



GOOD PRACTICES GUIDE

Showing how Volunteering is Making Europe Stronger



GET2IT

GETting to Active
CITizenship in Europe



BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT GET2IT

TITLE: GET2IT - GETTING TO ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IN EUROPE

Duration: 01/03/2020 - 28/02/2022.

Total value of EU funding: 100.800 €

Project applicant/lead partner: Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin (POU Varaždin)

Partners on the project: Tourist organisation of the City of Sremska Mitrovica (Serbia), Regionalna Razvojna Agencija Srem d.o.o. Ruma (Serbia), Ljudska Univerza Ptuj (Slovenia), Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl (Italy), Commune di Cavriago (Italy), Institut pro regionalni razvoj, o. p. s. (Czech Republic)

Source of EU co-funding: Europe for Citizens, strand 2 - Democratic engagement and civic participation, Measure 2.2. Networks of Towns

Introduction – What's GET2IT? What is the good practice guide about?

A major challenge for all partners has been to enhance citizen involvement in local actions and democratic processes. Citizens rely on public authorities as the main (& sometimes only) entity that can create changes in the community. As a result, many citizens refrain from taking initiative. GET2IT focuses on encouraging citizen-driven actions; meaning that activities focus on having citizens take an active role as volunteers and initiators in planning/managing actions that improve local conditions. With this in mind, the main aim of the project is to create a transnational network of towns that focuses on enhancing citizen engagement in local actions based on the principles of volunteering and solidarity.

The project is organized as 5 events (in Croatia, Serbia, Italy, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) that focus on building citizens' understanding on how to plan & manage actions that contribute to inclusive growth.

Through the project, we ultimately want citizens to be more open to, and interested in, volunteering.

By presenting regional good practices in volunteering to you in this guide, we intend to show you how you can be active, get involved in local actions, and create initiatives that contribute to making communities more vibrant, inclusive and sustainable. Each chapter details how volunteers are contributing to raising the quality of life in certain ways in the partner countries (Croatia, Serbia, Italy, Slovenia and the Czech Republic).

We hope that these good practices encourage you to become volunteers in your community.

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CROATIA



Volunteering as a way to Boost Education and Employment

Get2IT is led by **Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin (POU Varaždin)**, located in the City of Varaždin, Croatia. The City of Varaždin prides itself as a region that takes control of its own affairs, and does what it takes to ensure that the quality of life continuously improves. Volunteering is promoted as a means for citizens to get their “foot in the door.” It is regarded as a means for citizens to gain new experiences, talents and skill sets that enable them to access education and employment opportunities.

POU Varaždin, as a community-oriented public education institution, contributes to volunteer efforts regionally. It plays an important role in ensuring that Varaždin's citizens gain the knowledge and skills needed to participate in volunteer initiatives, and create fulfilling careers on the labour

market. Since 2014, POU Varaždin has managed the programme “**Leaders for the Development and Implementation of EU Projects**,” which trains citizens to prepare and lead EU projects in their communities. Many of the persons that have taken part in the program volunteer in civil society organizations regionally. They have applied



the competencies they gained in the programme to manage volunteer actions. Over 100 persons have completed the course; many of whom have been able to find work connected to EU funds in their communities. Apart from this course, POU Varaždin is providing citizens the skills and knowledge required to become entrepreneurs through the **Academy of Entrepreneurship (AzP)**. The skills that participants gain in leadership,

leading EU co-funded projects that promote volunteering regionally. **FOI's Centre for Supporting Students and Career Development** is currently leading the EU project "**Study4Career**." The project focuses on giving students early career development opportunities (via practicums and volunteer opportunities). Its main premise puts practical work experience first over theory (work-based learning model). The project puts students in direct contact with companies by applying new models to education. This has improved the current practices and techniques used to engage students in the world of work.

Education institutions are not the only entities that contribute to civil society and volunteering regionally. **The Red Cross of Varaždin County** and its volunteer teams are renowned for their role in disaster relief and rescue operations. In addition to this role, volunteer teams in Varaždin County are responding to cases connected to COVID-19, domestic violence and suicide. In these situations, communication and negotiation skills are essential in ensuring positive outcomes. Red Cross Volunteers are thoroughly trained in intervention techniques relating to specific crisis scenarios. They also participate in regular education that ensures that they can provide emergency assistance to persons in need. By gaining these skills, persons volunteering at the Red Cross gain the

communications, finance, and business planning have been used by participants not only to form new businesses, but also to organize local initiatives that contribute to improving the quality of life in the Varaždin region.

