

The project « Community without borders » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"

Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.1 "Town-Twinning"

Participation: The project involved 1564 citizens, notably 620 participants from the organisation V.I.A.C. – Institute for youth support and development, Trstená (**Slovakia**), 760 participants from the city of Trstená (**Slovakia**), 60 participants from the city of Hořice (**Czech Republic**), 34 from the town of Rázová (**Czech Republic**), 17 participants of the city Isaszeg (**Hungary**) and 73 from the city Gmina Jabłonka (**Poland**).

Location/ Dates: The event took place in Trstená (**Slovakia**), from 07/06/2018 to 10/06/2018

Short description:

The day of 07/06/2018 was dedicated to welcoming the participants. The director of V.I.A.C. – Institute for youth support and development officially welcomed representatives of partner cities and towns and representatives of city Trstená. He had got them familiar with the project objectives and pointed out the importance of cooperation. Meeting went on with mutual getting to know each other through quiz questions about participating countries and also culture introducing. Meeting had been held in non-formal way and pointed out the importance of good relationship and partnership among the European Union countries.

The day of 08/06/2018 was dedicated to activities for citizens and supporting active participation and spreading the main project ideas and European common values.

There was a meeting of local authorities representatives from participating cities and towns and they discussed with mayors of local authorities, representatives of non-governmental organizations and invited guests the topic, how to develop communities and relations of citizens to cities and towns. The topic Fair urbanism (how to make public spaces really public) has been discussed with Milota Sikorová, expert and urbanist architect in New York and middle Europe. Second discussion was called Community children and youth friendly (how to work with society so children and young people don't want to leave their communities), with Andrea Chlebničanová, program manager from Children of Slovakia Foundation. Third topic was Erasmus+ about the funding possibilities from European Union with Adam Laták from the National Agency Erasmus+. Discussions were inspirational for participants and created a space for experience exchange, mutual connection and creating networks between local authorities, organizations, active citizens and particular countries in European space.

The main square and sport playground in Trstená were full of children, young people and adults. Through activities they had the opportunity to overcome their personal borders of comfort and to try new things. Besides project partners, people from local community got the opportunity to participate in program. Participants could try new sport activities, like Kan-Jam, Bumper Balls, Water football, Slackline, Cornhole and many others. Day full of activities, Active day, motivated to active approach, so citizens didn't stay passive to themselves or to life around them.

For the youngest children there was a program prepared where they can get to know European Union through playful activities. They colored EU flag and member states flags, they got to know about important places and beauties of European nature, so they could get first touch with EU and particular countries.

At the same time, there was a program for students from partner cities and towns participating in project, who created international groups together with Slovak students and participated in volunteering activities. They were led by mentors and together with workers of local authority and international volunteers from V.I.A.C. they created better places in Trstená and surrounding. They made tyre stands for parking bicycles, colored slides and jungle gym for children playground, used their creativity and talents and created promotional materials for city Trstená etc. By active participation in activities they experienced volunteering and realized, how help is important and how they can change their surrounding by active participation in their communities.

At the same time there were 15 workshops held in Trstená, all of them were focused on education and personal development with trainers from different part of Slovakia. There were 240 participants present in workshops. Participants could also experience larps, innovative method of attitudes forming. Through game they had to face different situations, make decisions and experienced situation that are not common for them. During the day festival participants could sit and taste small refreshment in community tent, speak to Community center workers.

Participants could also experience different cultures in Multicultural tent, where they could meet people from different cultures, speak to them, watch photos from their countries, taste typical food of Afghanistan, prepared by the refugee from Afghanistan, who nowadays live in Slovakia, tie typical African scarf with the girl from Somalia, and listen to a story of young boy, who every day have to face prejudices, because he is Romani. At the same time we wanted to point out the importance of Schengen, that we can cross borders without any restrictions within Europe.

Tent of sensitivity, run by non-governmental organization EDUMA from Bratislava, pointed out the importance of mutual acceptance of different cultures with the main idea: "Discover, who they really are." Participants could stop there, watch the photo exhibition of people suffered with marginalization, and in "online living library" they could hear the testimonies of people who have to face prejudices: story of a boy, born without hands, girl, who is a daughter of refugees, blind girl and others with disabilities who are often refused by society. Participants could also experience, what it means to be disable, they had to overcome a distance and barrier on the wheelchair or with crutches. Participants could also hear the story directly from "live libraries" and overcome their prejudices, for example the story of a boy who is paralyzed in wheelchair.

