groups, given the materials and instructed to start with brainstorming and practical preparation of their posters.
3. Facilitators supported the groups by encouraging active thinking and active participation of everyone. When the groups were ready, they were invited to present.



## Presentations of each group

**Group 1:** The group explained that they grouped pictures in 3 main categories that they believe are important. At the bottom, they placed points of interest, such as the Eiffel tower, Santorini island, Agia Sophia, Acropolis and the Colosseum. In the middle, they placed historical moments or historically significant symbols, such as the Aristotele, cyrillic alphabet, European Parliament, and Odysea, among others. And finally, on the top of their poster, they



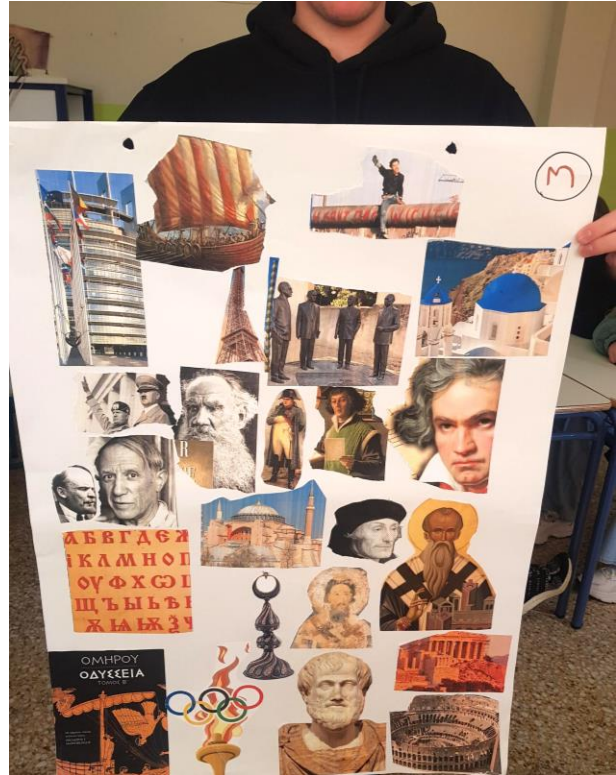
placed important historical figures or most important historic symbols, such as Beethoven, the Olympic games, Islam symbol, Christian saints, Erasmus, Picasso, Lenin, Napoleon. It should be noted that at some moments the students forgot some of the names of the historic figures and called them “grandfather”, indicating some sense of relation or familiarity. As well, as you can see in the picture, one of the students decided to draw makeup on Aristotle, however other students commented that it was not a good and respectful idea to do, even for not for fun.



**Group 2:** The second group also aligned the images alongside two main categories - symbols to which they can connect their reality with, and symbols with which they can't relate and wish they were not symbols of Europe. In some transitioning areas, they placed a couple images they felt indifferent about.

On the relatable (right) side, they placed symbols connected to Greece, such as the Olympic games, Aristotle, Acropolis, Santorini island, olives, Agia Sophia, Odyssey. Additionally, on the right side they placed Christianity and the European Parliament. In the transitioning area images of Tolstoi, colosseum, Erasmus, Copernic, Vikings, Islam, Cyrillic alphabet, Beethoven, Picasson, Eiffel tower and others were placed, meanwhile leaving the undesirable part of Europe covered with images of Berlin Wall, Lenin, Napoleon, Mussolini and Hitler.

**Group 3:** Participants of this group decided to create a pyramid of symbols, even though the final visual representation of their idea was executed differently. As a base, they placed ancient symbols of the Europe, for example, the Colosseum, Aristotle, Acropolis, Odyssey and the Olympic games, representing the origin of European civilization. On the second level after the base, religious images were assorted, such as the Orthodox Saints, symbol of Islam, Agia Sophia, also including the alphabet, representing beliefs and values of people. On the third level, participants placed historic personalities that had a large impact on the course and /or development of Europe, for example, Copernicus, Napoleon, Tolstoi, Hitler, Beethoven. And finally, on the top, there are places that are worth visiting, both for beauty or discovering and learning. European Parliament building, viking sites, the Well of Berlin, Santorini and Eiffel tower are among them.



**Group 4:** This group had a challenging time to assemble the symbols of Europe in a cohesive manner forming a clear result of thought and cooperation. Several members expressed that it is hard to form an image of Europe with only these symbols, meanwhile a discussion around the history and future of Agia Sophia arised. The discussion, in a sense, also represents some overall concerns of the future of Europe that some young people feel.

**The second workshop with young adults, conducted on 30/3/2023 at youth center of the YC EPIRUS organisation, was led as following:**

- Two facilitators of the workshop introduced young people with the project, aims and structure of the workshop, and invited participants to a short ice breaking activity.
- Participants were explained in more detail about the activity, they were then separated in 2 groups, given the materials and instructed to start with brainstorming and practical preparation of their posters.
- Facilitators supported the groups by encouraging active thinking and active participation of everyone. When the groups were done with practical creation of the posters, they were invited to present their work.



**Presentations of each group**

**Group 1:** Participant quickly set an overall plan of their representation of Europe. As the base, they placed the European Commission and also personas that they see as some of the founding fathers of Europe. Further, they grouped other symbols of Europe in categories of historical elements, artists, influential people, and symbols they relate to Greece. Finally, some of the participants suggested a political stance by placing the Olympic torch in the hand of Lenin, while spelling out the word 'Edinstvo', which means 'Unity' in Russian language.





**Group 2:** Members of this group struggled to find a common agreement on the image of Europe. They created a poster mostly based on visual aesthetics, including most of the symbols they found relevant in an artistic representation of Europe. Furthermore, they wrote Neighbours Next Door over the poster, indicating neighborly relations among the European countries, and they used satire towards visual representation of Hitler, as they wanted to hint at the fact that he is one of the most undesirable historical faces of Europe.

**An overall conclusion about this workshop** is that the age of participants determined a different level of interest and understanding of the workshop, however at both age groups of young people there were both agreements and disagreements during the group work. It was sometimes easy for the participants to structure and represent their thoughts and ideas of Europe as a group, however sometimes it was not at all easy due to strongly different points of view.

# INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## An Overview

The people interviewed were 5 high school students aged 17-18, 5 young adults aged 18-25, 3 high school history teachers and 3 high school literature teachers. In total, 16 people were interviewed. Overall, it is evident that the opinions of students and young adults are formed increasingly by the news and social media, following specific well known narratives in some cases. However, the knowledge and comments on political and social views were often deep and well explained, meaning that the young people are confident and detailed about their views. Below, there will be provided short overviews for each question, followed by some exemplifying citations.

## Highlights from the interviews with young people

### **1. Do 'being European' and 'being an EU citizen' have the same meaning for you?**

Overall, 100% of the respondents replied with no.

