



**The project «ERAS – European Alliance for Volunteer Support» was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"**

**Applicable to Strand 2 - Measure 2.2 “Network of Towns”**

**9 events have been carried out within this project:**

### **Event 1 – Slovenia**

**Participation:** The event involved 56 citizens, including 19 participants from the city of **Litija (Slovenia)**, 3 participants from the city of **Durres (Albania)**, 5 participants from the city of **Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**, 3 participants from the city of **Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)**, 3 participants from the city of **Dubrovnik (Croatia)**, 3 participants from the city of **Thessaloniki (Greece)**, 2 participants from the city of **Pecs (Hungary)**, 6 participants from the city of **Kekava (Latvia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Mažeiki (Lithuania)**, 1 participant from the city of **Gharb (Malta)**, 2 participants from the city of **Prilep (North Macedonia)**, 3 participants from the city of **Lousada (Portugal)**, 4 participants from the city of **Niš (Serbia)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event was hosted by Društvo za podporo Civilne družbe in Litija (**Slovenia**) from 17/06/2021 to 23/06/2021. Due to the situation with Covid-19 in the EU and restrictions placed to travel and to limit the spread of Covid in EU and Slovenia, the event took place online.

**Short description:** Solidarity in Europe

The aim of the event was to learn about the voluntarism regulation and support in each of the project partner countries. The event was based on three topics with the aim of providing a comprehensive insight into the regulation and support of volunteering in partner countries and exchange good practices.

To meet the objectives three topics were covered at the event. We started with the presentation of good practices on solidarity in response to the needs of an ageing society in the Municipality of Litija. The event was opened with a welcome speech by Lijana Lovše, deputy mayor of Municipality of Litija who made a brief presentation of the municipality and its efforts to respond to the needs of an ageing society. She explained that the Municipality of Litija is also committed to development of volunteering, which is also evident from the many projects which include volunteers. The welcome speech was followed by detailed presentation of five projects addressing different needs of ageing society currently implemented in the Municipality, namely Seniors for seniors, Co-travellers – transportation for seniors, School of health – morning exercise, Old age, a gift to the young – intergenerational socializing and to conclude the event Point for seniors – assistance for the seniors at home. The following two days were dedicated to an intensive two-day online workshop on video skills to promote volunteering and active

citizenship. Participants learned how to design concept of the promotional videos, how to edit videos to engage the audience and inspire them for volunteering. Participants also learned about editing tools and apps that are affordable or free as well as easy to use for inexperienced video editors. In the continuation of the project, 13 video stories of European volunteers were created, with which we encouraged and promoted volunteering in European cities.

We concluded the event with a discussion on regulations and support for volunteering in partner countries. To meet this objective, partners prepared research on the regulation and support of voluntarism in their countries and presented it to partners at the online event. The presentations were followed by a discussion on how regulations can support or hinder the development of volunteering. As part of the Regional NGO Center for the Zasavska region, we presented them with good practices and efforts for the development of NGOs and volunteering. In cooperation with Slovenian Philanthropy, we presented the regulation of the field and incentives for the development of volunteering in Slovenia. The discussion gave participants an opportunity to learn about effective regulations around Europe and how to implement them in their own country. By sharing the review of the regulation of the field of volunteering in the partner countries, a comprehensive review of good practices was created at both the national and local levels, which can be transferred to other countries and communities.

During the event, which took place online due to the measures to contain the Covid-19 epidemic, we still managed to bring our municipality closer to our partners and part of our culinary culture by baking potica simultaneously in all partner cities.

## **Event 2 – Latvia**

**Participation:** The event involved 35 citizens, including 11 participants from the city of **Kekava (Latvia)**, 4 participants from the city of **Kuldīga (Latvia)**, 5 participants from the city of **Rīga (Latvia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Baloži (Latvia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Durres (Albania)**, 2 participants from the city of **Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)**, 3 participants from the city of 2 participants from the city of **Pecs (Hungary)**, 1 participant from the city of **Harkány (Hungary)**, 2 participants from the city of **Mažeiki (Lithuania)**, 2 participants from the city of **Niš (Serbia)**, 3 participants from the city of **Litija** and 1 participant from the city of **Šmartno pri Litiji (Slovenia)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Kekava and Kuldiga (**Latvia**), from 18/08/2021 to 20/08/2021. It was organised by Solis Tuvak.