Day was full of social, sport, educational and cultural program. Project partners and public could enjoy dancing and singing exhibitions and concerts of music bands. In the evening program, people who experienced Candle manifestation were sharing their stories and reminded one of the most important events in Slovak history. Program was finished with firework as the sign of remembering the common history and vision of better Europe and European Union.

The day **09.06.2018** was dedicated to community development, overcoming barriers and discussion about future Europe. Project partners and participants from public could try their stamina and they overcame their personal limits in 6 kilometers long run full of different obstacles. There were 18 obstacles in total, participants had to run through meadows, forests, mud, water of Orava dam and so on. Adrenalin Race was also focused on strengthening team cooperation in 4-members mixed teams (boys, girls), where they could discover that together they can do more. Racers started in Ústie nad Priehradou and the end was at the main square in Trstená. There were 20 teams and 13 individuals participating in Adrenalin Race.

There were also Community markets held, where participant could support by buying handmade products Orava producers. They could also let themselves be inspired by creating in creative workshops and create something for themselves or for their relatives, for example wire jewels, soil characters, wooden heart with decoupage, carved fruit, baskets from pedig, or their own T-shirt. They also could overcome their fear and experience joy in non-conventional games and fun attractions.

In the afternoon, there was a discussion held about the future of Europe. The invitation was accepted by guests – members of European parliament – Ivan Štefanec, Monika Smolková and the representative of Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural development of European commission Dušan Chrenek. The problems and challenges that EU citizens are facing were discussed. Participants could meet members of European Parliament personally and discuss with them EU values, process of EU policy development and problems that need to be solved in every partner country, so EU citizens could avoid Euroscepticism. Discussion continued with another guests – Juraj Šeliga, founder of initiative "For respectable Slovakia," and Tomáš Jacko, university teacher from Economical university of Bratislava, who teaches the subjects Critical thinking and argumentation, Political thinking and decision making. Both of them are active Slovakian citizens, who bring a positive change to our country and are not afraid to fight for common good and democratic life. Within this discussion the most important problems and challenges, that citizens of our countries are facing, were pointed out.

The day **10.06.2018** was dedicated to project evaluation. Participants assessed the event and left back to their communities, inspired to bring a positive change to their cities and towns. Hungarian participants assessed their participation in the project Community without borders with these words: "For the second time the city Isaszeg had the opportunity to participate in the project of organization V.I.A.C. – Institute for youth support and development in Trstena. Program was colorful and well-arranged. Young people enjoyed their participation in the event "Your city needs you," where, besides useful help for city and people in Trstená, could meet young people from different countries, change their opinion about everyday life, and they were able to communicate despite their language barrier. In Isaszeg group, there were mostly sportsmen, so it was interesting to see them in larp, playing the roles of mafiosos or other characters. Also workshops and discussions about important topics connected with young people not only from Slovakia, but also from Hungary and other countries, were interesting. Organizers did their best for us to feel good and to have unforgettable moments. And it happened. The very top of the project was Adrenalin Race, our sportsmen were very much looking forward to. The special thanks belong to organizers who could arrange the competitive race in highly professional quality. Our young people came back home full of experiences and ideas from friendly meetings and cooperation with young people from different side of the borders. At last they enjoyed the victories and chances for next meeting.

Our big thank belongs to everybody, who was participating in preparation and realization of this project, especially V.I.A.C., but also representatives of the city Trstená and city Isaszeg, who considered our participation in the project. It was pleasure for us." Slovak, Hungarian, Czech and Polish participants created within those 4-days event community without borders. They encouraged themselves to common engagement in European space. It is very significant, that countries have very much in common. In the formal and non-formal discussions and meetings there was a space opened for closer cooperation and project participants increased their awareness about common history and EU values. Project activities were adapted, so they enable active participation of citizens on the local, regional, national and European level through development of mutual understanding, intercultural learning, social engagement and volunteering. The future of Europe belongs to those, who have a courage to step out of their comfort zones, accept challenges and fight for correct values through their activity and enthusiasm.