

The project « GET2IT - GETting to Active CITizenship in Europe » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.2 *"Networks of Towns"*
Measure 2.3 *"Civil Society Projects"*
Strand 1 – *"European Remembrance"*

Five (5) events have been carried out within this project:

Event 1

Participation: The event involved 87 citizens, including 34 participants from the City of Varazdin, Croatia (under POU Varaždin – Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin), 14 participants from Ptuj, Slovenia (from LUP - Ljudska Univerza Ptuj), 24 participants from Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia (from RRA Srem – Regionalna Razvojna Agencija Srem d.o.o. RUMA and TO SM - Tourist Organization of the City of Sremska Mitrovica); 6 from Cavriago, Italy (from Comune di Cavriago & Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl), and 9 from Prague, Czechia (from IRR - Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s.),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Varaždin, Croatia over a 3-day period (27/10, 05/11, 12/11/2020)

Short description: The format and schedule of the event needed to be changed due to the health and public safety measures in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The partnership adopted a hybrid format during the event where participants per partner were gathered in a single space (i.e. Kino Gaj in Varazdin, offices of the City of Sremska Mitrovica, etc.) and were connected via teleconferencing technologies (Zoom). The aim of the event was to demonstrate how citizen-driven initiatives function in the European context by presenting on how civil society organizations and local public bodies have promoted citizen engagement, solidarity, built a sense of belonging and trained volunteers in their communities. Particular focus was put on how such actions have been adjusted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main theme of Day 1 (27/10/2020) was demonstrating how volunteering has benefited communities during the pandemic. Lana Velimirović Vukalović, Director of POU Varaždin, presented the project to the audience (via Zoom and those in attendance at Kino Gaj) in order to describe the project activities, goals and purpose. Željka Markulin from the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Republic of Croatia described the results of the Europe for Citizens programme in Croatia and how their operations had been adjusted in order to address the needs of NGOs during the pandemic. After this initial stage, best practice presentations were held describing how volunteer actions (based on solidarity, dialogue and mutual understanding) are making a difference in their communities during these difficult times. The director of the Red Cross Society of Varazdin County, Nebojša Buđanovac, described how the Red Cross is providing citizens with psychological support, responding to the needs of senior citizens and the safety precautions that they are taking while delivering aid to citizens in need during the pandemic. Teodora Prokić and Čedomir Nedeljković from the Youth Council of Sremska Mitrovica, RS described how young volunteers delivered food and other goods to senior citizens in the region during the lockdown from March to May 2020. Martina Zecchetti and Giovanni Mazzoli from Cavriago described how municipal volunteers were coordinated to provide goods and services to disadvantaged persons in the town. Mrs. Zecchetti described how volunteers contributed to reorganizing the library in the town. Mr. Jurij Šarman from CID Ptuj described how volunteers were screened in the NGO and how young persons were engaged in actions to improve local infrastructure during the lockdown in Slovenia. Martin Rejmiš from Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s. described the various measures taken in the Prague area to assist disadvantaged persons in the region, and how volunteers were coordinated.

On Day 2 (5/11/2020), the focus was on how volunteer-based organizations recruit and train volunteers. A online/hybrid workshop was held by the Red Cross of Varazdin County. In the first part, presenters explained the theory and methods re: organizing volunteers in Croatia (i.e. why it is done in specific ways and how the Croatian laws impact this work). Group work was organized where participants described their approach to volunteering and the reasons why people volunteer. The group discussion (which included organizations from all countries) focused on how COVID has affected the motivation of people to volunteer and how organizations are taking specific measures to promote volunteering in their regions.

On Day 3 (12/11/2020), the focus of day 3 was on how volunteers should communicate to stakeholder groups in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the future of the Europe for Citizens programme (i.e. what can be expected in the 2021-27 period under the CERV programme). Željka Markulin from the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Republic of Croatia described how segments of the Europe for Citizens programme will be placed in the CERV (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values) programme during the 2021-27 period. After that, an online workshop on how to communicate to different groups was held by Patrick Galeski. The first part of the workshop consisted of a presentation on the overall impacts of COVID. Within the presentation, he compared the COVID pandemic to the Influenza pandemic of 1918-20. This was done to emphasize how there is currently a lack of innovation in pandemic responses globally. After this, group work was organized via Zoom breakout rooms. Participants from each country were given a scenario and had to decide on how particular persons would respond to the scenario (using stakeholder analysis as a tool). Each group discussed their findings. It was emphasized throughout the workshop that volunteers need to keep in mind that different groups respond differently to proposed actions. It was also emphasized that they need to be prepared to address the questions and perceptions of various stakeholders.