- 'Being European' means that you embrace and support the culture of the inhabitants of Europe, their customs. To be a citizen of the EU means to be a member of an association that is an expression of visions and aspirations concerning the overall improvement of the quality of life, the solution of common problems and the creation of substantial conditions for a better future. The term 'citizen' is therefore a practical term, while the term 'European' is an ideological one. (student)
- Within the union there are conditions of peace that, in my opinion, last (or at least should) for centuries, unlike some other countries in Europe that may have animosities and antipathies between themselves and are not involved in any way with the European Union. (young adult)
- In my opinion, being a European has a different meaning than being a citizen of the European Union. On the contrary, a citizen of the European Union is one who, in addition to residing in the European Union, participates in public life, i.e. behaves as an active citizen. (young adult)

### **2. Do you think 'being European' is a unifying factor?**

Overall, 70% of the respondents replied with yes.

- European history has shown that, unfortunately, the peoples of this continent do not take it for granted that they should overcome crises and difficulties together. The latest example is the war in Ukraine. (student)
- I believe that being European is a unifying factor. Because many of the countries that belong to Europe have a common history, a similar culture and the people who live in them have common characteristics. (student)
- The EU has created a sense of unity in Europe. But I think that is far from being true. I say this because I believe that every state in Europe operates with different terms and the



everyday life of its citizens is also different. Because of this, stereotypes still prevail among Europeans, such as all Germans are fascists and all Greeks are liars. (young adult)

**3. Do you think that the EU respects its values (rule of law, human rights, non-discrimination, free market, private property)?**

Overall, 70% of respondents said yes.

- The European Union is constantly trying to put into practice the moral values and ideology it stands for. Peace, equality, egalitarianism, and freedom are just some of the values it upholds, always seeking to do justice to any attempt to violate them. (student)
- In theory, the EU respects all of the above, but in practice things are completely different. Europe in recent years has been corrupted and has lost the values that were once that once characterized its citizens. So in essence, the EU has 'betrayed' most of the values on which it is built. (young adult)
- Undoubtedly, there have, at various times, been persons who have tried to take advantage of various circumstances and conditions to serve their own interests by trying to violate some of the fundamental values of the European Union, and for this, of course, they have been punished accordingly. Through this process, moreover, it is clear how essential and valuable this European institution is becoming. (young adult)

**4. Do you want Europe to have no borders and become a single country?**

Overall, 100% of the respondents replied with no.

- In my opinion, I believe that this would have more negative than positive consequences. It is important that each country continues to preserve its culture, tradition and heritage in general. Unfortunately, the 'abolition' of borders will deprive each individual state of its unique identity, which it has managed to build over all these centuries. (student)
- In theory, a Europe without borders (as was the original vision) from the Atlantic to the Urals would be the ideal Union. Today it is a utopia, and to achieve it, internal weaknesses and external interventions that want Europe to be small and weak must be addressed. (student)
- There should not be a single constitution because the problems of each country are different and specific. Moreover, the mentality that the citizens of a country follow can be very different from the mentality that prevailing in another, for example the inhabitants of the northern peoples tend to be more disciplined than the inhabitants of southern nations. (young adult)

**5. Do you want the EU to expand by accepting new countries from the Balkan Peninsula?**

Overall, 80% of respondents said yes.

- I would like the EU to expand by accepting new countries from the Balkan Peninsula. It would be good for the states because they would be able to grow and benefit from cooperation with the existing member states. It would also be good for the Balkan region in general, which would be given an opportunity for development. (student)

- Of course, I would also like to see the EU expand with the annexation of countries from the Balkan Peninsula. Because in this way the EU will be able to strengthen its international position and will be able to and can extend its power to the rest of the continent. Among other things, it will strengthen the advantages it offers these countries, advantages of economic, scientific, political and institutional advantages. (young adult)
- In my opinion, it would be wrong to accept new countries from the Balkan Peninsula into the European Union. We all know that the Balkan countries have significant differences not only among themselves, but also with European countries. Besides, with the admission of Turkey, for example, to the European Union, the problems that will be caused will be great, since Turkey is very different from the European countries, not only in terms of its history and culture, but also in terms of its beliefs and its behaviour towards other countries. (young adult)

#### **6. Choose 5 things that best describe a European person.**

Liberal spirit, human rights, education, gender equality, right to vote, rational, technocrat, clinging to material culture, disciplined and showing respect for the public, courtesy, civility, freedom of speech, national consciousness, protection of the environment, voluntarism, social justice, respect for human rights, democratic, active, politically active, diversity, peaceful, solidarity, oppressive, close minded, progressive, organisational, equality and freedom, security and cooperation.

#### **7. Choose 5 things that best describe a Greek person.**

Hospitality, austerity, liveliness, strong patriotism, independence, spontaneous, impulsive, ambitious, ready to bend laws and rules and disorganized, courtesy, friendly, willingness to cooperate, negative prejudices towards people that are different, equality between genders, having ethos, honest, sensitive, humanistic, revolutionary, intelligent, tricky, equality, responsibility, democratic, dignifying, striving for a better future, egalitarian, harmonic, empathy, endurance in difficult circumstances, and cooperation.

#### **8. What threatens Europe to a greater extent?**

Overall: Refugee influx, tensions between countries, alienation from national identities, energy dependence, tensions between the powerful and weaker countries within the EU, some of the political leaders, refugee influx (not a direct threat by the refugees), accession of other countries to the EU.

- The greatest threat to Europe is the resurgence of tensions between its states. As we see with Russia's invasion of Russia, war on European soil is again a reality. But there are also problems within the EU, with the North-South divide. (student)
- The greatest threat facing Europe in recent decades is the phenomenon of immigration. To be more precise, thousands of people a year leave their countries, mainly Iran, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, because of war or miserable living conditions in order to seek a better future in Europe. The result of this situation is, on the one hand, the accumulation of many people in different areas, which in some cases affects their coexistence with the local population and, on the other hand, encourages environmental pollution due to the

life jackets and personal effects found in coastal areas or in camps. Naturally, this phenomenon also leads to the death of many refugees in the attempt to transport them by sea using boats, which adds to the grief and suffering. (young adult)

### **9. What threatens your country more?**

Overall: Economic crisis, corruption, division among citizens, other countries such as Turkey, low self-esteem, and incompetent politicians.

- The biggest threat to Greece is a prevailing view that wants the country to be run by corrupt politicians with no way out in sight. This is also shown by the huge numbers of young people who emigrate and consider the first cause to be not unemployment but undesirability. (student)
- Greece, same like Europe, in recent years is also threatened by external factors. The most important danger is the threats that Greek state receives often from Turkey. Because of its favorable position, our country is threatened both from the air and from the sea. (student)
- In modern times, the greatest threat facing Greece is the economic crisis, which has dramatic consequences both in social life and on a personal level. More specifically, it is largely reinforcing the phenomenon of poverty and destitution, while at the same time the reduction in income is gradually leading to the psycho-emotional decline of people who are faced with redundancy at any time. (young adult)

### **10. In your opinion, what can contribute to the good relations of the Balkan countries in the future?**

Overall: Solidarity, clarity about boundaries, creation of conditions for common goals such as peace, cooperation, and economic prosperity; cooperation, overcoming prejudices, all Balkan countries should join the EU, education, exchanges, increase mutual respect and awareness, have more opportunities to visit each other's countries.