**Short description:** Voluntarism in crisis

After arrival to Latvia, project participants had a meeting to get to know each other and visited the mayor of Kekava municipality, Mr Juris Žilko, who personally has experience in voluntary work. He discussed with the participants his ideas about the importance and support of voluntary work in Kekava municipality. He believes that volunteering gives self-confidence, gives experience and is a great way of making connections and develop friendships. As a volunteer, mayor Žilko supports and encourages voluntary activities of municipal officials as well as citizens.

The purpose of the event was to learn about voluntarism in crisis. Participants learned about voluntary initiatives that started in Latvia during the Covid-19 pandemic as well as other project implemented with the help of volunteers. On the second day, participants visited Kuldiga city. There, the event, and debate, which was partly held online, was opened by Mrs Inese Vaivare, Director of the Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation - LAPAS. Mrs Inese Vaivare is a co-founder of the voluntary initiative "Stay home". It was created as a response to the needs of citizens during the Covid restrictions and has since grown into a volunteer movement "Easy to help" with volunteers all throughout Latvia. We had the opportunity to meet live with Mrs Ilze

Jankovska, one of the important actors in the "Stay home" initiative. We talked with her about the experience of volunteering in crisis situations in partner countries and came to a common conclusion that the feeling of crisis has aroused a greater desire in people to volunteer and thus contribute to the end of the crisis as soon as possible. Now, a year and a half after the onset of the crisis, the sense of crisis is lost and many organisations in partner countries are facing a decline in interest in volunteering.

We were impressed with the program run by the Children and Youth Center in Kuldiga, presented by Mr Toms Girvaitis. Many leisure activities that young people between the ages of 5 and 25 can take part in, are free of charge, co-financed from national funds and run throughout the school year. We also visited the Democracy Quarter, a space in Kuldiga, where the first Festival of Democracy took place. There we got acquainted with the vision of the festival organizers, Mrs Maija Jakovska and Mr Girts Jankovskis, to create a centre where discussions, debates, art exhibitions and performances that connect both individuals and organizations could take place. The space would also provide residential and workspace for writers, philosophers and artists. The festival was also well-received in the media, as funds were raised for its implementation through an auction of books donated for this purpose by a number of important Latvian politicians.

On the last day, event activities were moved to Riga where participants visited "Gardens of Sporta Pils (Sporta pils dārzi)" a community garden designed in a deserted area of the former sports hall at the initiative of the residents and cared for by volunteers. Mrs Sabīne Skudra, explained that residents of Riga can get their own square meter of the garden in the middle of the city, where they can grow flowers and vegetables as well as socialize with their friends. If not interested in urban gardening, residents of Riga can simply enjoy the garden as visitors. With meadows replacing degraded surfaces and different events for the public, this quickly became a place where the community comes together.

### **Event 3 – Serbia**

**Participation:** The event involved 30 citizens, including 17 participants from the city of **Niš**, 3 participants from the city of **Prokuplje (Serbia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Bela Palanka (Serbia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Bujanovac (Serbia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**, 2 participants from the city of **Kekava (Latvia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Prilep (North Macedonia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Ljubljana and Trbovlje (Slovenia)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in Niš (**Serbia**) and was hosted by Club for Youth Empowerment (KOM 018), from 07/09/2021 to 09/09/2021.

**Short description:** Volunteering in festivals and manifestations

On the first day, partners presented their organisations and work and discussed volunteering and the organisation of events. During the discussion, they exchanged their experience with the event organisation and cooperation with volunteers for the event organisation. While all have previously cooperated with volunteers to organise an event, no one has experience as extensive as the host. Since KOM 018 has ten years of experience organising festivals solely with volunteers, partners were looking forward to learning more about it in the following days. An immersive experience of Serbian culture and cuisine rounded up the first day.

