



SNAPSHOTS
FROM THE **BORDERS**



Press Release – 04.10.2019
**A Crowded Square embracing the
European Day of Memory & Welcome**
«No more bricks in the Wall Campaign»

Agios Athanasios Municipality

On the 3rd of October, Agios Athanasios Municipality organised with big success the event for the European Day of Memory & Welcome in Limassol with the participation of hundreds of people.

The event took place at the “Freedom Square” opposite the Municipal Hall of Agios Athanasios. Visitors had the opportunity to watch the documentary “But now is Perfect”, listened to Mihalis Hatziyiannis music concert and be informed about the European Day of Memory and Welcome.

Speeches were made by the Mayor of Agios Athanasios Marinos Kyriakou, the Head of the EPIO in Cyprus, Andreas Kettis, the UNHCR in Cyprus Representative, Katja Saha and the Head of the European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior, Constantinos Kyprianou. Mrs Chrysoulla Hadjichristou read a welcoming speech on behalf of the Minister of Education Costas Hampiaouris.

The 3rd of October represents the “European Day of Memory & Welcome” for refugees and immigrants who lost their lives in the Mediterranean Sea. The date takes us back in 2013, when 398 people drawn at the shores of Lampedousa.

Agios Athanasios Municipality, the informal “Capital of Refugees” as it has been designated through the years, participates to the European programme “Snapshots from the borders” that is co – funded by the European Union promoting humanity and solidarity at the heart of the migration policy with fair distribution across Europe.

The aim of the project is to improve the critical understanding of European, national and local decision makers and of the public opinion regarding migration and asylum.

“Only with solidarity, humanity, love and equality we can achieve stability in the local community and build a better future for all our citizens” said the Mayor of Agios Athanasios Marinos Kyriakou and continued “Our municipality is an example that refugees can make a positive contribution to the economic and social development of our city”.

The head of the EPIO in Cyprus, Andreas Kettis, referred to the actions of the EP regarding asylum and migration noting that “the political will of our Member States’ governments is the key to the whole equation to have practical compliance with their legal obligation to manage migratory pressures with solidarity.”

Both Mr Kettis and Mrs Katja Saha, UNHCR representative in Cyprus, referred to the crucial role played by NGOs and/or commercial vessels in the implementation of rescue operations. “They should not be



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criminalized or stigmatized for saving lives at sea," Ms Saha noted, while stressing the importance of discussions on "establishing a provisional and predictable arrangement for the disembarkation and equal distribution of responsibilities between Member States for their subsequent hospitality".

The Head of the European Funds Unit Constantinos Kyprianou, noted that the immigration is a multidimensional and multilevel issue that "must be dealt with collectively and cooperatively by all European countries". Furthermore, he announced a tripling of EU funds to Member States for migration management purposes.

Finally, the president of the Cyprus Refugee Council, Willy Totoro, noted the importance of similar initiatives to be taken by local authorities and remember that "no one chooses to be a refugee".

Visitors supported the petition to make the 3rd of October the European Day of Memory and Welcome by signing it at the dedicated "petition corner".

Other info points took place from migrant and refugees' associations as well as other organisations implementing projects related to migration and asylum. Among the info points was the presentation of the project AMID – Access to Services for Migrants with Disabilities, in collaboration with the project partners in Cyprus, Cardet.

The project "Snapshots from the borders" and the event are co – funded by the European Union.



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