- Solidarity as well as mutual support between the countries of the Balkan Peninsula are perhaps the most necessary conditions for the development of good and effective relations. (student)
- Firstly, what can contribute to the good relations of the Balkan countries with Greece and other European countries is to overcome negative prejudices towards the difference. Each state should respect the diversity and uniqueness of each country, without being judged for what they are. (student)
- Cooperation, I believe this is the magic word, which can contribute to a good relationship between the Balkan countries. Through cooperation the Balkan peoples can pass on ideas to each other and "cultivate" economic relations that benefit all the countries involved. (young adult)
- Exchanges, the movement of goods and land trade are carried out by concluding peaceful treaties and by safeguarding human rights and the basic freedoms of citizens. It would be advisable for states to ensure that children in schools are well educated about contacts between countries and to ensure the formation of well-rounded and multi-faceted personalities. (young adult)

## **Highlights from the interviews with teachers**

### **1. Are young people excited about the issues of the day? What excites them the most?**

Overview: students seem to be generally interested in social issues, international developments and overall contemporary issues, however often their natural interest and excitement is overpowered by social media, technologies, and harsh reality that they face.

- Students are excited about some of the possibilities of modern reality. They find the technology and the potential it provides in every aspect of their daily lives to be excellent. They consider social media to provide them with the possibility to communicate and inform themselves, but also to give them a platform to express themselves and show what expresses and concerns them. They are also excited by the opportunities provided by Greece's integration into Europe, however, there are also many things that upset, worry and disappoint them.
- With the stress they experience daily on the threshold of the national exams? With the insecurity they feel about their future? With the war in Ukraine or the unrest in various parts of the world? With the rape and abuse of children? - There are these and so many other issues that overpower their natural excitements. However, the free information and the information that is being spread all over the planet spontaneously. They are fascinated by that!
- Second and third grade students are not particularly enthusiastic about today's issues, as they are interested in other issues such as their studies and career. Of course, they are enthusiastic about music, artistic activities, excursions, sports activities and their involvement in social media. They are also concerned about gender equality, gender violence, the functioning of democracy, the way politics is conducted and the protection of the environment.

### **2. Are they interested in national history? Where does their interest in history come from – family, school, media...?**

Overview: Most young people are interested in the national history and national identity however, often they lose some of the interest, especially due to the fact that history is being touch in schools in a way that is not exiting for the young people. The interest typically comes from upbringing in family, visiting museums and historical sites, movies.

- Some of them are really interested. They read and have questions and queries about the events. Of course, this interest is not accidental. It is there either because they see their parents reading or because they themselves have learned to read from a young age. But most children are indifferent. One would think that in today's age with its abundance of information sources, students should have global knowledge and interests. Yet we see that students do not know our history as they should and are not interested in learning, even though teachers try with whatever means they have to pique their interest. Of course, much of the blame lies with the textbooks, which in many places are incomprehensible and do not attract pupils.

- Certainly for many students history is not among their favourite subjects. But I notice that their interest in history and primarily in national history is activated and becomes more intense whenever there is a possibility and opportunity to connect with current affairs... I consider school to be the main source of strengthening their interest. They also seek the historicity of the phenomena of political, social, economic and cultural life thanks to the often interdisciplinary nature of the course's approach. They are impressed by the achievements of our ancestors and admire people who have contributed to world civilization, to the protection and regeneration of the Greek nation.
- Of course, there are always a small number of students who love history and consider it one of the most important subjects for their cultivation and formation as civic beings. These pupils are therefore first stimulated by their families by reading books on mythology from an early age, visiting archaeological sites with their parents or watching films on the Homeric epics or other heroes such as Theseus or Hercules.

### **3. Do they read, apart from the obligatory authors in the curricula, and what kind of literature do they prefer to read – foreign authors, national...?**

Overview: Even though students are busy with the mandatory school curricula and preparation for examinations, some students read additional literature, both in Greek and in English, mostly from well known and contemporary writers.

- Many students read literature and extracurricular books from an early age (the family helps with this). But growing up they don't have much time, so they are more involved in school subjects. However, those students who do read prefer foreign writers. They ignore the Greek older writers and poets and of the younger ones they know Seferis, Ritsos and Elytis.
- The majority of students do not have a good relationship with literature. They did have some contact with books at a much younger age but did not cultivate it thereafter. There are also a number of children who, influenced by science fiction films, are directed towards reading these types of books, but in a fragmented way. Finally, there are a small, small number of students - one in twenty-five in the classroom - who take the teaching of literature to its zenith!!! They read prose, Greek and foreign, make comparisons, try to discover Dostoevsky's influence on Kazantzakis, for example, experiment with Proust's "Lost Time" or Joyce's "Ulysses".
- ...some choose to be in contact with the literary book which, as they say, relaxes them and takes them to another beautiful world. They prefer, rather, contemporary literature, both Greek and foreign, often reading from the original when it comes to texts in English. They prefer science fiction, crime fiction and texts dealing with social issues.
- Second and third grade students have increased obligations due to their preparation for the National Examination and thus spend little time reading literature books in addition to the compulsory authors in the curriculum. Nevertheless, several students show a particular interest in the poetry of K.P. Cavafy, Odysseus Elytis, Yannis Ritsos, Tasos Livaditis, K. Karyotakis and Maria Polydouris. They also prefer to read detective and science fiction novels. Finally, some read classic authors such as Dostoevsky, Emil Zola, Edgar Allan Poe, etc.

# ESSAY WORKSHOPS “REWRITING HISTORY”

## An Overview

In total, there were 10 high school students aged 16-17 and 2 young adults aged 18-30 who took part in the essay writing workshop. Some of them wrote essays in pairs and some individually after a discussion about the topic. Finally, there were 8 essays produced with a various degree of reflection and proposed changes.

## The Results

There were several commonalities among most of the essays. First of all, most of them emphasized that the history repeats itself in a way, therefore we should learn from it, especially when it comes to large events such as the WWII. Secondly, a couple of essays suggested that cooperation instead of competition is the key for a better future, as it was for the past. Several of the essays pointed out that the relationships between Balkan countries are tense because of nationalism, competition, and cruel battles of the past, as well as because they were on different sides during the WWII. When it comes to changes, some writers proposed that the demands from the losing countries, especially Germany, were very high and resulted in further issues such as the rise of Nazi party in German; at the same time some other writers suggested that they would like to change some events that happened for their ethnic people, such as the genocide of Pontians or Greeks in Asia Minor by the Turks. Meanwhile, several participants noted that the events leading to the WWII were very complex, as was the war itself, therefore it is very hard to imagine what specific event they would like to change, apart from the utopian idea of not having the war at all. However, there were few very unique proposals of specific changes in the historic events. Below there are some quotations of the essays, to exemplify the themes in above description.