In continuation of project activities, the day started with Jovan Milić, presenting Youth Office Niš, their work and opportunities for volunteering they provide. Nikola Božanović presented the Club for Youth Empowerment (KOM 018). He also introduced the methodology for organizing volunteering activities at the festivals and manifestations, using the Come to Amfi festival as an example, as it involves more than 100 volunteers yearly.

KOM 018 implements the project “Hip Hop culture festival Come to Amfi” in cooperation with various European countries. The Festival engages young artists and supports their work at the regional and European levels. The project builds the capacities of young performers through the support of their senior and more recognized colleagues. The project builds the capacities of young performers through the support of their senior and more recognized colleagues. It provides a platform for young artists to enhance their audience.

Shortly after the end of the festival, preparations begin for the next edition of the Come to Amfi festival. They choose volunteers with an open call. Prospective volunteers describe their previous experience with events of this type and tell to which sector they wish to contribute. They can choose between photo/video, host, promo, technical support, refreshments. After individual interviews, volunteers get assigned to their sectors. Depending on the sector, they undergo short training. There, volunteers are acquainted with their obligations. Each group of volunteers has a team of leaders. They are always there to clarify and advise them in an emergency.

In the evening, project partners had a chance to see the practical side of volunteering at the festival during the first festival night. The participants went through a sped-up process of volunteer selections process. Before the festival opened, project partners were assigned to different sectors and learned about their role as a volunteer for that night. Throughout the night participants volunteered in the assigned sector and helped with the implementation of the first festival night.

The exchange of experience from the previous night and a short evaluation concluded the event.

#### **Event 4 – Portugal**

**Participation:** The event involved 43 citizens, including 29 participants from the city of **Lousada (Portugal)**, 3 participants from the city of **Durres (Albania)**, 2 participants from the city of **Dubrovnik (Croatia)**, 3 participants from the city of **Kekava (Latvia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Prilep (North Macedonia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)**, 2 participants from the city of **Litija (Slovenia)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event was hosted by Municipality of Lousada and took place in **Lousada (Portugal)**, from 20/10/2021 to 22/10/2021.

**Short description:** Environmental volunteer work in Lousada, a successful case study

The aim of the event was to present the volunteering work developed in the Municipality of Lousada, especially in the environmental area, as well as the municipal strategy for sustainability. To meet the objectives, the following work plan was implemented: The Councillor for the Environment, Manuel Nunes, first made a brief presentation of the municipality and the municipal strategy for sustainability and evolution from 2013 to 2020. The projects in which approximately 6300 volunteers participated were presented, namely Plantar Lousada, Lousada Guarda-Rios, International Workcamp, Lousada Charcos, Casas Ninho, Young Environmental Volunteers, Bioescola and finally Biosénior. The session was followed by the presentation by Milene Matos, coordinator of the nature conservation and environmental education sector of the Municipality of Lousada, who explained the opportunities created for young volunteers in the municipality of Lousada and the volunteering projects developed with them.

All the participants become aware in detail the projects BioSénior, Lousada Guarda-Rios and Plantar Lousada and understand what is done best in context of volunteering in these projects

and the results achieved with the participation of young people in contact with the environment. In Lousada Gurada-Rios, the participants had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the knowledge developed, among other areas, but with special focus on the volunteering developed by the Sousa and Mezio River surveillance patrols.

Concerning Plantar Lousada project, there was the opportunity to learn about strategies and numbers of this project that has already planted over 72.000 trees in Lousada and restored 47 acres of forest in the last five years, and engaged over 6.300 volunteers. It was also possible to see in loco the volunteer work of the BioSénior Project in Complexo Social de Macieira, with senior citizens.

Participants had the opportunity to visit Mata de Vilar, this place provides unique experiences about the natural heritage of the Forest, including the development of regular volunteer activities, open to the whole community. The forest of Mata de Vilar has been gradually recovered since 2016, and visitor support structures and exploration of its ecological values have been implemented there, which has also allowed the implementation of educational actions of environmental.