Event 2

Participation: The event involved 99 citizens, including 16 participants from Varazdin, Croatia (under POU Varaždin – Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin), 16 participants from Ptuj, Slovenia (under LUP – Ljudska Univerza Ptuj), 47 from the city of Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia (from RRA Srem – Regionalna Razvojna Agencija Srem d.o.o. RUMA and TO SM - Tourist Organization of the City of Sremska Mitrovica), 11 from Cavriago, Italy (under Comune di Cavriago & Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl) and 9 from Prague, CZ (from IRR - Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s.),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia, from 23/08/2021 to 25/08/2021

Short description: The aim of the event was to show how volunteers play a key role in preserving culture, tourism and how citizens are involved in cultural actions. Participants from Croatia, Slovenia and Czechia participated in the event in-situ; however, due to COVID safety/quarantine measures in Italy, Italian participants needed to participate online at the event. Other persons from the visiting countries that could not participate due to their vaccination status, being in self-isolation or being infected with COVID were also connected to the event online. On Day 1 (23/08/2021), Tourism Organisation of the City of Sremska Mitrovica introduced participants to the host city via short video presentations and a presentation on the city's previous projects and volunteer actions that focused on culture and tourism. Sanja Stupar from RRA Srem presented on how the development agency has managed to create synergies between the public, private and civil sectors via the inter-municipal Working Groups. Biljana Lučić, archaeologist Institute for the Protection of cultural monuments Sremska Mitrovica, presented on the Project "Archest" and described how students and volunteers contribute to preserving the city's historical monuments. Svetlana Sabo - creator and founder of the Roman festival „Imperial Sirmium- City of Legends“, which gathers thousands of citizens and tourists each year, described how the private & public sector and volunteers make the festival possible each year.

Day 2 (24/08/2021) started with a press conference in order to make the project visible to the general public.

Manuela Hrvatin, Croatian National Coordinator for INTERPRET EUROPE: held a workshop on the interpretation of cultural heritage via interactive story-telling. Hrvatin described how towns can use a cultural and natural asset, whatever it may be – e.g. a legend, historical event, natural asset, etc.) to create attractive content for the tourists and citizens. The workshop provided participants with knowledge on how to animate and motivate citizens and volunteers to take part in such initiatives, and with examples of how such an approach creates a sense of belonging and solidarity in the community. Hrvatin explained how the best practice "Istra Inspirit" functions, and group work resulted in participants identifying and developing new interactive stories about their towns.

The afternoon programme was organised at the City centre where participants could understand how storytelling is being practised by volunteers to promote the Roman heritage of the City of Sremska Mitrovica. An archaeological route was organised in the city with stage plays at the sites. Participants saw how actors (amateurs), volunteers and citizens contribute to the interpretation of cultural heritage.

On Day 3 (25/08/2021), a site visit was organised to the Special Nature Reserve Zasavica. Staff and volunteers described how they coordinate actions that preserve traditions, natural elements and wildlife. The partnership held a hybrid meeting (partnership meeting) to end the event. They discussed content of the joint training course (to be tested at the end of the project) and outcomes of event 2. At this meeting, participants from various organizations mentioned what type of training benefits volunteers the most and how they see the training going forward.

Event 3

Participation: The event involved 96 citizens including 15 participants from Varazdin, Croatia (under POU Varaždin – Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin), 6 participants from Ptuj, Slovenia (under LUP – Ljudska Univerza Ptuj), 15 from the city of Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia (from RRA Srem – Regionalna Razvojna Agencija Srem d.o.o. RUMA and TO SM - Tourist Organization of the City of Sremska Mitrovica), 54 from Cavriago, Italy (under Comune di Cavriago & Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl) and 6 from Prague, CZ (from IRR - Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s.),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Cavriago, Italy from 18/10/2021 to 20/10/2021

Short description: The aim of the event was to demonstrate how citizens are engaged in social policy & environmental protection in the European context. Participants from Croatia, Slovenia, and Czechia participated in-situ. However, due to public health and safety travel restrictions relating to COVID-19 on visitors from Serbia coming to Italy; Serbian participants had to participate online. Other participants from the visiting countries that were unable to participate in the event due to COVID-19 were connected to the event via online tools (Zoom). On Day 1 (18/10/2021), A simulation of the Educare model of gaining citizens' inputs on issues of local importance was organized. Coordinators from Comune di Cavriago and La Cremeria showed participants how it works, how citizens and local authority representatives are involved and interact, and how different groups come together and come to a consensus on various issues. In this way, both local citizens and representatives of the partners have learned how mutual understanding between groups contribute to inclusive growth and proper planning. The work of this inter-municipal group has shown participants how local authorities & civil society organizations form partnerships on cultural projects and incorporate the inputs of citizens.

