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Ever vigilant, evergreen

Booklet

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The ERASMUS+ Program¹

Erasmus+ is the European Union's program for education, training, youth and sport for the period of 2014-2020. It integrates seven different programs within the EU into a more complex system, providing a strong network of cooperation amongst every branch. The current program has a budget of 14.7 billion euros and supports numerous projects throughout the continent. Thanks to a more simplified code on finances, organisations can apply for the grant easier – thus, nearly 4 million European citizens could benefit from the program. Almost 10% of the youth is eligible to apply, which means that over 500.000 young applicants can take part in the program.

According to the program, the most important aims of any project should include the following: developing key competences of the youth; increasing their presence in the democratic public life and on the job market as well; activating intercultural communication; encouraging social accepting and solidarity; forging a strong relationship between youth and the job market; improving youth work conditions; supporting youth policies; distribution of results; increasing visibility and broadening capacity for youth living in countries outside of the EU.



In Hungary, the Erasmus+ program's education and training chapters are coordinated by Tempus Public Foundation, while NCSSZI Erasmus+ Youth Program Bureau is the office for the youth chapter.



¹ Source of images in this chapter are from www.eplusifjusag.hu

Participating organisations

Associatia Turul Madar (Turul Bird Youth Bureau)

The Turul Bird Youth Bureau was founded in 2007 by three youth organisations: Erdély Magyar Ifjak (Transylvanian Hungarian Youth) from Háromszék, Dávid Ferenc Ifjúsági Egylet (Ferenc Dávid Youth Organisation) from Sepsiszentgyörgy, and the Farkas Sándor Bölöni Scout Team 115. In 2016, their team called „Turul” became the „Most youthful town of Háromszék” at a competition initiated by Regös Ifjúsági és Közművelődési Egyesület (Regös



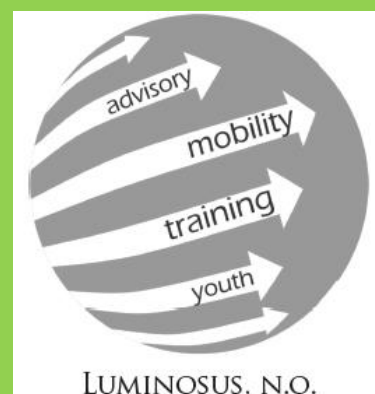
Association for Youth and Education) and Kovászna County’s Cultural Centre. Their bureau opened 26th January 2007 under the name „Turul Bird Association”, becoming a legal person in the process. Their mission is to raise a new generation of youth with a mental, spiritual and value-oriented upbringing, all within a healthy cultural community.

Their aims are:

- Operating and maintaining a local bureau for providing information to the youth;
- Preserving and passing down local values and customs;
- developing the personality of youth from Háromszék
- Organising regional youth programs: preserving spiritual health; organising family-centred activities; volunteering; nurturing talent; offering scholarships; educating; preserving customs; organising cultural events
- Forging and improving relationships on local, regional and international levels to serve the youth’s needs

Luminosus, n.o.

Luminosus n.o. is a non-profit organisation founded in 2008 with the aim of helping Bodroghöz and the Ung region to make significant societal, social and cultural progress. Their main activities include the organisation of English language courses (for every age group at every level), the organisation of seminars and conferences, tender monitoring/ writing/ implementing, counselling in EU training programs and tenders. They also



closely cooperate with European host institutions participating in the Life Long Learning – Leonard da Vinci program, plus they function as an ECL regional language centre. The organisation has been working with and for the youth for long years, keeping a close eye on their job market opportunities, while also trying to insure their future, be it their homeland or abroad. They have many years of experience in organising youth exchange programs. Luminosos have organised an Erasmus+ program in Slovakia in 2017, and they also participated in several other programs as partner organisations, both of which providing the necessary amount of experience needed for organising a youth exchange program.

Fundacja Szkoła z Kultúra- 'Szkoła z Kultúra' Foundation

“Szkoła z Kultúra” is a foundation started back in 2015. Its main aim is to support educational activities in the schools of Jablonka, with a particular focus on culture and sport. This also motivates and supports students to take part in volunteering work.