Another education institution in Varaždin that plays an important role in promoting volunteering and community development is the Faculty of Informatics of the University of Zagreb (FOI). **The Centre for Volunteering and Humanitarian Work** FOI serves as a platform that connects FOI's students with civil society actions in the community. In recent years, the centre has organized actions relating to intergenerational solidarity, COVID-19 support, support for victims of disasters, etc. FOI is also developing and



competencies, experience and know-how to find employment in civil protection and healthcare related fields.

Outside of Varazdin, there are other volunteer initiatives that are contributing to efforts to enhance education and employment conditions. The **NGO “Brodoto” in Zagreb** is

development of crowdfunding in Croatia for the 2020-25 period. In the City of Karlovac, the **NGO “Carpe Diem”** (a volunteer-based organization focusing on youth) has been managing the project **“Job Club for Youth.”** Through this action, unemployed youth in Karlovac have been able to gain soft skills and

know-how relating to job searching via seminars and workshops with employers. They have also been able to reach out to employers in the region via an online platform that provides employers with the profiles and CVs of unemployed persons in the region. The project contributed to improving the job

search skills of 200 unemployed young persons. Since the project has contributed to improving employment conditions regionally, the model is now being applied to other cities and regions throughout Croatia.

Overall, volunteering serves as a reliable method that improves education and employment conditions in Croatia.

working as a partner on the INTERREG project **“CROWD-FUND-PORT”** in order to raise the capacities of citizens and civil society organizations to manage crowd-funding initiatives. Brodoto has been able to identify obstacles in developing a crowdfunding ecosystem in Croatia. They have published a manual on the topic, and have worked with 20 teams to write an action plan for the further



SERBIA

Enhancing Tourism and Cultural Activities with the help of Volunteers



The partners from Serbia on the project "GET2IT" are the Tourist Organization of Sremska Mitrovica – TO SM (located in Sremska Mitrovica and serving the City of Sremska Mitrovica) and RRA Srem – Regional Development Agency Srem (located in Ruma, Serbia and serving the entire Srem Region). Both organizations work together along with other entities regionally in order to protect cultural and historical heritage and promote Srem as a tourist destination.

Volunteering plays an important role in the actions of both partners. Each year TO SM organizes the Festival „Imperial Sirmium - The City of Legends“ in Sremska Mitrovica, which promotes the Roman heritage of Sremska Mitrovica, which was known in Roman times as Sirmium and was the capital of the Roman Empire. It is held over three days in August every year. The main goal is to mobilize and unite a large number of creative people, individuals, cultural

institutions, schools, NGOs, associations, and the private and public sectors. This is achieved through team work and a well-created and interactive programme. Stories and legends from the Roman past come to life through the Roman legionary camp, a colourful parade through the city streets, and theatre plays; workshops of ancient crafts and skills, roman food and beverages tasting; competition in rhetoric, Roman dance, gladiator fights,



Roman school for children and so on. The event is supported by more than 20 local volunteer-based associations. Each year over 300 volunteers dedicate their time, energy and knowledge to organizing the festival. They work as tourist guides, conduct maintenance and clean-up, provide information to visitors, etc. By participating in the organization of the festival, volunteers also gain new competencies and knowledge regarding event organization and tourism. As a result of the festival, there are tens of thousands of new tourists coming to Sremska Mitrovica to experience its culture, diversity and energy. This result is contributing to sustainable economic growth, new employment opportunities and a more-tightly knit community.

In addition to promoting its Roman heritage, the City of Sremska Mitrovica and TO SM supports organizers of other annual festivals such as: Srem Folk Fest, The Piano Festival, String Fest. These are the largest and most important music festivals in the region. Apart from these, the smaller scale festivals include the Festival of Choirs, Festival of Rhetoric, SM Jazz & blues spring fest, Magical square, Kolo of Srem, and the Wine park are also organized annually. Some of these last 3-5 days each year and showcase the traditional music, cultural assets, and heritage of the Srem region (e.g. Srem Folk Fest) while some (The Piano Festival and String Fest) represent competitions in the area of music art. These events are organized in coordination with several other local NGOs and institutions, and rely on the efforts of volunteers to make them possible annually. Volunteers help performers, distribute materials, welcome visitors and guide them through the city, contribute to maintenance and clean-up and other aspects. Thousands of new visitors come to the city each year to

participate in these events. These festivals contribute greatly to enhancing the quality of life regionally. They contribute to enhancing the cultural aspects, promote multiculturalism, tolerance, and raise awareness on other European values. They also contribute to boosting business in tourism-related sectors (accommodation, crafts, creative sectors, etc.).

