The approach to shifting walls

1. Introduction to the project

The Erasmus+ Project *shifting walls - European History through the Eyes of the Young* connects media education with recent European history. The organisations involved in the project are *Kulturring in Berlin e.V.* (Germany), *University of Valladolid* (Spain), *Kūrybinės jungtys* (Lithuania), *Doukas School* (Greece), *University of Sofia* (Bulgaria) and the *Pestalozzi-Fröbel-Haus* (Germany).

30 years after the end of the Cold War, Europe now enjoys a significantly higher level of democracy with greater freedom of movement and speech. However, this is not a guaranteed status quo. Walls are still around and new ones are constantly being built. Many young people know very little about recent history - traditional history lessons using books are often un-engaging, static and rarely include current themes. At the same time, populist parties are gaining increasing interest, including that of young people who lost faith in democracy[1]. Our aim is to inspire students (11-18 years) to engage with history by producing personal stories using creative photography. By allowing different perspectives, including their own ones, they learn to deal critically with historic and current information, and empathize with other realities. The visual stories created in each country are mainly shared on Instagram, the most popular social media tool among young people. The project's Instagram channel *shiftingwalls_eu* serves as the main platform to present the diversity of stories and encourage an open dialogue throughout Europe.

shifting walls, mainly designed for secondary schools, could be implemented in various subjects such as history, political science, citizenship/ civics, language learning, IT, ethics, art among others. The shifting wall team will produce and share materials for teachers that cover the last thirty years of European history in three overlapping themes:

● "The Fall of the Wall" (1989/1990, the end of the Cold War)
● "From 1990 to 2020" (30 year period since the fall of the wall)
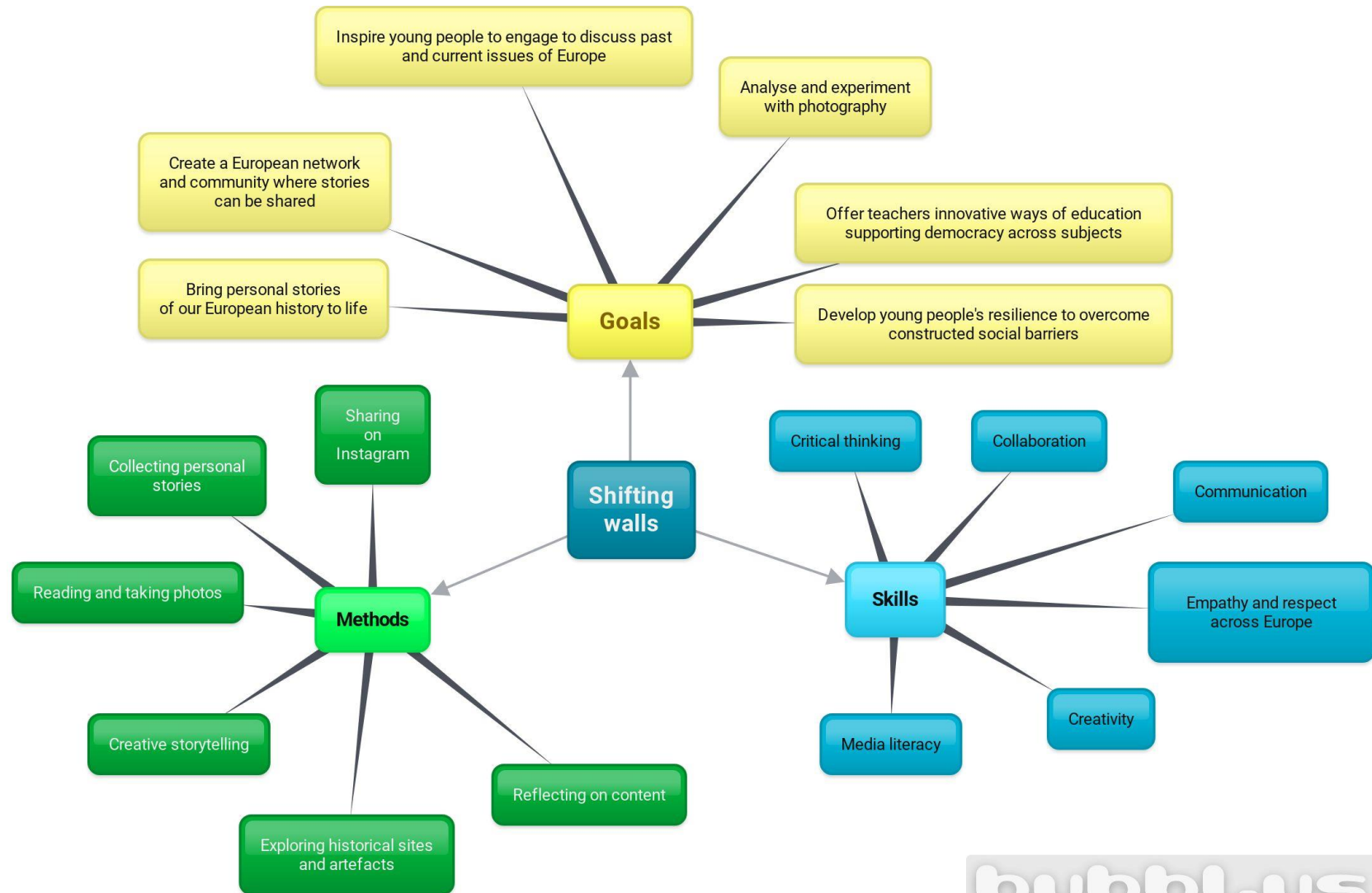● "History Now" (new walls we are facing today)