Finally, participants became aware of the voluntary work and partnership with NGOs Bioliving and Verde with the Municipality of Lousada.

### **Event 5 – Malta**

**Participation:** The event involved 34 citizens, including 24 participants from the city of **Gharb, Islad Gozo (Malta)**, 2 participants from the city of **Dubrovnik (Croatia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Kresnice (Slovenia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Pecs (Hungary)** and 2 participants from the city of **Thessaloniki (Greece)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Gharb, Island Gozo (Malta)** and was organised by Genista Research Foundation, from 25/11/2021 to 27/11/2021.

**Short description:** Building social inclusion through voluntary activities and cultural events.

The event was aimed at learning about good practices in the field of building social inclusion through voluntary activities and cultural events. At the event, participants learned about numerous good practices from Gozo, all of which were oriented to serving the local community and the organisation of events by volunteers.

Participants visited local voluntary organisation Ghaqda Banda Vizitazzjoni Gharb. Ghaqda Banda Vizitazzjoni Gharb to learn about their good practices and voluntary activities. Ghaqda Banda Vizitazzjoni Gharb provides free music lessons for brass instruments provided by qualified musicians. Throughout the year they organise various band marches and concerts for free in their local community and abroad. The highlight of their work is the organisation of the annual event - Opera in the square. The Opera in the square is organised in conjunction with other NGOs and their volunteers and the local council.

The Opera in the square is an important event for the local community in Gharb as it focuses on the involvement of the local people as a way of promoting active citizenship and building social inclusion through voluntary activities and cultural events. The participants of the fifth international event had the opportunity to attend the Opera in the square and see first-hand how such events can be implemented with the help of volunteers and how they benefit local communities. The Opera in the square is produced by a mix of professionals and new beginners as the professional opera singers and music maestros give the opportunity to local youth and others to learn and have an active part in the production of the opera. The annual event is attended by an audience of approximately 200 people including the Minister of Gozo,

members of parliament, high church officials, regional council councillors, local councillors, various directors from the culture ministry, local government and other elected officials.

While in Gozo participants also met with the Mayor of Gharb, Mr David Apap, to discuss the role of the Municipality in the development of volunteering. While at the meeting they also discussed the initiatives taken to foster volunteering, how the council assists VOs and the collaboration network between the municipality and Voluntary Organizations (VOs) in Gharb. Participants learned that The Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector ensures that VOs are informed of all opportunities that may benefit them. There is a dedicated page that brings together all the relevant funding opportunities for VOs, including local, European and Third Country Opportunities. The page serves a dual purpose, to inform of funding opportunities for VOs and funding results.

The event was concluded with a workshop titled Knowledge of European programs and opportunities and sharing of good practices. At the workshop, the participants got an overview of the various opportunities available for collaboration, through various funding opportunities and how we as partners could further work together to further strengthen our networking, building synergies together through identifying new projects and using our strengths as a network to jointly produce new projects. Participants visited the workshop of Ghaqda armar Gharb where representatives shared good practices done by this volunteer group from Gharb. Ghaqda armar Gharb focuses on building replicas of traditional designs which are mostly used during the annual traditional Festa and also voluntarily restores art pieces that are displayed in the locality, the participants later visited a chapel to see the traditional style stained glass art pieces they produced.

The last site visit was to the Ta'Dbiegi Crafts village which now houses various crafts workshops working on pottery, glass, filigree, lace and metal. The participants got to know how the municipality applied for funding to organise traditional crafts lessons, where master craftsmen mostly old village people provided free tutorials to the younger generation to learn the crafts. This was followed by restoring an old army barracks area which were turned into small workshops. Now the trainees have opened their own business initiatives on the crafts learned and this traditional crafts centre has become a top tourist destination.