The City of Sremska Mitrovica, TO SM and RRA Srem respect the contribution of volunteers and they are treated as esteemed members of the organisational teams. It is clear that without volunteers, such serious and complex events could not be so well and successfully organized.

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ITALY

Engaging Young Volunteers in the most Important Issues



The public education institution **Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria"** and the **Municipality of Caviago (Comune di Caviago)** located in the Region of Emilia-Romagna in northern Italy are partners on the project. The Municipality and La Cremeria work together closely on issues relating to education and the engagement of young persons in local activities.

For the Municipality, it is essential that young persons are included in community activities and actions so that the

development of Caviago is sustainable, and it benefits current and future generations. In order to engage young persons in local issues



and make them a part of the solution, the municipality in cooperation with La Cremeria

and 7 other local-level CSOs have developed the programme “**Educare: a question of community (Educare, una questione di comunità).**” The main aim of the programme is to connect adults and teenagers (young persons under the age of 18). It focuses on building solidarity between groups in addressing local development issues, promotes volunteering, creates dialogue among groups, and includes marginalized groups in democratic processes. Through meetings, conferences, seminars, planning sessions, etc. the programme has resulted in setting up a formal dialogue between younger persons and the wider population. Through the exchanges that have taken place through Educare, social projects managed by volunteers including a theatre laboratory, tutoring for youth with learning difficulties, job shadowing for youth in social services, support groups for women in difficult situations, and the town’s annual festival “Festival di Comunita” have been successfully organized. The initiative has essentially created a platform for volunteer actions. It allows citizens to share views, perspectives and knowledge. This in turn ensures that volunteer actions are inclusive and address the needs of all citizens. In addition to Educare, other local initiatives in Cavriago focus on reaching out to youth. One issue of importance to Cavriago and other municipalities in the wider region is environmental protection. **The Cavriago**

CAVRIAGO LAND ART

a cura di Gaia Bertani e Nicla Ferrarini
con la presentazione di Ivan Cantoni

L'EVENTO È INSERITO ALL'INTERNO DEL PROGETTO
“AUTUNNO D'ARTE E BELLEZZA”



Plastic Free Association is a volunteer-based organization that focuses on engaging young persons aged 13 to 18 in environmental protection. The organization was actually formed during a school strike for climate, where young persons were asked “what can we do in a small way?” The Association regularly organizes clean-up actions where volunteers are gathering plastic waste and cleaning specific public places. In addition to those events and actions, the association regularly leads campaigns that aim to build citizen awareness on how waste can be reduced in the community. Overall, by giving young persons the opportunity and means to express their



views, participate in local issues, and volunteer, Cavriago has been able to balance its development, and develop citizen-centred solutions that are sustainable, inclusive and innovative.

SLOVENIA

Volunteering as a Means to Bring Generations Together



The partner from Slovenia on the project is **LUP – Ljudska Univerza Ptuj** which is a publicly-owned adult education center located in Ptuj, Slovenia. LUP works with the Municipal government of Ptuj, NGOs, other schools and institutions to ensure that citizens gain access to educational programmes that contribute to enhancing their quality of life. One particular issue that LUP has focused on in recent years is improving the quality of life for senior citizens.

LUP is the lead partner of the project “**DAC - Digital Assistance Centre.**” This centre was created to address the growing need for digital literacy among senior citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. As everyone has seen, the threats connected to transmitting the COVID-19 virus has forced local and

regional governments in Europe to prevent physical contact between people, initiate lockdowns, and even restrict travel between cities and towns. One of the most impacted groups are elderly persons, who are more vulnerable to infection and physical isolation, and more limited in mobility. With this in mind, the DAC’s main goal is to empower the elderly (as well as persons with disabilities) by increasing their digital literacy; and thus, raise their competencies to use modern devices and services, including smartphones, computers and the Internet. This allows them to communicate, track expenses and be more connected with the wider community. The centre applies two main approaches – Consulting/counselling and information provision. The counselling/consulting is conducted via workshops where elderly

persons learn ICT basics, which allows them to connect with essential services and loved ones more easily in this difficult period. Information provision is provided via targeted media tools which aim to debunk myths about digital devices and enhance awareness about how digital tools can be used on a regular basis. Another important part of this project is the training of volunteer mentors. The mentors assist and support elderly persons in using and accessing digital tools. After completing the training, a peer-to-peer network will be setup so volunteers can support elderly persons directly in their efforts to use digital tools to improve their quality of life. 75 elderly persons (including 30 persons with disabilities) have been trained through the project.

