MANY PATHS,
ONE GOAL.

Erasmus+

E-BOOKLET ON
SOCIAL INCLUSION

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KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

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VILLAGEMYTHBUSTERS

ACTIVE YOUTH

MANY PATHS,
ONE GOAL.

Erasmus+

YOUTH EXCHANGE

VILLAGE MYTH BUSTERS

18–26 AUGUST, 2017
KAUNAS, LITHUANIA

PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

LITHUANIA
LATVIA
ROMANIA
ITALY
SPAIN
TURKEY

TRUE...ISH STORIES

Inspiration

The challenges faced by European societies are great and increasing. These vary from violence to environmental pollution, not to mention discrimination and intolerance. One of the sensitive problems that is widely seen in every EU country is social exclusion because of area of living. Namely, those living in countryside often face negative stereotypes towards them and in general a negative opinion about their lifestyle. This also applies to those, who were brought up in a rural areas.

According to a survey done prior to this application (emails sent to our partner network of 100+ organisations), city dwellers consider villagers as uneducated, not understanding technologies, and in some cases simply uncivilized. It seems that those living in the city feel like they are superior to those from the villages. Even the word "villager" has a negative meaning now in many EU countries.

As a result, young people from villages starting studies in universities and leaving parental home are faced with discrimination, negative stereotypes towards them and other challenges. This more than often than not excludes them from the social life of local communities. Naturally, they feel embarrassed to talk about their roots. The organisations that united for this project believe that there is still a lack of understanding that diversity is a natural thing in the society; that all citizens should be treated equally regardless of their origin or place of living.

Problem of stereotypes towards countryside and the ensuing social exclusion is seen all over Europe. However, after discussions with different youth organizations, it was noticed that it is especially acute in Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Turkey, Italy, and Spain. As youth workers indicate, one may find big rifts in rural and urban societies here. Therefore, youth organizations from these countries have joined-up with an aim to change the approach to- and opinion about people from countryside, minimize negative stereotypes towards them and reduce the ensuing social exclusion.

Now, we're willing to share the results of the project implemented to other youth organisations, so that the project could be replicable elsewhere.

Objectives

In order to reach the key aim of the project mentioned above, the following Objectives have been set:

1) to develop youth's understanding of social exclusion that people from the villages are facing in urban areas, as well as to provide them with specific tools and support to fight that;

2) to identify the most common stereotypes towards people whose place of origin is countryside, and find ways to reduce them;

3) to spread tolerance, strengthen equality and combat marginalisation between cities and villages;

4) to increase cooperation between villages and cities in order to create joint work, inclusion, equality and social initiatives.

Apart from teaching the youth about social exclusion and tolerance, and turning their ideas into practice, the setting of the project will also allow to: (1) boost awareness and social responsibility 2) contribute to an intercultural dialogue and social inclusion; (3) involve the youth in discussions and decision making in an international environment; (4) keep the youth active; (5) enhance communication and language. It is believed that all of this would help the participating youth to better grasp the importance of- and the benefits brought by social inclusion and equality, which are the backbone of united & prosperous Europe.

At the same time, the project aims to facilitate a discussion on social inclusion of those coming from- or living in the rural areas that would effectively reach wider audiences and promote tolerance and diversity all over Europe. This will be done by a variety of means, for instance:

1) performing small social actions/ flash-mobs in public (about stereotypes towards villagers, and how to increase their social inclusion), this will be filmed (media invited also);

2) creation of videos of the above mentioned actions; which will also include participant's experiences, comments, the ideas and the goals of the actions/flash-mobs; as well as NFE activities that lead to the creation of the actions;

3) Usage of social media, blogs and press to spread the above mentioned materials and ideas about social inclusion, tolerance and diversity to youth and other related parties;

4) Making small workshops or social actions highlighting the results of the project in all the partner countries after the youth exchange.

We hope that the project's results helped to reduce stereotypes about villagers and their social exclusion as much as possible across the participating countries and beyond.

It is suggested that for your project, you would adapt the objectives and the goals you want to achieve according to your market needs. This will help achieve the best possible learning outcomes for youth and impact to the local community.

Project's Participants

36 young people coming from 6 different countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Spain, Italy, Turkey) gathered to discuss the social problems of Europe and searched for answers and tools, which could help solve social exclusion of villagers. Most of the participants already had previous knowledge of volunteering, working with minorities and other excluded groups; thus, information sharing among them was easily facilitated. The participants were from different work fields (photography, secondary school teacher, entrepreneur, etc.) coming from different backgrounds (including disadvantaged). At the same time quite a few participants have previously volunteered in refugee-related projects, worked with minorities, disadvantaged people, etc. Thus, the knowledge gained throughout the project helped in their future initiatives. **Such composition of participants is also recommended for the project you want to implement!**

"The training was good and I really like the activities. Activities were various, in unseen performance. This will definitely help me when I'm back to volunteer in Spain!" - Ismael, Spain.