## **Event 6 – Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Participation:** The event involved 37 citizens, including 26 participants from the city of **Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**, 2 participants from the city of **Litija (Slovenia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Niš (Serbia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Kekava (Latvia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Plunge (Lithuania)**, 2 participants from the city of **Budapest and Pecs (Hungary)** and 1 participant from the city of **Athens (Greece)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event was hosted by Sarajevo Economic Region Development agency - SERDA and took place in Sarajevo (**Bosnia and Herzegovina**), from 08/03/2022 to 10/03/2022.

**Short description:** Voluntarism in crisis

The aim of the event was to present the topic Voluntarism in crisis (COVID-19) and how did pandemic affected volunteering programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in what way volunteering programs and activities overcome this crisis. Also, the goal was to share knowledge on how to improve the conditions for the development of volunteerism. Between the 8th to 10th March, Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency SERDA hosted the delegation of the project ERAS - European Alliance for Volunteer Support in Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina, where participants discussed and shared good practices on volunteering.

Within the workshop days, domestic and international guests were addressed by representatives of the organizations "Pomozi.ba", Platform "Trebasta.ba", Foundation Source of Hope, Association "Let's do it", Incubator of social innovation Munja.ba and SOS Children's Village as one of the best organizations for volunteering in our country, who presented their volunteer programs that were developed before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Speakers shared information, practices, knowledge and expertise on how humanitarian activities and projects affect volunteerism in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how to involve more people in helping our community in need. In a way that some volunteer organizations provide service to volunteers, encouraging them (the young people as well as older people who are unemployed) to volunteer with the argument that volunteering can help them find employment. They help young volunteers present their experience, knowledge and skills when transitioning from a school environment to employment and help them prepare for meetings (organizing and running a meeting). All this helps young volunteers in practice when searching for or when going for interviews for a job. We discussed plans for the future and opportunities for network with foreign partners to respond more quickly and to easily overcome future global challenges. The visit also included a site visit to the "House of Good" of the Association Pomozi.ba, where we were able to see a part of their activities and discuss volunteer initiatives. We had the opportunity to talk with Mrs Nermina Suljević and Mrs Lejla Bešliagić who are representatives of Project Management Department, City of Sarajevo and learn how the city of Sarajevo is engaged with helping volunteers and NGOs and how important is the engagement of volunteers for the whole community, the city and the country as a whole. The event in Sarajevo also showed how sustainable and well-supported volunteer programs can positively address social and economic issues.

### **Event 7 – Albania**

**Participation:** The event involved 47 citizens, including 26 participants from the city of **Durres (Albania)** and 12 participants from the city of **Kavaja (Albania)**, 1 participant from the city of **Lousada (Portugal)**, 2 participants from the city of **Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**, 2 participants from the city of **Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)**, 2 participants from the city of **Litija (Slovenia)** and 2 participants from **Prilep (North Macedonia)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Durres and Kavaja (Albania)**, it was hosted by Udhëtim i Lirë - Liberi di Viaggiare from 11/04/2022 to 13/04/2022

**Short description:** Impact of voluntary work in tourism and the European Solidarity Corp Programme opportunities

The aim of the event was to share best practices of voluntary work from actual volunteers and participants of civil society organizations and initiatives and to show the impact of voluntarism in the local community and also in the individual perspective. The attendants were also able to get to know each other and create new networks throughout Europe. The first day of event took place at the Multifunctional Youth center, where were present besides of the partners of the project, representatives from other local NGO such as "Liri dhe Demokraci", "Qendra Multifunctional NISH Tulla", students of the "Aleksander Moisiu" University and activists of Youth Center, in all 26 persons. At the second day, the event was organized at the Conference Room of Arvi Hotel in Durres. There were present 23 persons representing the Municipality of Durres, "Qendra ditore per femije me aftesi ndryshe", Head of Psychology Department of the University "Aleksander Moisiu", representative of General Director of Albanian Railway, representative of "Alb contact Center". In the third day the event was held in Kavaja City at the Municipality Council Hall with representatives of Kavaja Municipality Council. As a good practice was the visit to the Center of Youths with disabilities.