Apart from LUP's projects, other institutions in Slovenia are also organizing initiatives that take into account the educational needs of the elderly, and that train volunteers to assist them. The **Network of Slovenian Universities for the Third Life Period – Mreža SUTŽO** has organized a video lecture series and literature under the project “**Mentoring Competencies (Kompetence za mentorstvo)**” in order to train volunteers/mentors on how to stimulate elderly persons to participate in educational programmes and plan

education for elderly persons in various fields. By participating in this educational program, mentors gained new and fresh experiences, which have been very important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when we cannot have personal contacts, it is very important to take advantage of the opportunities offered by ICT and digital tools. This is one of the reasons why teaching older people about the correct and safe use of the Internet is so important. During lockdown, citizens (especially senior citizens) have been connected to each other, even those from different generations. Citizens think of others and maintain mutual ties, optimism, friendship and stay active thanks to enhanced



use of digital tools. Volunteers that are assisting seniors to continue on with their daily lives via assistance in digital learning have contributed greatly to keeping citizens together in solidarity in these uncertain times.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Volunteers Reaching out to the Most Vulnerable Groups



The partner from the Czech Republic on the project is **Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s. (Institute of Regional Development – IRD)**, located in Prague 6, Czech Republic. IRD works with local authorities in the Prague area, CSOs, public bodies & students to ensure actions meet the needs of various stakeholder groups. In order to ensure that actions are sustainable and inclusive, IRD encourages citizens to volunteer in local actions. IRD works with youth, Roma persons, the long-term unemployed and migrants to ensure that they gain unimpeded access to public services in line with European values.

In recent years, the IRD has focused on issues relating to migration. As a result of the surge

in the number of migrants arriving in Europe in 2014, many public service systems were suddenly overwhelmed. Many migrants



coming to Europe lacked information on their rights, available services and information in their languages. Within the project "**SafeLabour**", the IRD and its partnership created information support centres that provide information about public services and support to migrants arriving in Europe. Within the programmes created, volunteers play an important role in providing information and support to migrants so that they are able to integrate and access their fundamental human rights. Apart from that project, the IRD has also trained young volunteer activists in their efforts to destigmatise the perception that most European citizens have towards migrants. Through the training and networking between organizations in the Europe for Citizens project "**You Are Welcome**" (lead partner: Jugend- & Kulturprojekt e.V. from Germany; IRD is a partner), volunteers learned how to communicate with the general public and build positive perceptions towards

migrants who are in need of help by establishing a nation-wide database of volunteers. Each year, 2000 to 3000 migrants are granted refugee status in the Czech Republic. Many of these persons are unaware of their rights, how to access services and lack contact with other citizens. As a result of the project, volunteers and persons from the migrant population have been able to easily connect and share knowledge. Volunteers registered in the project act as mentors to newly arrived migrants and in this way, they have contributed to their integration in the wider community.

A part from resolving issues relating to migration, volunteer initiatives are also improving the quality of life of children from difficult backgrounds (i.e., foster children, youth with criminal histories, children living in poverty, etc.). In the project "**Program Pet P**", led by **HESTIA Centre for Volunteers** in numerous Prague municipalities, volunteers receive training and are assigned to work directly with specific children. They visit with them at least once a week and their main task is to listen to their issues, help them to find solutions, and if needed find appropriate help for

them. In this way, these children gain support geared towards their needs and this in turn contributes to boosting their self-confidence. By applying the concept of volunteering to issues facing vulnerable groups in the Czech Republic, progress has been made in improving the quality of life in the wider community and bringing together citizens from different backgrounds.

migrant populations. This project covered 10 European countries.

Apart from the efforts of IRD, other institutions, NGOs, and public bodies that IRD networks with regularly promote social inclusion in the Czech Republic. The **UN Refugee Agency – UNHCR** is managing the project "**iDobrovolník**". The project aims to coordinate people who want to help migrants and



Who can I contact for more information?

In order to gain additional information about the project and its activities, we encourage you to contact POU Varaždin (the lead partner) and the partners:

We look forward to hearing from you! Let's work together!

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