Activities

A range of non-formal activities have been implemented during the project. The range of those is really wide and should be chosen according to the market needs, the composition of your group and the current knowledge of the participants. Below you will find some examples of possible activities that were done in Lithuania (you can find the materials of those in the end of the e-booklet).

The participants were asked to make creative country workshops on combating social exclusion, make open discussion on discrimination and key points when combating it during a "World Cafe" activity, had sessions on successful photography, and more. Every evening participants had a chance to introduce their culture, history and traditional cuisine, as well as the initiatives to combat social exclusion in their countries. They not only showed videos and photos, but also made dances, songs, games and quizzes to get every participant of the project involved. All the materials for these activities can be found in the project's website: http://activeyouth.lt/village-myth-busters/.

Inviting guest speakers related to the topic is always a good way to share ideas to the participants. However, the key is to make the sessions as interactive as possible, so that the participants would discuss among themselves and learn new things from each other. During our project, the participants had a chance to meet a social photographer Tadas Kazakevičius (his photography), who showed how photography is an easy way to convey the message and how he tries to show the realities villagers have to live with. Afterwards, the participants could themselves implement the things learned while making "Rural vs Urban" photography campaigns in the city.

Videos

"**Video story**" – With all the knowledge and experience gained from the beginning of the project, participants set out to create YouTube videos that would depict stereotypical views of villagers and their life. Comedy is the main driving force when trying to spread your message as far as possible and our participants put a huge emphasis on it.

This kind of activity is always good when you want to facilitate creativity among the participants. Working in teams of different nationalities allows them to not only develop the topic well, but also to share their cultural insights through the activity. Digital competencies are also developed in this way, which really helps the participants in their future endeavors.

- ✓ "VIllage Myth Busters" project video "Realities vs truths";
- ✓ "VIllage Myth Busters" project video "What is love";
- ✓ "VIllage Myth Busters" project video "Olialia".

Trip to local village

It is up to you whether you want to base this type of a project in a village or a city; however, the key is that the participants would see both communities and could make comparisons. This would help to find the typical stereotypes of the village community and help bust them.

During our project, participants had an opportunity to visit local village and witness the hardships villagers come across on their daily basis. During the trip questionnaire was organised which helped participants deepen their knowledge on stereotypes towards villagers.

“What do You know about villages?” – During the project, we set out to Kaunas street with a simple task – ask random people about their opinions regarding life in villages. “Would you live in a village? Why?”; “What are the benefits of living in a village and the city?” – these and similar questions were asked of locals and answers were varied. Some were stereotypical while others introduced a new point of perspective for the participants. All of the results of surveys were recorded in both audio and text which can be seen below.

A. survey nr.1
B. survey nr.2
C. survey nr.3

Rural vs urban

We discovered that one of the main reasons villagers are viewed negatively is of negative impact social media creates. “Picture can speak a thousand words” – with such idea in mind we set out to the streets to see if city and villagers lives are as extreme and as different as they are shown. Do villagers live without roads? Do city dwellers live only in multi-story houses? These and a lot of different questions were raised during the project, which we tried to answer with the pictures provided below:

Current Knowledge Assessment

All the activities mentioned above where steered to one or another direction according to the knowledge of the participating group. This has to be assessed in the very beginning of the project so that activity programme could be adjusted accordingly. You can you're your knowledge assessment on the questions given below. The most popular answers the participants gave are also provided.

What do you think are the main advantages of rural life?

- Ecology
- Nature
- Calm life

What do you think are the main disadvantages of rural life?

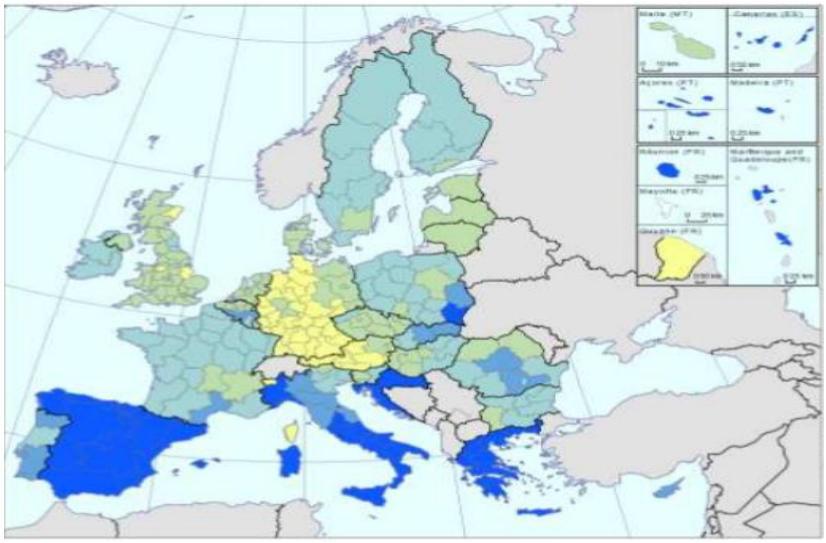
- Distance
- Lack of social life
- Less opportunities
- Low income

What are the main barriers (social, experience, knowledge, etc.) for rural youth integration into urban environment?