### About Balkans

1. “...despite the land connection between these countries and their common experiences, they were not enough to unite them, since their success was often based on their competitiveness towards each other.”
2. “...it would be important to strengthen transnational and inter-Balkan cooperation to prevent war conflicts and resolve disputes through cultural diplomacy and dialogue. In addition, it would be important to reverse some of the conditions that have triggered a climate of tension and fanaticism and have been the cause of the outbreak of war.”
3. “I fully agree with the expression 'the Balkans are the powder keg of Europe', since they have sometimes been a hotbed of conflict that has undermined the harmonious coexistence between peoples.”
4. “The main concern felt in the Balkans is the strong sense of nationalism that still pervades people to the verge of fanaticism in many regions today. During the years of the First World War several conflicts broke out concerning the membership of each country in the Great Powers [...] which undermined peace and unity among the Balkan states.”

### About cooperation

1. "...dialogue is a useful tool for solving global issues and at the same time bridges differences between countries."
2. "If the European powers had focused more on cooperation and less on competition, then perhaps the unbearable human and economic losses that marked the First World War could have been avoided."
3. "We must take immediate protective measures, such as dialogue at international level, in order to solve these problems and avoid other similar incidents."
4. "Through common goals and international cooperation will we continue to avoid the blunders of the past and strive towards a common, just and peaceful future together."

### **About repeated history**

1. "History repeats itself again because man does not learn from his mistakes."
2. "I believe that history performs a periodic movement , not in the sense that it repeats itself perfectly , but in the sense that similar situations occur , adapted of course to the specific conditions of each era . By knowing history well , similar situations can be foreseen , even if only to a small extent, and past mistakes can be avoided , so that, if possible, any negative circumstances are not repeated and their consequences can be prevented in the future."
3. "We can easily conclude that no one has "learned the lesson". Because the past gives many examples of how a state should not function by giving but also gives the factors why these dysfunctions existed, all over the world political leaders should redefine and pay close attention even to the details."
4. "History repeats itself all the time. [...] There are many times when epidemics, wars and disasters make their presence felt again in order to prove that nothing is an imposed condition and to pass on the message that the human race must not repeat the same mistakes because it will suffer the consequences of its actions. But no one would wish for another world war that would endanger the whole of humanity and destroy everything in its wake. We therefore hope that at some point the tragic events of history will cease to repeat themselves for the greater good of all."
5. "History has the awe-inspiring ability to be both an opportunity for speculation and education for future generations. Because it is true that history is repeated in circles of various 'diameters' which are translated in different time periods in human history. One of the main factors behind this is that history is shaped by humanity's actions and that humans across history have shared and will continue to share some characteristics."

### **About the results of the war**

1. "Germany and its allies were defeated in the war and were forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. This treaty imposed many restrictive clauses and demands on Germany, including huge reparations that it had to pay. This led to economic and political instability in Germany and played a role in the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party."
2. "If I could change anything in World War I, I would remove the treaties and war reparations imposed by the victorious Western powers on the defeated nations. [...] If these conditions and war reparations had not existed, many subsequent events would have changed."

### **About the complexity of the WWII**

1. "It is difficult to answer whether I would change anything in the First World War, as the war was a complex and multi-level event with many causes and consequences."
2. "Initially, the reasons for the war were many and related to the political, economic and social conditions of the time."
3. "Undoubtedly, a multitude of situations and moments in history and would be able to be used as deterrents to the outbreak of the First World War and beyond."
4. "The Great War was a complex one. As such, it is difficult to try to find something that could alter it in such drastic measures the course of history."

### **About ethnic Greek genocide events**

1. "I would change , since we are referring to the First World War, the outcome of the Asia Minor campaign , which took place after it. [...] If things had developed differently and had been appreciated and handled better, perhaps the Pontian and Asia Minor Hellenism would not have had this inglorious end, of genocide and uprooting from the primordial homes of Ionia, Pontus and other regions where there were Greeks."
2. To the question if there are any moments in history that I would like to change it would be the Genocide of the Pontians as I believe that this act was quite violent towards the inhabitants of the regions for the reason that they were driven out of their homes with the threat of death lurking at the door of their homes. These people suffered to an extreme extent until they escaped from the hands of the Ottomans and it is with a heavy heart that the multiple rapes of women by the Turks deserve to be noted.

### **Unique propositions of changes in events**

1. "... if I have to make a choice it would be that I would have tried to talk to Emperor Wilhelm of Germany. The Emperor was in contact both with his cousin in Russia(Tsar Nicolas II) and his counterpart in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He tried to talk to both to try and avert the war that he saw coming. Although when he was close to easing the tensions in Europe , he went on holidays . Then the war happened. So I would try to talk to he Kaiser to make him see reason and to not go on holidays. I would make it my mission to make call a conference of all the major countries in Europe. Through those actions, it might have been possible to try and avoid the war. Not forever unfortunately but maybe long enough for time to bring a newer generation of leaders into the fold. Then the life of Earth's peoples would be in their hands."
2. "...what I would like to change in history is the domination of the Great Powers over other countries. This change would have to start very early, several years before the First World War, from the years of colonialism. I might even see to it that Christopher Columbus never reached America. If all these changes had actually happened, there would probably not be so much discrimination today, racism would not be so rampant, some countries would not be able to submit their sovereignty to others, and there would be more unity among peoples."



# ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE “ME AND EUROPE”

## An Overview

In total, we had 112 young people taking part in the online questionnaire “Me and Europe”, of which 44 were young adults aged 18-30 and 68 were high school students aged 16-17. Overall, the answers did not demonstrate many significant differences between the age groups, however in a few questions there were visible differences. On the most part, respondents feel their culture is noticeably different from other Balkan and European cultures, however, they express the admiration and respect for other cultures. As well, they feel it is important to preserve their own cultural values, a strong majority is positive or neutral towards including more Balkan countries in the EU, and they believe that religion differences has contributed to conflicts in Balkans. Finally, they characterize themselves with some more negative words than other Europeans.

The answers of participants represent a diversity of opinions, meaning that there were many opposing opinions on the most controversial questions. Below are the results of each question by age group, in some cases followed by visual graphs when there are notable differences between the age groups.

### **2. Cultural differences between mine and European culture are irrelevant, and everyone should adhere to a unique set of cultural norms and values.**

Students: Completely agree - 7,4%, Agree - 35,3%, Neutral - 19,1%, Disagree - 25%, Completely disagree - 13,2%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 0%, Agree - 40,9%, Neutral - 22,7%, Disagree - 31,8%, Completely disagree - 4,5%.

### **3. There are no significant differences between Bulgarian/ Greek/ Macedonian/ Romanian/ Serbian/ Turkish culture.**

Students: Completely agree - 1,5%, Agree - 25%, Neutral - 14,7%, Disagree - 44,1%, Completely disagree - 14,7%.