During all these days the participants shared their experience in voluntary works and the involvements of youths in social life.

## **Event 8 – Croatia**

**Participation:** The event involved 39 citizens, including 26 participants from the city of **Dubrovnik (Croatia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Dubrovačka Župa (Croatia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Zagreb (Croatia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Durres (Albania)**, 2 participants from the city of **Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria)**, 2 participants from the city of **Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)**, 2 participants from the city of **Thessaloniki (Greece)**, 1 participant from the city of **Nespereira LSD (Portugal)**, 2 participants from the city of **Litija (Slovenia)**.

**Location / Dates:** The event was organised by Association BONSAI. It took place in **Dubrovnik (Croatia)**, from 01/06/2022 to 03/06/2022

**Short description:** Sustainable development of volunteering

Between 1 and 3 June 2022, the 8th international event of the ERAS project, implemented by the Civil Resource Centre, took place. Udruga Bonsai, our project partner from Dubrovnik, Croatia, hosted the event. At the event, we focused on measuring the effects that volunteer programs bring to the local environment, the sustainability of volunteer programs and the motivation of individuals working in this field. We had the opportunity to learn more about the regulation of volunteering in Croatia and learn about non-governmental organizations operating in Dubrovnik.

During our visit to Dubrovnik, we visited the Dubrovnik Youth Center. The City of Dubrovnik provides free use of the premises for non-governmental organizations that run various free programs for young people. The centre is part of the “Youth and the City” activity designed to respond to the needs of young people in Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik, heavily influenced by tourism industry, is facing emigration of the young, because many cannot find the right opportunities and challenges for work and life outside of tourism. Miho Katičić, from the Department of Education, Sports, Social Welfare and Civil Society, presented how they tackled this in the Dubrovnik Municipality.

While in Dubrovnik, Deputy Mayor Manuel Nunes from the Municipality of Lousada, Portugal, met with Deputy Mayor Jelka Tepšić from Dubrovnik Municipality. At the meeting, Deputy Nunes presented the practice of involving volunteers in implementing environmental projects and their experience with a strategic approach to environmental issues in Lousada. Together with different stakeholders from Dubrovnik, we reviewed the possibilities and the transfer of good practices from this field to Dubrovnik.

We devoted a large part of our visit to impact measurement, which was presented to us by Michael Freer from the Impact House. We devoted ourselves to the Theory of Change method. We recognize that impact measurement requires a lot of thought and time to define and measure the effects of our programs in the local environment. Despite this fact, impact measurement motivates program implementers and decision-makers who allocate public funds for programs and the general public to recognize the benefit that non-governmental organizations bring to the environment in which they operate.

## **Event 9 – North Macedonia**

**Participation:** The event involved 31 citizens, including 8 participants from the city of **Prilep (North Macedonia)**, 15 participants from the city of **Ohrid (North Macedonia)**, 1 participant from the city of **Durres (Albania)**, 1 participant from the city of **Gharb (Malta)**, 4 participants from the city of **Litija (Slovenia)**, 2 participants from the city of **Niš (Serbia)**.



**Location / Dates:** The event took place in **Ohrid (North Macedonia)**, from 03/08/2022 to 05/08/2022. It was hosted by Center for Civic Initiative.

**Short description:** Challenges of volunteering in the EU and outside of the EU

In North Macedonia, participants met with representatives of the Ohrid Red Cross and were impressed by their work. The Ohrid Red Cross has five employees and 500 volunteers who implement numerous projects that are not typical for the Red Cross. In addition to blood drives, food distribution, first aid courses and children's summer camps, their activities include a drama group, free English lessons for children, reading classes and much more. As they say, they welcome any volunteer with an idea and a desire to do something in their local environment. And they support them in achieving it.

The Ohrid Red Cross Organization is thus one of the most active volunteer organizations in the country, and the Mountain Rescue Service also operates under their auspices. Together with the Zlatovrv Rescue Service from Pelagonija, they presented how rescue services operate in Macedonia and the importance of their work in the community.