

USE YOUR POWER



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ABOUT THE PROJECT

We live in a society where everyone is familiar with the notions like democracy, human rights, gender equality, freedom of speech. But do we live in a democratic society where everyone is respecting each other's opinions? Is every one of us aware of the right to stand up and speak out for his/her own rights? How can we use our power as citizens and make a change for our society? The participants of the youth exchange "Use your power" that was held in Strumica, North Macedonia as part of the Erasmus+ program supported by the European Union, tried to answer these questions.

The youth exchange was organized by CIA NOVUS and brought together young people from five different countries: North Macedonia, Slovenia, Italy, Poland, and Romania with different cultural and religious backgrounds, different opinions, ideas, and experiences. During the youth exchange, the participants had the opportunity to learn more about their basic human rights, to discuss the role of the government, NGOs, media in society and to share positive examples from their countries. Through a lot of games, discussions, and debates, they learned how to raise their voice and how to address the problems they are facing. The main event was the action "Use your voice" held in the city center where the participants raised their voices and in discussion with the local people talked about the current issues in the city such as hate speech, fake news, pollution...

The youth exchange aimed to make the participants more aware of the power they have in society and the right ways and methods to use it to make a positive change in their local communities. The participants also had the opportunity to get to know the region of Strumica by visiting natural sights such as the Smolari waterfall and the springs in Mokrino. They got familiar with the city of Strumica during the treasure hunt activity during which they got acquainted with the competencies of the youth pass certificate.

Organizations

The Center for Research and Analysis NOVUS



NOVUS is a non-governmental organization established on 30.01.2013 in Strumica. The main areas of work are focused on the field of youth, informal education, improvement and rising the social status and awareness of the citizens and youth, with special emphasis on protection and affirmation of basic human rights and freedoms. The main focus of the association is young people and the promotion of European values, principles and the encouragement of the local economic development.



Association ELIOS – Italy

Association Elios is a non-profit organization based in Sicily, Italy active since 2007 in the field of youth, volunteering, sport, and active citizenship. The organization is very active in the field of youth mobility (Youth in Action & Erasmus+ Program) and is a sending and receiving organization for youngsters between 18 and 35 years old. It has a lot of experience as a partner for projects abroad and as coordinator, started to organize international projects since 2010.

Organizations

Foundation IRSE – Poland



The mission of the Foundation IRSE is to create favorable conditions for development of informal education and dissemination of lifelong learning concepts.



Onix Youth Association – Romania

The Onix Youth Association, founded in July 2010, aimed from the very beginning to approach a diverse range of activities, with reference to the various individual and social problems existing at local and even European level. In this sense, the organization has enjoyed a continuous evolution, so today is able to boast the involvement of over 2000 young people from the local community and neighboring local communities regarding problems of interest. Onix adds series of European projects brilliantly represented by members, in two of the projects being beneficiary and coordinator.



Student Tolar Foundation – Slovenia

The basic purpose of the Student Tolar Foundation, an institution of the SOU in Ljubljana, is to help students of the University of Ljubljana in need with various forms of assistance such as non-refundable financial and material resources, language courses, professional courses, sport courses, free psychotherapy sessions and other forms of assistance and education.

PARTICIPANTS



YOUNG PEOPLE FROM NORTH MACEDONIA, ITALY, SLOVENIA, POLAND AND ROMANIA GATHERED IN STRUMICA IN ORDER TO TALK ABOUT YOUTH ACTIVISM AND THE INITIATIVES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN TAKE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.



Ice Breakers and Team Building activities

On the first day of our youth exchange we had ice breakers and team-building activities in order to get to know each other.

First, we started with the “Mission impossible”, a game that consisted in few activities such as:

- Make a group photo
- Make a paper tower
- Write a sonnet with words: mango, Roberto, Macedonia, czeburek
- Draw a map of Europe with the countries
- Draw a logo of the project with the first letter of the participants' names

After we finished the activity successfully, we continued with another game consisting of mutually drawing portraits. Everyone was having fun during this activity!

We finished the first day with a short representation of our organizations and a short discussion about their roles and activities. We also shared our own experiences as members or volunteers within these organizations.



Debates and discussions



We all know how important it is for a young person to openly share his/her own opinions in daily life. But more important is how these opinions will get to a wider audience. In order to achieve that, we need good, reasoned arguments so we can stand up for our rights and ideas. This all leads to debating skills. Debating can help us develop critical thinking which can be essential in everyday situations. During the youth exchange, we had two activities that helped us improve our debating skills.

In the first activity, the participants formed small debating groups, after hearing the topic and had a few minutes of choosing the side – who is for and who is against the topic. Then, two participants were chosen from both groups and they had the same amount of time to express their opinions and arguments. The topics included a lot of current issues like migrants, violence, human rights, freedom of speech...