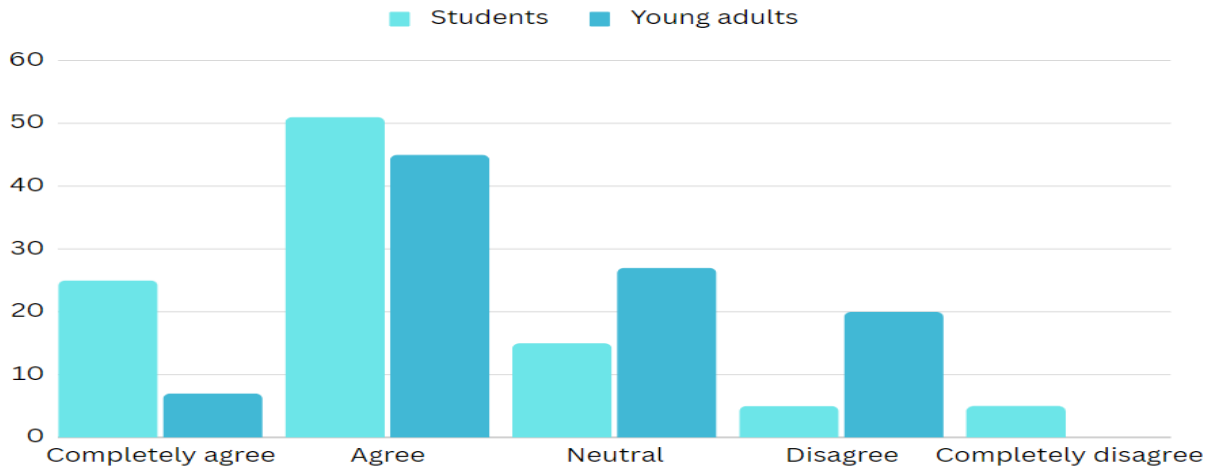
Young adults: Completely agree - 2,3%, Agree - 36,4%, Neutral - 22,7%, Disagree - 22,7%, Completely disagree - 4,5%.

### **4. It is essential that I defend and preserve my cultural values and beliefs when interacting with people from European cultures.**

Students: Completely agree - 25%, Agree - 51,5%, Neutral - 14,7%, Disagree - 4,4%, Completely disagree - 4,4%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 6,8%, Agree - 45,5%, Neutral - 27,3%, Disagree - 20,5%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**4. It is essential that I defend and preserve my cultural values and beliefs when interacting with people from European cultures.**

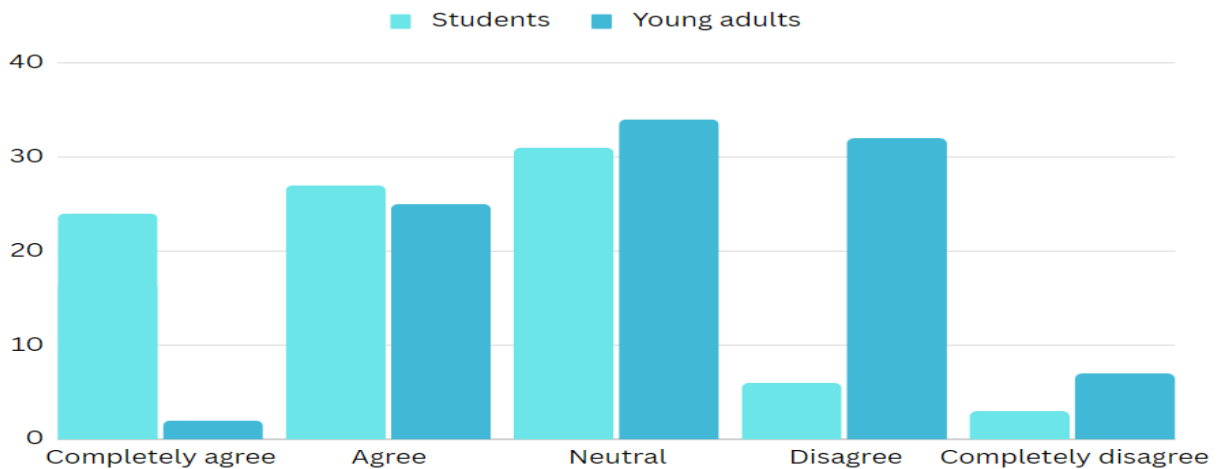


**5. I need to defend my cultural practices and traditions when I meet a person from Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish culture.**

Students: Completely agree - 23,5%, Agree - 36,8%, Neutral - 30,9%, Disagree - 5,9%, Completely disagree - 2,9%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 2,3%, Agree - 25%, Neutral - 34,1%, Disagree - 31,8%, Completely disagree - 6,8%.

**5. I need to defend my cultural practices and traditions when I meet a person from Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish cultures.**



**6. It is better to be Greek than to be European.**

Students: Completely agree - 1,5%, Agree - 1,5%, Neutral - 36,8%, Disagree - 35,3%, Completely disagree - 25%.

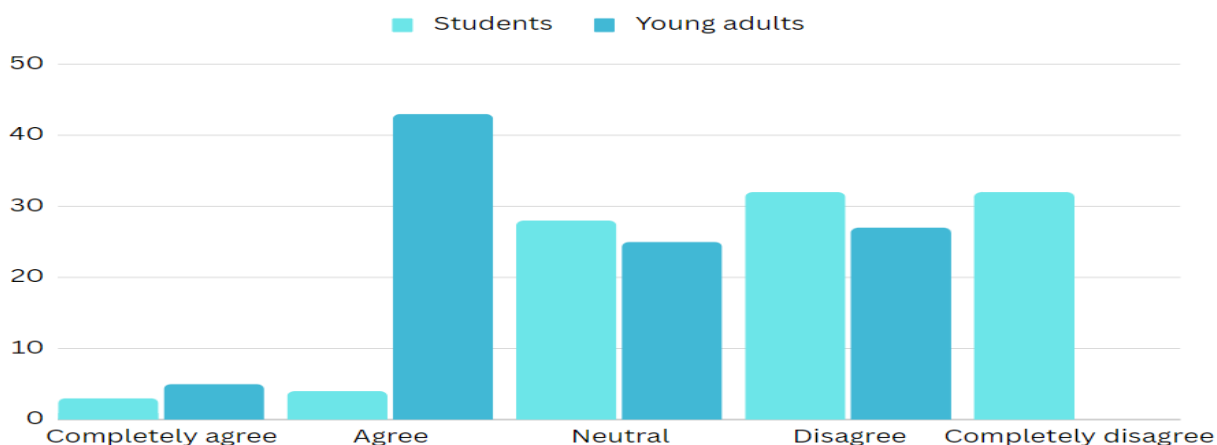
Young adults: Completely agree - 0%, Agree - 2,3%, Neutral - 40,9%, Disagree - 34,1%, Completely disagree - 22,7%.