We will develop a teaching toolkit for each theme with task sheets for teachers and students, video tutorials and other teacher training materials.

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[1] Keith Breene. 08 Jun 2017.World Economic Forum. "Millennials are rapidly losing interest in democracy".
https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/06/millennials-are-rapidly-losing-interest-in-democracy/

2. Goals of the project

shifting walls is very much about getting students curious and motivated to engage with European history, especially through personal perspectives and stories. The mind map illustrates the ideas behind the project:

Inspire young people to engage to discuss past and current issues of Europe

Analyse and experiment with photography

Create a European network and community where stories can be shared

Offer teachers innovative ways of education supporting democracy across subjects

Bring personal stories of our European history to life

Develop young people's resilience to overcome constructed social barriers

Goals

Sharing on Instagram

Collecting personal stories

Reading and taking photos

Creative storytelling

Exploring historical sites and artefacts

Reflecting on content

Methods

Shifting walls

Critical thinking

Collaboration

Communication

Empathy and respect across Europe

Creativity

Media literacy

Skills

3. Pedagogical background

Education is about acquiring key competencies. For many years, the European Union has proposed key competencies to change education: "Moving from a rather static conception of curricular content to a dynamic definition of the knowledge, skills and attitudes a learner needs to develop throughout the learning process requires a paradigm shift in education, training and learning, affecting the way it is organised and assessed."[2] These competencies overlap with the concept of 21st century skills[3] such as:

Critical thinking: critical thinking is one of the main priorities of the project. European history is not just taught through a textbook. It is explored by the young people themselves. They will be encouraged to look beyond given content, they will reflect on media of history lessons and what ideas are communicated. Open-ended tasks will help them to ask questions themselves. History is about teaching students thinking skills, that allow them to look at the past with a critical eye, and in consequence question the present to change the future, as Seixas said to "turn towards the past in order to break from it"[4].

Creativity: students will work on 'out-of-the-box' tasks, creating their own stories with images and text. They will explore photos as artefacts or works of art. Visual tasks will encourage the creative combination of images. They will work on ideas for different formats, such as factual or creative styles combined with historic content.

Collaboration / fostering social and civic competencies: work within groups of students will support reflective and problem-solving skills. Young people will develop their own ideas, take initiative when researching and become leaders in their own projects. Engaging with democracy will need to be done democratically. Creating their own texts about history will offer a different level of participation in learning history. History education is no longer about memorising the grand gestures of a nation told in a book.

Communication: students will create authentic texts about history using a series of photos which is not done too much in school. They will communicate through images but also through social media such as the photo platform Instagram. But they will also experience the power of talking about a personal photo - a memory of someone's own life. Quiet voices will be brought to life - oral stories which have not been included in the history curriculum. Students will gain "openings for different affective relations - such as empathy, humility and compassion"[5].

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[2] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0024 (page 5)

[3] "The four C's of 21st Century skills": https://www.aeseducation.com/career-readiness/what-are-the-4-cs-of-21st-century-skills

[4] Citation from Seixes, Peter; 2004. in Llewellyn, Kristina R., Ng-A-Fook, Nicholas. 2015. "Introduction: Telling Tales in Schools. Oral history education, political engagement and youth" in *Oral History Education*. p.102. https://www.academia.edu/39606857/Telling_Tales_in_Schools_-_Oral_History_Education

[5] Llewellyn, Kristina R., Ng-A-Fook, Nicholas. 2015. "Introduction: Telling Tales in Schools. Oral history education, political engagement and youth" in *Oral History Education*.https://www.academia.edu/39606857/Telling_Tales_in_Schools_-_Oral_History_Education

Empathy / respect across Europe: community building using storytelling: students work together, comment on each other's photos and stories and share their own stories. This can develop into unique experiences for all students involved. Stories can connect the past with the present with larger social and civic themes such as barriers, political freedom or social change. Within European exchanges students can experience how history is perceived in different European cultures. This includes learning from Europe's past struggles.