During the second activity, all the participants were divided into 2 groups. The one group was supporting the idea that privileged groups in society should have duties toward disadvantaged groups in order to support them. The other group was against it. Then, they improvised a small Roman Senate. Every group has chosen 3 participants that were the voice of the group and they presented one of the two Consuls. The rest of the participants were part of the Senate. After the two Consuls finished debating, the members of the Senate had the chance to vote for one of the Consuls.

All the participants enjoyed these two activities, and what is more important, they learned that in order to be able to raise their voices, they first need to have good arguments and to be able to debate with others.

Simulation games and role plays

We did simulation games and role-plays where we tried to put ourselves in other people's shoes. During one of the games, we discussed the role of media, government, NGO and citizens in the society.

In order to understand them better, we discussed their roles and mutual expectations. The activity helped the participants to be more aware of the power that each of these groups has. Working in four groups, all the participants had the opportunity to “be in the shoes” of one of these groups even for a short period. This is the conclusion of the activity.

1. Citizens

The role of citizens is, first of all, to cooperate with the institutions, pay taxes, obey the law, respect each other's rights, care for the environment and be aware of voting rights.

2. Media

Media has a huge role in the democratic society, especially in terms of informing the society, spreading awareness, being a tool for sharing content and opinions, and supervising government decisions. Media transparency is one of the key factors in modern society. The media should present unbiased and truthful sources of information. They should bring not only quality in the content but diversity as well. In other words, the media should educate people, inform objectively, and try to avoid publishing fake news.

3. Government

The governmental institutions have the task to provide leadership and maintain order in society. Their main role is to provide national security and economic stability. To make decisions in a transparent way and to give people a voice for every decision. They should also try to include more young people and people with fewer opportunities in the process of making decisions.

4. NGO

We all are aware of the fact that NGOs play a critical part in developing society and promoting citizen participation. In order to improve the community, NGO activities should include social, advocacy, environmental, and human rights work. Through these activities, NGOs can have a positive social impact on society.



Community actions and main event "USE YOUR VOICE"



During the preparation phase of the city activity, our participants were divided in several groups and had a task each one of them to make research of the local community and prepare a community actions. We had continued with group work to prepare the community actions which were survey, stray dogs, hate speech, spreading positive messages, and fake news.

These city community actions were held on the 28th and 29th August, on the city center and the city area of Strumica.

Erasmus + program presentation and competences



Erasmus + promotion was done during the second city game where our participants had a presentation about the Erasmus + program, and the opportunities that this program offers to young people. We also had competence hunt around Strumica, and the opportunity not just to explore the city but to share with the people of Strumica the competencies gained during the Erasmus + youth exchange and programs.



The competencies we developed...

1

Multilingual competence

- Learned phrases in Macedonian, Italian, Polish, Romanian and Slovenian
- Improved our English which was essential for our mutual understanding and communicating

2

Personal, social and learning to learn competence

- Developed social skills
- Improved our knowledge of how to address an issue in the society
- Learned techniques of resolving conflicts and problems

3

Citizenship competence

- Learned how to care for the environment
- Understood the meaning of an “active citizen”
- Understood the importance of being informed about what happens in our own city/country

4

Entrepreneurship competence

- Improved our knowledge of social capital and market
- Learned the idea behind taking risk

Cultural awareness and expression competence

5

- Shared our traditions
- Learned a lot of things about the other cultures

Digital competence

6

- Improved our knowledge regarding IT technology
- Better usage of programs such as Excel, Word, PPT, Photoshop

7

Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering

- Developing problem-solving skills
- Aware of money currency
- Able to think in term of statistic

8

Literacy competence

- Improved our ability to express ourselves with words
- Using the right tone when spreading knowledge and information
- Being able to distinguish true from false news and facts



Intercultural activities

During the exchange we had intercultural nights as well when each group represented their country through food , dance, music and interesting facts about their country. Through these events, the participants had the opportunity to learn about other nationalities.



Macedonian intercultural night

During the Macedonian intercultural night, we watched a video about the history, culture and natural landscape in the country. There was singing and dancing as well. Afterwards, we had a quiz about topics connected to the modern culture, history and famous Macedonian musicians and moviemakers. We finished the evening with the delicious traditional Macedonian food.



Italian intercultural night

We learned a lot of things regarding Sicily during the Italian intercultural evening. The Italian participants sang a traditional song and did a little presentation of their world-famous cuisine.



Polish intercultural night

During the Polish intercultural night, the Polish participants showed us a video of their country and afterwards we played a quiz regarding Polish history and culture. At the end, we tried some of the most famous polish desserts.



Romanian intercultural night

Dressed in traditional clothes, the Romanian participants talked about their history and culture. We had the chance to hear a traditional Romanian song and watch a short video of the most famous facts about Romania.



Slovenian intercultural night

The participants from Slovenia showed us a video of their country as a short presentation. Afterwards, we tried food from the traditional Slovenian cuisine.





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