**7. Cultural differences between my culture and European culture are minimal and can be ignored or neglected in communication and interactions.**

Students: Completely agree - 2,9%, Agree - 4,4%, Neutral - 27,9%, Disagree - 32,4%, Completely disagree - 32,4%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 4,5%, Agree - 43,2%, Neutral - 25%, Disagree - 27,3%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**7. Cultural differences between my culture and European culture are minimal and can be ignored or neglected in communication and interactions.**



**8. Differences in values, beliefs, customs, traditions and practices between Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish cultures are small and insignificant.**

Students: Completely agree - 0%, Agree - 11,8%, Neutral - 11,8%, Disagree - 42,6%, Completely disagree - 33,8%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 0%, Agree - 18,2%, Neutral - 13,6%, Disagree - 45,5%, Completely disagree - 22,7%.

**9. When interacting with people from European cultures, I try to understand and respect their values, beliefs and behaviors, even though they differ from my own.**

Students: Completely agree - 50%, Agree - 32,4%, Neutral - 13,2%, Disagree - 1,5%, Completely disagree - 2,9%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 68,2%, Agree - 31,8%, Neutral - 0%, Disagree - 0%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**10. When faced with cultural differences between Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish cultures, I try to find a common language and respect diversity.**

Students: Completely agree - 16,2%, Agree - 45,6%, Neutral - 33,8%, Disagree - 4,4%, Completely disagree - 0%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 36,4%, Agree - 56,8%, Neutral - 6,8%, Disagree - 0%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**11. It is essential that I adapt and adapt my communication and behavior when interacting with people from European cultures in order to communicate and cooperate effectively with them.**

Students: Completely agree - 22,1%, Agree - 57,4%, Neutral - 11,8%, Disagree - 7,4%, Completely disagree - 1,5%.

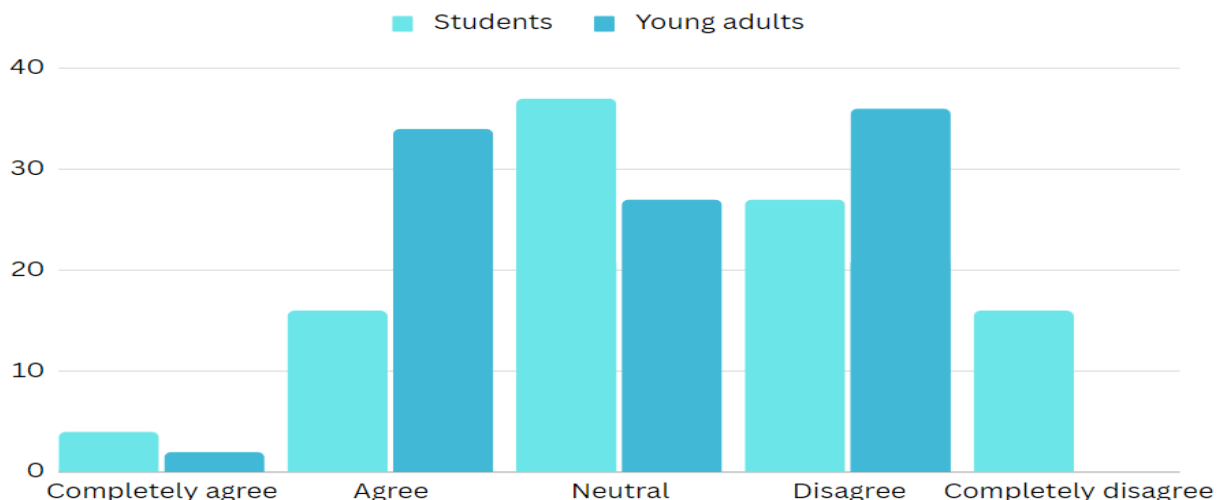
Young adults: Completely agree - 29,5%, Agree - 45,5%, Neutral - 18,2%, Disagree - 6,8%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**12. In my interactions with people from Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish cultures, I tend to adapt my behavior or communication style to fit into these cultures by avoiding my own cultural practices and expectations.**

Students: Completely agree - 4,4%, Agree - 16,2%, Neutral - 36,8%, Disagree - 26,5%, Completely disagree - 16,2%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 2,3%, Agree - 34,1%, Neutral - 27,3%, Disagree - 36,4%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**12. In my interactions with people from Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish cultures, I tend to adapt my behavior or communication style to fit into these cultures by avoiding my own cultural practices and expectations.**

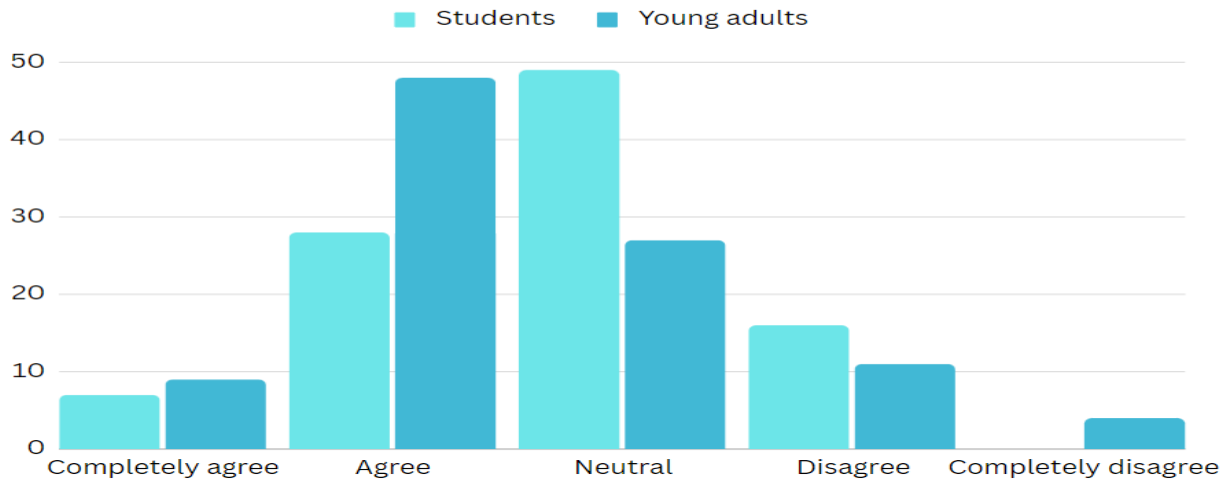


**13. Integrating and incorporating elements of European cultures into my culture is key to building a more inclusive and diverse community or society.**

Students: Completely agree - 7,4%, Agree - 27,9%, Neutral - 48,5%, Disagree - 16,2%, Completely disagree - 0%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 9,1%, Agree - 47,7%, Neutral - 27,3%, Disagree - 11,4%, Completely disagree - 4,5%.

**13. Integrating and incorporating elements of European cultures into my culture is key to building a more inclusive and diverse community or society.**



**14. Since Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbian and Turkish cultures intersect and influence each other through language, customs, traditions and values, I try to integrate aspects of these cultures into my culture.**

Students: Completely agree - 2,9%, Agree - 25%, Neutral - 39,7%, Disagree - 20,6%, Completely disagree - 11,8%.