Day 2(19/10/2021) began with an opening conference attended by the mayor of Cavriago, Ms. Francesco Bedogni, and representatives of partner organizations. An additional presentation of the Educare project was organized as well in order to explain how the model includes young people and children in decision-making processes. In the afternoon, the site visit to the Multiplo Community Centre took place. The centre houses a library, spaces for socializing, a small concert hall used for film screenings (family cinema), poetry evenings and similar cultural programs. The Centre is a space that brings together the citizens of Cavriago, but also the wider area, as well as guests and immigrants who are able to learn Italian at the Centre. Within the centre there is a restaurant / cafe "Eighth Day" run by people with special needs, whose services are very happy to use citizens for their gatherings or family celebrations. Persons from "Eighth Day" (persons with disabilities and volunteers) prepared a meal for the participants as a means to demonstrate how citizens can promote social inclusion locally. It also serves as an example of deinstitutionalization, which occurs with the support of the community. To finish the day, a site visit to the works of Land Art Cavriago was organized in order to show how local artists (supported by CSOs and Multiplo) are using recycling to create artworks in the town. The works draw the attention of citizens to the need to protect the environment and coexist with nature.

On Day 3 (20/10/2021), young volunteers living in Cavriago presented the nature protection activities they have carried out in their community. One of the activities which was spontaneously initiated by high school students was the creation of the Nature Protection Plan at the city level. The "Funeral of Disinterest" campaign launched an action in which citizens continuously remove garbage left in nature throughout the year, and the Stop Cigarettes campaign was regarded as particularly interesting, through which citizens can even vote on common issues using special containers. Young people from Varaždin (P4 and young people of the Red Cross) presented their local environmental activities, mentioning some that are carried out at the level of the Republic of Croatia. Ms. Nikolina Zigmund presented on the circular economy project currently underway, under Development Agency North DAN d.o.o. and the City of Varaždin and co-funded from the Interreg Central Europe fund called "CITYCIRCLE". With this project, Varaždin becomes the first city in Croatia to introduce the concept of "circular economy". The pilot project serves as an example to partners and the general public of how the circular economy can function. The best practice examples and interactions have contributed to raising participants'/citizens' knowledge about how citizen-based actions function in a European context, and how EU policy & values (volunteering, active citizenship) function in practice.

Event 4

Participation: The event involved 93 citizens including 13 participants from Varazdin, Croatia (under POU Varaždin – Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin), 38 participants from Ptuj, Slovenia (under LUP – Ljudska Univerza Ptuj), 17 from the city of Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia (from RRA Srem – Regionalna Razvojna Agencija Srem d.o.o. RUMA and TO SM - Tourist Organization of the City of Sremska Mitrovica), 11 from Cavriago, Italy (under Comune di Cavriago & Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl) and 14 from Prague, CZ (from IRR - Institut pro regionalni razvoj, o. p. s.),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Ptuj, Slovenia from 22/11/2021 to 23/11/2021

Short description: The aim of the event was to show citizens how intergenerational solidarity works in a European context and how to engage citizens from different generations in democratic processes. Due to the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19, the event followed a similar format as Event 1. The activities had to be moved online and some local participants were gathered in Ptuj in order to facilitate interactions between those participants in an in-situ atmosphere.

On Day 1 (22/11/2021), the event began with presentations by the partners where they described briefly their activities that target senior citizens and how the project is benefitting their regions and organizations. After this, LUP described the activities that they perform that promote intergenerational solidarity. They presented the best practice "Seniorijada", which is an Olympics for seniors made possible by the contribution of volunteers and younger generations in the community. It was emphasized that the event promotes active ageing, has contributed to optimizing health & well-being, creating a sense of belonging to the community, and bringing citizens of different generations together.

In the second part of the day, LUP led the conference entitled »Bridging Generational Gaps". It included presentations of best practices on intergenerational solidarity in Ptuj. It was arranged in the form of round table, with speakers from Špajza Modrosti (Ptuj, University for 3rd life period (Ptuj) Rotaract Club Ptuj and POU Varaždin speaker Patrick Galeski). The discussion was about how to include youth and seniors in local actions; specifically, how intercultural dialogue with other regions contributes to addressing issues affecting the elderly.