Students collect donations, clothes and food for those in need. However, the aim is not only to help people but animals as well. Youth taking part in the project are truly involved in the issue of animal rights and they would also like to share their experiences with youth from other European countries.

The school also organises events themed around ecology in order to raise the youth’s awareness about humanity’s impact on the environment (global warming, pollution etc.). Personnel actively engaging in the work of the foundation are teachers of the school complex. Many of them teach subjects related to a specific profession (economy, cooking, architecture etc.). Apart from implementing their lesson plans, every teacher of the school complex plus those teachers who take part in the work of Szkoła z Kultura Foundation educate their students and raise awareness to topics such as animal rights and the fight against animal cruelty. One of the team leaders in the project is an English teacher who is also responsible for maintaining cooperation with other countries’ organisations, and who has taken part in numerous professional trainings which focussed on issues such as the improvement of youth employment and finding partners for future projects.



Kárpátikum Közhasznú Alapítvány

Eger-based Kárpátikum Közhasznú Alapítvány was founded in 2006 and currently has 5 affiliates in other counties apart from the headquarters. Its projects focus on the following areas:

Researching and spreading the innovative methods of regional development. Helping closing up those regions lagging behind socially and economically by applying well-

known and well-working examples from the European Union in local environments and also by mobilising the youth and strengthening their social responsibility.

Forming a nature- and society-friendly mindset within the communities in the Carpathian basin; strengthening a sense of national belonging. Both aims revolve around activities focussing on training and motivating the youth.

The organisation has already realised several, mainly sustainability related programs: popularising renewable energy sources, training regional developers, developing underdeveloped local regions, supporting cross-border Hungarians, photo contests, popularising environmental protection and organising camps.



Accommodation

Várkút Tourist Lodging and Kóborló Hostel

The accommodation is located on the Southern slopes of the Bükk mountain range, right between Eger and Noszvaj, in the heart of Bükk National Park in a picturesque glade. While choosing the location, we were impressed by the clean air, the serene environment and the friendly hosts of the venue.

It was particularly important to pick a venue that offers locations for both outdoor activities and also indoor programs – fortunately, we found both in Várkút.

We could also cook in the garden of the Tourist Lodging, making it a perfect location for the cultural nights.



Ever vigilant, evergreen

We chose the slogan “Ever vigilant, evergreen” as a name of our project, which was realised jointly by three organisations: Kárpátikum Közhasznú Alapítvány (Kárpátikum Public Interest Foundation) from Eger, Asociația Turul Madar (Turul Bird Youth Bureau), Luminosos, n.o., and finally Szkola z Kultura Foundation. Over the course of the 10-day-long youth exchange program a grand total of 48 members took part (12 per organisation) in



Noszvaj Várkút in May 2018. The majority of the youth came from either geographically or economically underdeveloped regions, and showed great interest in solving environmental issues upon volunteering to take part in the youth exchange program. Main goals of the program aimed to shape an environmentally conscious mindset and to improve their skills and abilities while also creating a positive attitude in the participants. Community building received extra attention during the program – youth learnt that in an ideal community solving problems are much easier, this way also motivating them to do the same upon returning to their homes. The reason why community building was put in the limelight is that our aim was to help youth see that problems can be sorted out much quicker and easier with the right people.

Our topics included the following: rural development, environmental protection, the power of communities. Another aim of the project was to encourage environmental consciousness, thus helping participants to shape their conduct and way of living at the same time.

It was our priority to help the youth acquire knowledge that can have practical use in the future. We themed our programs around more informal activities (ice-breakers, teambuilding exercises, tasks improving creativity) and the more professional ones (workshops focussing on the main subject of the youth exchange). It was our top priority to employ non-formal and informal learning methods. Once the exchange program’s agenda was completed, every participant received their personal Youthpass certificate.