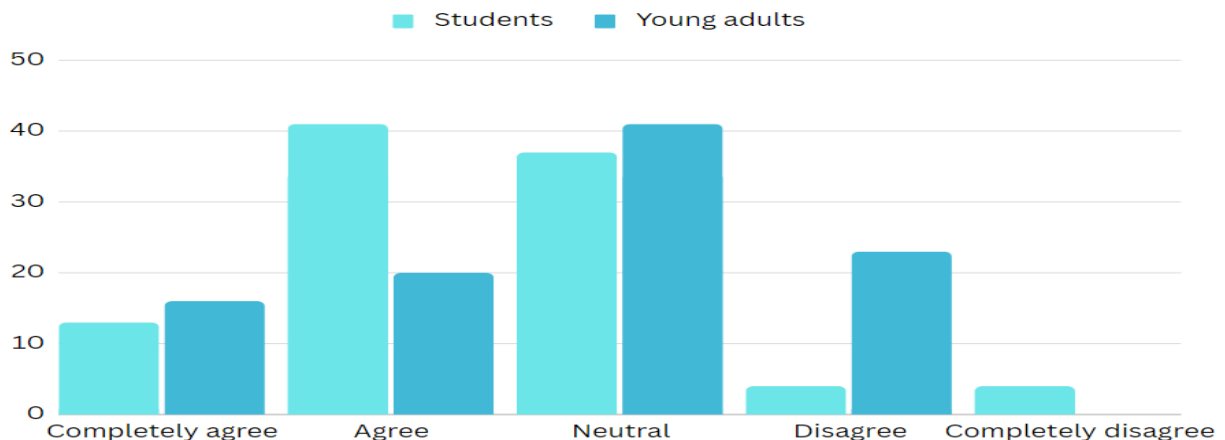
Young adults: Completely agree - 4,5%, Agree - 20,5%, Neutral - 45,5%, Disagree - 25%, Completely disagree - 4,5%.

**15. I would like the EU to expand by accepting new countries from the Balkan Peninsula.**

Students: Completely agree - 13,2%, Agree - 41,2%, Neutral - 36,8%, Disagree - 4,4%, Completely disagree - 4,4%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 15,9%, Agree - 20,5%, Neutral - 40,9%, Disagree - 22,7%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**15. I would like the EU to expand by accepting new countries from the Balkan Peninsula.**



**16. Food serves as a point of connection between the Balkan peoples.**

Students: Completely agree - 27,9%, Agree - 42,6%, Neutral - 27,9%, Disagree - 0%, Completely disagree - 1,5%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 22,7%, Agree - 61,4%, Neutral - 15,9%, Disagree - 0%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**17. Differences in religion between the Balkan peoples contributed to conflicts or divisions between the Balkan societies.**

Students: Completely agree - 13,2%, Agree - 58,8%, Neutral - 14,7%, Disagree - 7,4%, Completely disagree - 5,9%.

Young adults: Completely agree - 11,4%, Agree - 56,8%, Neutral - 20,5%, Disagree - 11,4%, Completely disagree - 0%.

**18. What can contribute to good relations between the Balkan countries in the future? (Choose the three most appropriate answers in your opinion)?**

Students: Economic cooperation and exchange (58,8%), Visiting and getting to know other Balkan countries better (48,5%), Increasing awareness of mutual respect a sense of closeness and togetherness (42,6%) and Intercultural education in schools (42,6%).

Young adults: Increasing awareness of mutual respect a sense of closeness and togetherness (61,4%), Economic cooperation and exchange (56,8%), Intercultural education in schools (52,3%).

**19. Choose five significant characteristics, from the listed ones, which, in your opinion, best describe the term European.**

Students: Democracy (69,1%), Human rights (64,7%), Freedom (54,4%), Equality (50%) and Safety (36,8%).

Young adults: Human rights (81,8%), Democracy (72,7%), Freedom (70,5%), Cooperation (43,2%), Safety (43,2%), Environmental protection and sustainable development (43,2%).

**20. Choose five significant characteristics which, in your opinion, best describe the term Greek.**

Students: Democracy (63,2%), Freedom (54,4%), Racism/Discrimination (54,4%), Human rights (47,1%) and Conflict (42,6%).

Young adults: Low standard of living (65,9%), Freedom (56,8%), Democracy (52,3%), Conflict (52,3%), Racism/Discrimination (47,7%).

# HISTORY CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

## An overview

To conduct this part of the research, history books of every high school grade were reviewed (3 books in total), and additionally a high school history teacher was consulted on their comments on the book content taught in class.

According to the book review, different time periods are being taught at different grades. In the first grade of high school, emphasis is placed on ancient history, mainly Greek and Roman, among mentions of some others. In the second grade of high school, history class revolves around Medieval and Modern history until the 19th century. Finally, in the third high school grade, Modern and Contemporary history (19th - 20th century) is taught to classes that orient towards other scientific field (not humanities), and students in humanities, economics and information technology oriented classes study only Greek Modern and Contemporary history, mostly from economic and political perspective and in more interpretive way than any other high school history book which are based on less interpretive, factual content. Below, there are review details according to each specific question.

## 1. What are the proportions between national and world history?

The overall emphasis is clearly on the national history, while including proportionally less information about other countries and regions of the world, especially in the books of first and last high school grades. In the first year of high school, the history book content covers Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman times the most, paying attention to political, social and economic aspects of that period. Greece is studied in more detail, differentiating between prehistoric (Mycean and Aegian civilizations) and ancient Greece (Homeric, Ancient and Classic periods), including a variety of cultural aspects of those times (religion, art, language, sciences, etc.). Ancient Roman times are also studied quite in detail, differentiating between West and East Roman Empire, accenting the times of Caesar Augustus, Constantine and Justinian. Significantly smaller chapters of the book are attributed to other people that Greeks had relations with - of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Phoenicians, Jews, Hittites, Medes, Persians. Finally, there are also chapters about South and North Asia, specifically about China and India, however the teacher commented that these chapters are typically not studied in the class due to lack of time to cover them.

In the second grade of high school, the history book describes Medieval and Modern history from the perspective of Greece. Various periods of Greece are accented, such as Byzantium, Ottoman, and Latin times. Countries and cultures of those who Greece had contact with the most are described, noting the end of ancient Rome, Arabs, Slavs, Bulgarians, dynasties of Merovingians and Carolidians, south of Europe, Asia Minor, Serbs, Italians, Ottomans, Russians, and Cypriots. Apart from those, external mentions of Modern history are present in mostly 5 proportionally short chapters regarding Renaissance, Enlightenment, main European powers, revolution of North America and French Revolution plus Napoleon times.

In the last grade, the world history also of Modern and Contemporary period is mostly described from the Greek perspective, meaning that it refers to processes in Greece and mentions of others

are mostly in clear connection with Greece or cover major world events, such as the crisis of Habsburg empire, Crimean war, processes in Americas, Balcan wars, ethnic movements in South-East Europe, WWI, period in Greece and other regions in between the World Wars noting international economic crisis, processes in the USA and Japan, and mentions of European colonies overseas, WWII especially highlighting the role of Germany, and period in Greece and other regions after the second World War noting the formation of the UN, the Cold War, unity of Europe and issues in Cyprus.