4. Methodology / Approach

Collecting personal stories

As part of the project, students will interview their relatives, neighbours etc. and find out their personal stories of a particular time period. In order to do that, students will create their own interviews by choosing their own questions, or a selection of questions from our materials. The interviews will then be recorded using the available devices - e.g. mobile phones, apps for audio recording, digital cameras etc.

Exploring historic sites and artefacts

Students are encouraged to develop their visual skills by becoming aware of historic traces in their neighbourhood. This could include buildings, ruins, memorial signs, but also private artefacts connected with that time or a specific event such as postcards, clothes, small furniture, toys or jewellery.

Creative storytelling

Having collected all the information, students will creatively tell their own stories. They will combine written, audio and visual resources. We suggest they use storyboards for this task, where each can be planned in detail.

Getting into photography

During the different project stages, students will experiment with photography and produce photos for their final work that capture thoughts, ideas, historic moments etc. The quality of the photos produced is not important. Students can use any technological device available, such as mobile phones, tablets, digital cameras etc. They will not need to buy new equipment for the project.

Young people will also have the opportunity to collect and look into historic photographs produced by others and analyse their meaning, purpose and historic context.

Working in groups

The project is designed to allow students to listen to each other and become aware of different opinions and realities. For this reason, it is important that during the entire project students work together in groups of 3 to 4 people and discuss photographs, ideas, personal stories, final work etc.

Sharing on Instagram

The Eurostat statistics 2016 show that 80% - 90% of young people from Europe use social networking platforms on a daily basis - such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter[6]. They use them to express themselves and communicate. This is why shifting wall uses Instagram to publish students' creative stories and final work.

To publish their work, students can use their own Instagram account - if they have one - or the project's account. To publish any work, students (or if under age parents) will need to send their written consent to us via email. Written consent is also necessary for other people present in photos or videos.

Three things are important for an Instagram upload:

- Visual materials: photos (5 maximum) and videos (60 seconds maximum)
- Hashtags: include our hashtag #shiftingwalls_eu
- Text of the story (250 words maximum)

Having previous experience with Instagram is not necessary. The project can provide training for students and teachers.

Reflection

Another important part of this project is time for reflection. By encouraging students to spend time evaluating their work together, analytical skills, self-esteem and group belonging can be developed. They will receive feedback and take that on board for new projects.

What are the themes students will work on?

Themes	Possible activities
Theme 1: Fall of the wall	- Interview temporary eyewitnesses about the time when the wall came down (across Europe)
Theme 2: "From 1990 to 2020" (30 year period since the fall of the wall)	- Find and interview people who experienced change between 1990 and 2020 - Discover historic places of your town, city, neighbourhood etc. through a scavenger hunt. Find information about these places. Make a Google Creator Tour or an Actionbound with the materials collected. - Create an Instagram story telling the personal stories of those places.
Theme 3: "History now"	- Attend a demonstration - such as Fridays for Future - and document your experience through visual, audio and writing materials. Use these materials to create your Insta story. - Engage with the Covid-19 pandemic and explore the changes across Europe.

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[6] Eurostat. 04/01/2019. Being Young in Europe - digital world. Statistic Explained. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/39761.pdf

Possible project activities

Step-by-step project activities will help to stimulate curiosity, explore personal stories and invite creative storytelling. Detailed information for each activity will be presented in the task sheets for teachers and students.

	Possible activities
Get started	● Explore existing historic photos with places and people from the neighbourhood ● Mapping these places onto a map (link with geography) ● Include themes like "overcome a barrier" or "concept of time" for further perspectives ● Discuss "How is history being made?", "What makes a moment historic?"
Photo analysis	● Look at and analyse a significant historic image as a group ● Look into different perspectives ● Imagine yourself in that situation (concept of empathy)
Take photos	Follow the steps on the task sheet according to the three themes ● Plan photos, take photos, select photos, …
Create photo stories	Follow steps on the task sheet according to the three themes ● Work on stories, interviews, creating insta story, …
Share photo stories	Follow task sheet and technical support material ● Use #shiftingwalls_eu and @shiftingwalls_eu ● Print out stories for display ● Exchange with students in the school and in partner countries
Evaluate / discuss	● Present stories ● Discuss and reflect together