Day 2 (23/11/2021) started with a presentation of »ŠPAJZA MODROSTI intercultural centre«. Saša Bezljak and Janja Kafel described how the centre organizes art activities, education, and other actions that bring together elderly persons and younger generations. They also described how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their work and the measures they are taking to ensure that the action can still reach out to senior citizens effectively. To add to their presentation, a short quiz on the impact of EU, EU values and intergenerational solidarity was organized, and photo materials from workshops with seniors and volunteers in Špajza Modrosti were presented. After this, thematic workshops were organized where participants from different countries were gathered in Zoom breakout rooms to work on specific problems impacting elderly populations in Europe. The themes covered were: 1) How to engage

seniors in IT activities – challenges and solutions; 2) How seniors are dealing with isolation? How can we approach them?; 3) What can we offer seniors in order to encourage them to be active citizens?; 4) Involvement of volunteers: ways to approach seniors either over distance (lockdowns) or face to face. After each group discussed the issues/themes in depth, the groups presented their findings, project ideas and suggestions to the other participants as means to generate mutual understanding on the issues, discover ways in which citizens and volunteers can effectively engage elderly persons, and exchange know-how. To finish day 2, the partnership held a meeting in order to discuss the development of the training course and the findings from the other events. The draft curriculum was presented and discussed, the pilot training themes were elaborated, and the partnership planned the final event in Prague, CZ.

Event 5

Participation: The event involved 87 citizens including 14 participants from Varazdin, Croatia (under POU Varaždin – Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin), 16 participants from Ptuj, Slovenia (under LUP – Ljudska Univerza Ptuj), 10 from the city of Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia (from RRA Srem – Regionalna Razvojna Agencija Srem d.o.o. RUMA and TO SM - Tourist Organization of the City of Sremska Mitrovica), 10 from Cavriago, Italy (under Comune di Cavriago & Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl) and 37 from Prague, CZ (from IRR - Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s.),

Location / Dates: The event took place in Prague 5, CZ from 26/01/2022 to 28/01/2022

Short description: The aim of the event was to show how citizen-based actions (made possible by volunteers) contribute to enhancing conditions for marginalized groups (including younger persons, migrants, persons from ethnic minorities and migrants), and to test/pilot the training curriculum developed by the partnership (focusing on community leadership and engaging citizens in local actions). Participants from Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia were able to attend in-situ, but due to the high number of Omicron variant cases (i.e. being infected, in self-isolation, etc.) various participants were unable to attend in-person. Those that could not be in-situ attended via Zoom.

Day 1 (26/01/2022) started with opening presentations about the project concept and introductions to the partner organizations. After that, Stefania-Felicia Pavel, project manager from the Institute for Regional Development (Prague), presented on the ongoing and finished projects of the institution relating to social inclusion. Project "Resource – Raising awareness of the European Union through familiarization with its financial instruments", which focused on building capacities to access EU funds; Project "YOU ARE WELCOME" focusing on the needs of migrants and reducing discrimination; and "Project Momentum", which focused on providing women education as entrepreneurs all demonstrated how EU programmes can be accessed and how social inclusion as a core EU value creates benefits for all citizens. Pavel Pospíšek, representative of Prague 9 Municipal District and member of several NGOs dealing with youth and vulnerable groups in Prague, presented on how the community has created initiatives with volunteers. He described how the Paletka Garden, which is an open community garden frequently used by low-income households to grow food, has become a place that has contributed to citizens sense of belonging to the community. The project "Homeless Blues" has provided homeless persons work by providing them salaries for cleaning local areas and shelter. The project "Spolek Vespolek" has provided elderly persons social assistance. Popisek emphasized that due to EU integration in the Prague 9 area, the town has more active and vibrant citizens, more volunteer opportunities, and a socially cohesive community.

Day 2 (27/01/2022) started with a presentation on the InHeal project which focuses on enhancing the health literacy of persons from marginalized populations, namely the elderly (held by Lisa Petitjean). The rest of the day was dedicated to the issues relating to migration and how to encourage the inclusion of migrants in the countries participating in GET2IT project. The Prague-based NGO AMIGA – Agency for Migration – started by showing both online and in-situ participants its history and activities. It was emphasized how migrants have had trouble adjusting to European surroundings due to a lack of support and access to public services. After that, a workshop was organized focusing on the different situations that may occur between migrants and local residents. During the group work, the participants were encouraged to deal with problems relating to how to engage citizens in volunteer work for migrants. An open discussion about the readiness of the participants' countries and communities to integrate newcomers from abroad was held to conclude the 2nd day of the event.

Day 3 (28/01/2022) started with a presentation held by Mr. Filip Pospíšil from the Centre for Social Services Prague. He described his organization's services and projects for marginalized groups, mainly homeless people and persons in migration. After that, Romodrom, a Prague-based NGO working with marginalized groups (Roma persons and others) was held. Romodrom explained how they have accessed REC funding and relied on the efforts of volunteers to assist marginalized persons, especially Roma, in the Czech Republic. Both presentations provoked a discussion based on questions from both online and in-situ participants. In the final part of the event, the training course developed during the project implementation was successfully piloted via group activities held both online and in-situ. The pilot focused on conflict management in civil society organizations. After presentations on the theory of conflict management, group work was organized where participants had to come together and find solutions to possible conflict scenarios in CSOs.