Proportionally, in all books of general high school classes the history of Greece is examined more detailed in relation to World history. Many countries and regions are not mentioned at all or are mentioned only limited to a connection with a specific major event. It is important to note, that the humanities, economics and information direction classes of last grade of high school studies only Greek Modern and Contemporary history, with nearly zero random mentions of other countries, only in order to explain the processes of Greece.

## **2. On which part of history is the emphasis – the History of the Contemporary (20-21 century) Modern World History (15-19 century), Medieval, Antiquity... What is the balance between them?**

The content of the books is overall balanced between the different periods of time. In the first year of high school, the history book covers Ancient and Classical times, in the second year the content is regarding Medieval and Modern times, and, finally, in the last grade of high school history books cover the the end of Modern times and Contemporary history. As in the second year two of the main periods are covered, Medieval and most of the Modern times, it is evident that both of these periods are studied in less detail when compared to the Ancient and Contemporary periods.

Regarding this question, the consulted history teacher mentioned that though all periods are covered in the history books, in reality the periods that are studied the most are Roman and Hellenistic times of the ancient world, Ottoman period and the Greek revolution of 1821. Special note she placed considering Contemporary history, that there is no time at all to study the material that follows WWII.

## **3. Does the story of neighbors country fit into the historical narrative of the history textbook, of which ones and at what times?**

The major mention of any neighboring territory and country in Greek history books is attributed to Ancient Rome. The relationship and influences between the ancient Greeks and Romans referred to, apart from detailed description of internal and external processes and events of Ancient Rome. Second major neighbor described heavily in the book is the Ottoman empire, especially referring to their occupation of Greek territory from the end of 15th century until the Greek Revolution in 1821.

Other, much less major, mentions of neighbors can be found in the history books:

- Bulgaria is mentioned in the 8th and 9th century time period, referring to their struggle against Byzantium powers, other internal and external neighboring battles, and organisation of the Bulgarian state.



- Bulgaria and Serbia is also mentioned as receiving cultural influence from Byzantine empire especially in the 9th and 10th centuries.
- Constantinople is mentioned throughout the periods of prevalence of Byzantium and Ottoman empires.
- Territories and people of Turkey are mentioned throughout the Ottoman era.
- Territories and people of Balkans are mentioned throughout the Byzantium era.
- Italy is mentioned briefly throughout the Medieval, Moderna and Contemporary times, with deepest accents placed on the Renaissance, Enlightenment and WWII periods.
- Asia Minor is mentioned in several places referring especially to medieval ages.
- Balkan peninsula is mentioned and described as a whole in several areas of the books, especially in the periods of Medieval and Modern ages.
- Serbia is described starting from their victory over Skopje in the 13th century until the middle of the 14th century.
- During the approaching end of the Ottoman empire, the Revolution of Serbia in 1804 is mentioned.
- Serbian, Bulgarian, Albanian and Turkish national movements of 18th century are described.
- Balkan wars of 1912-1913 are described in detail, mentioning all participating countries and main battles.
- Bulgaria and Serbia are mentioned during the WWI.
- Apart from Turkish territories, also Serbs, Albanians and Italians are briefly mentioned during the Minor Asia war of 1919-1922.
- Turkey is mentioned within the context of Cypriot - Turkish issues starting in 1960s.

Additionally, it was underlined by the consulted teacher that the stories of others, even though mentioned in the history books, are significantly less studied in comparison with the Greek stories and processes and are interpreted in the books as less significant due to the fact that Greeks are portrayed as victims and not perpetrators in any international connection with the neighboring countries.

#### **4. What are the key events through which the spatial-temporal continuum of national history is built - Beginning, Origin, Contacts with the others, the Concept of the border, the Concept of the national;**

Greek national history stretches until prehistoric Hellenic times, throughout antiquity, classical and every following period of time. The contacts with others are mentioned since ancient times, when the main contact of Greek people was with the ones of ancient civilizations - Rome, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, and others. The Greek national identity is based on common cultural heritage and major historic events shared by the people and territories within mainly the modern territory of Greece - Greek battles against neighbors throughout the history where the Greek city states would often support each other if possible due to the shared culture and identity. Greece as a nation was established in 1830, several years after the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman power, and a year after the national border of Greece was first set.

## **5. Mention promised" places - of battle glory (battlefields), of spirit (monasteries, churches...), of memory (monuments...), of nature (mountains, rivers,...):**

Most well known promised places in the history books are monuments (Acropolis, ancient sculptures, ancient art), spiritual locations (churches and holy places of Byzantine era and ancient times - temples), and as for natural places and locations, the most important are ancient cities of Greece, the Greek islands, but also locations of Asia Minor that were built by Greeks - and Constantinople (Istanbul), Pergamon, Ephesus, Smyrna, and locations built by people of Alexander the Great.

Battlefields of the Greek Revolution of 1821 are the most significant places of glory, but also other battlefields of only slightly less or the same level of significance can be named, such as the northern Epirus (Kalpaki) that served as battlefields against Italian army in the WWII and battlefields of Marathon fought against Persians.

## **6. Mention the heroes of the community - the different types - Warriors, Patrons, Martyrs, Creators...**

- Pericles - politician and general of ancient Athens
- Kylon - politician and general in ancient Greece
- Philip 2nd - king of Macedonia
- Alexander the Great - Greek conqueror and founder of the ancient Alexandria
- Mihail and Andronikos Paleologs - Greek - Byzantium leaders of 13th-14th century, Ioannis and Manuel Paleologs - Greek leaders in 14th-15th centuries.
- Religious/educational leaders of Byzantine times - Kyrill Loukaris, Theofil Koridaleas, Theofanis Mpafas
- Religious leaders - Chrisostomos, Chrysanthos Filipidis,
- Warrior and political heroes of the 1821 Revolution - Theodoros Kolokotronis, George Karaiskakis, Giannis Makrygiannis, Athansios Diakos, Rigas Feraios, Konstantinos Kanaris, Grigorios Dikaos, Kitsos Tzavelas, Andreas Miaoulis, Markos Botsaris and the only female heroine - Laskarina Bouboulina.
- Eleftherios Venizelios - Greek leader of the liberation and democratic movement, prime minister of Greece who had such a large internal and external influence that he is known as the "Maker of Modern Greece".
- Andres Michalokopoulos - politician, cooperating with Venizelios
- Alexander Papanastasiou - politician, father of democracy
- Charalaos Trikoupis - politician and leader in 19th century
- Panagias Tsaldaris - politician of 20th century
- Ioannis Metaxas, dictator of 20th century, victorious leader of Greeks in the WWII
- Konstantinos Karamanlis - prime minister, 20th century, paved a path for Greece to the EU
- Andreas Papandreou - strong politician, end of 20th century.