- Different habits
- Cultural
- Social skills
- Education

Which indicator is shown on this map (truth answer is youth unemployment rate)

- Tolerance level
- Unemployment rate in rural areas
- Urbanization



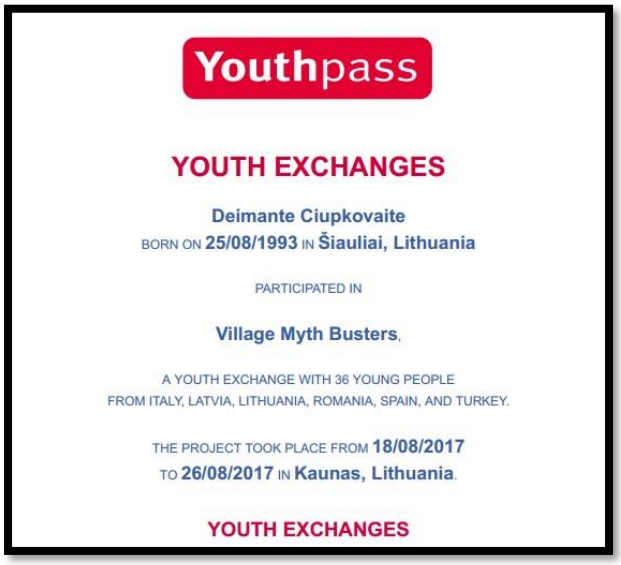
Grading your current knowledge about the rural life and areas etc. from 1 to 10, **what grade would you give to yourself**? Please put down a X or mark in some other way one of the cells below

1 – very low	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 – absolute

In the end of the project, a similar survey should be made to see the learning outcomes of the participants. On average participants, grade themselves for 4.7 in the of beginning the project. After the project more than 50% of participants grade themselves for the highest grades.

Youthpass Recognition

Youthpass is a tool for non-formal & informal learning in youth projects. It is available for projects funded by Erasmus+: Youth in Action (2014-2020) programme. It is a part of the European Commission's strategy to foster the recognition of non-formal learning, putting policy into practice and practice into policy. With Youthpass, participants of Erasmus+ projects can describe what they have done and show what they have learnt. This is a must in each youth exchange made; thus, we recommend to include it to your project too.



Read more about experiences made with Youthpass – https://www.youthpass.eu

Project's Success

Such activities should lead your project to success! In our case, the informal learning process, as well as the sharing of participant experiences among each other worked really well. As the knowledge assessment of the participants showed – the project displayed over 50% growth of knowledge about rural communities. The participants of the project were also amazed by Lithuania. The city culture as well as the beauty of countryside views left a lasting impression on them. Interactions they had with the Lithuanian participants and locals showed how different and truly amazing people can be. In their own words "I learned a lot and I didn't expect people to be so open and friendly to foreigners".

All in all, the project induced a positive effect on the participants, organisations and made an impact at the regional, national and international levels. "Village Myth Busters" is still anticipated to impact the society further. By increasing the scale and the scope of such initiatives, social problems such as discrimination towards people from villages could get the right visibility and be diminished to an extent.

Now, it is your time to shine!

Materials for Your Project

1. Schedule of the Youth Exchange.
2. Info pack of the youth exchange with all the information for participants.
3. The country workshop for participants to make interactive presentations.
4. Current knowledge assessment, which was done in the beginning of the project.
5. City game tasks and results.
6. Video creation tutorial and task.
7. Task for the survey.
8. Pop quiz.
9. How to do a survey.
10. Project's preparation - Mentoring and support.

11. Project's preparation - Participant selection task before the mobility.
12. Project's preparation - Reviewing the schedule.
13. Project's preparation - Safety key rules.
14. Project's preparation - Working with youth with fewer opportunities
15. Schedule for advanced planning visit.
16. Questions used in World Cafe discussions.
17. Evaluation of the whole project.
18. Learning agreement to be signed by the participants.
19. Travel cost reimbursement sheet provided to the participants.
20. Photo competition task.

Information about the Project on the Web / Media:

1. Participant's Pictures on Facebook.
2. Lithuanian NGO about the project
3. About the project on Official Erasmus+ web in Lithuania.
4. International coverage
5. Spanish partner about the project
6. Italian partner about the project

P.S. If you want free consultations on how to replicate the project abroad, don't hesitate to contact us via e-mail to info@activeyouth.lt.

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