



## Europeana 1914-1918 Digitising WW1 memorabilia

### Press Release

#### **WW1 Roadshow in Nicosia an unexpected success More than 500 WW1 images are published on the project website**

Nicosia, 7 December 2012: Europeana, Europe's digital library, museum and archive, saves and makes public the memories and personal accounts of World War One through the project Europeana1914-1918. After a successful start in Germany last year, the project expanded to other European countries like the UK, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Denmark and recently Cyprus.

Following the success of the roadshows that took place in six European countries and attracted thousands of participants from all ages, another roadshow was held in Nicosia on the weekend of 1-2 December. Historians and experts welcomed participants and talked about the significance of their memorabilia, while staff from the Cyprus Library digitised the objects and uploaded them to the dedicated [europeana1914-1918.eu](http://europeana1914-1918.eu) website on the spot.

The untold stories of Cypriots participating in WW1 made Nicosia's roadshow a great success. More than 150 people contributed the WW1 memorabilia of their ancestors, such as photographs, letters and diaries, at the roadshow. So far, more than 500 digital images from Cypriots have been published on the project website, adding to the rich archive of thousands of WW1 images from all over Europe.

One of the first items that was digitised is the list of all Cypriots who served in WW1 that was compiled in 1919. All eight volumes of the list have survived and are housed at the National Archives of the UK government. This list is a unique historical source for Cypriot history. It states the names, relatives and home towns of about 13,000 Cypriots serving from 1916-1919 in the Macedonian Mule Corps. Thanks to the project, the list is now available online (at the websites of the Cyprus Library and the Ministry of Education and Culture), so that every Cypriot family can discover if their grandfathers or great-grandfathers took part in WWI.

Another key finding was the extraordinary story of Agathoklis Hajichristodoulou from Polystipos – who later went by the name Polistipiotis. Agathoklis lost both his legs in Salonika to frostbite. He was the only person injured to have been given compensation: 40 pounds and a set of 'new' prosthetic legs. He drifted for a few years, before being given a job in the

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Forestry Department, but after about a decade of service, he was fired because he constantly complained about his legs, which had been replaced twice. So in the late 1930s, he was given 50 pounds and another new set of legs to start his own business, either a grocery or a cobbler. One of the three sets of prosthetic legs that Agathoklis changed is now kept at the Science Museum of London.

Among the many items was also a contribution of a set of binoculars and a diary which belonged to a captain of WW1 named 'Michael Savva' whose ship *Evaggelistria* was used to carry pomace (pulp from oil extractions). During the Great War, his ship was bombed and sunk by the French who falsely accused him of carrying fuel to enemy troops. Michael Savva survived the explosion and was sent to Egypt where he experienced horrifying times in jail and was later sentenced to death. Luckily, a few months later all accusations were withdrawn and Michael was sent back to Cyprus. He died 7 years later in 1923, depressed by not being able to return to a life on the sea. Both binoculars and diaries were brought to the roadshow by his grandson, Andreas Keleshis.

Mr. Andreas Michael the president of Filia Community who contributed medals, pictures and diaries of Cypriot WW1 soldiers said:

'We would like to thank Europeana, the Cultural Services of Education and Culture and the Cyprus Library for giving us this unique opportunity to highlight at a pan-European level the heroism and contribution of our fellow citizens during the Great War.'

The Nicosia roadshow revealed many unpublished stories describing the experiences and the contribution of Cypriots during the WW1, stories that will be available to all Cypriots and will therefore benefit WW1 research and education for current and future generations. The project helps to keep this type of stories alive; it saved these precious memorabilia from being lost or thrown away - and will definitely provide unique resources for research and education in Cyprus and abroad.

Pavlos Paraskevas, Director of the Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which is the main partner of the project in Cyprus, said:

*'The Ministry of Education and Culture is thrilled with the success of the first WW1 roadshow in Cyprus. We would like to thank all the people who participated in this initiative and digitised their family memorabilia. They have helped us to unveil unknown stories and keep them alive so that they are available for research and educational purposes. With the 100th anniversary of the start of World War One fast approaching, we are confident that Cyprus will be an important contributor to this unique archive with images that show the impact the Great War had in the lives of ordinary people.'*

For those who were not able to attend the event in Nicosia, the Europeana 1914-1918 website gives advice on how to scan, photograph and upload material at home: [europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributor](http://europeana1914-1918.eu/en/contributor)

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**About Europeana 1914-1918:**

The Europeana 1914-1918 project is a joint initiative of the European digital library Europeana, Oxford University and many local partners. The European public is invited to share their private memorabilia from the First World War on the web. This could be photographs, letters, diaries, short films, audio recordings, objects and their stories that will be digitised professionally and added to the online archive, along with



corresponding descriptions. Independently of the roadshows, everyone can contribute their digitised images and information to the website - [www.europeana1914-1918.eu](http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu). Until 2014, the year of the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One, we will collect memorabilia in digital form from many of the countries across Europe. The project aims to save people's family memories of this tragedy that convulsed Europe and make them accessible to the world.

**About Europeana:**

Europeana ([www.europeana.eu](http://www.europeana.eu)) is Europe's digital library, archive and museum. It collects and provides access to digitised material from libraries, archives, audiovisual archives and museums. It has more than 2,200 collaborating institutions and the website is available in 27 European languages. Europeana allows the public to discover and explore the cultural and intellectual heritage of Europe through a simple search engine and virtual exhibitions. Since its launch by the European Commission in November 2008, Europeana has grown to include more than 22 million documents and heritage works, available free on [europeana.eu](http://europeana.eu). The portal has over 3 million visitors a year.