Key competences learnt during the program

Over the course of the youth exchange program participating youth could acquire useful and practical professional experience. We utilised non-formal and informal exercises and methods to ensure that every single participant can acquire the most relevant competences, broaden their knowledge about the topic and gather practical professional skills during the exchange program.

Various activities and programs helped the youth to learn playfully how they could become determined, real entrepreneurs. They had the chance to acquire competences and professional knowledge that they can utilise later on in their lives – even in an own business.



While planning the project we put an extra emphasis on designing activities in a way that the participants could

benefit from them. We helped to develop each competency with the help of non-formal and informal activities. With the help of these activities we wished to improve the following competences of the partaking youth:

1. Technological and natural sciences related competencies
2. Entrepreneurial competence
3. Foreign language competences
4. Communicational competences
5. Interpersonal competence



One of our main aims was to build positive emotional ties between the youth and their immediate environment. This was done by acquiring experience during the various exercises and also as a result of the joint workshops.

During these workshop, social skills were also improved.

Every element of the program was conducted in English, thus ensuring that every participant has the opportunity to practice and improve a foreign language.



The program itself

Day 1

Once every organisation arrived, everyone checked in and took care of the administrative tasks. Participants received a briefing about the exchange program's agenda and listened to the safety training, plus everyone also received a T-shirt, a mug, a canvas bag, a keychain, a pen and a notebook.



The first event on our agenda was the introduction of the organisations. They all used short presentations and answered the audience's questions as well. After lunch, various exercises helped participants get to know each other a little bit better and to learn each other's names. Following the activities, our hosts led us through the accommodation and its surroundings.



Organisers prepared various teambuilding activities for the first night. Everyone was looking forward to it, and once it was over, we wrapped up the daily agenda with self-reflection, which was done at the end of each day. Participants finished the day chatting and shortly after they all went to bed.



Day 2



We had talked through the weekly agenda in the morning and elected the responsible personnel for each program. A presentation was delivered about the Erasmus+ program and its opportunities. Participants formed small groups to discuss the goals of the exchange program, their own plans and how

to implement them. They talked about their shared goals and clarified the differences between the terms of the exchange program to have a better grasp of the exchange's topic.

Shortly after, one of the volunteers used interactive presentation techniques to teach participants about the methodology of the program.

Participants planted flowers in the flowerbeds surrounding the accommodation, thus making the vicinity of the hostel even more cosy.



At the evening, our Romanian partner organisation got the chance to showcase the culinary and cultural values of their country to us.

Day 3

Participants took a short walk around the accommodation and collected all the things they didn't like (trash, dog waste, the number of cars, picked or torn flowers), plus they also listed the things they liked about the landscape. Moreover, they got the chance to learn about the opportunities offered by the forests and fields. All the above greatly contributed to the improvement of natural science related and technological competences.



After lunch, participants could demonstrate how much they remembered from the morning sessions. They planned their own sustainable, green economies and their promotional material in a group workshop event. The joint session gave birth to several creative ideas, some of which were displayed on posters or phrased in the form of short, catchy slogans.



At the end of the day and following the reflection, our Slovakian partner organisation held a cultural night for every participant.

Day 4

We kick-started the day with a workshop where participants could learn about the key features of an environmentally conscious customer. Tasks included the following: developing a more environmentally conscious mindset; learning about a way of living that focusses on material and energy saving – all by practising conscious shopping.



The next program was the “litter harvest”, where the youth could analyse the waste piled up during the exchange program. Apart from this, participants discussed the possible ways of decreasing or recycling waste.



Following lunch, a workshop and a more creative activity that involved drawing were held. Participants designed energy saving villages and town with the use of various renewable energy sources. This day’s agenda ended with the cultural night held by Kárpátikum Foundation.



Day 5

This day, the youth engaged in various situational exercises which all focussed on recycling and frugality.

We kicked off the day with an engaging interactive presentation by Dr Árpád Dávid, who spoke about the different types of rocks and minerals – at the end, participants could see and touch them as well. Thanks to the lecturer's generous offering, everyone could pick one tiny piece of mineral to bring home as a souvenir.

Following Dr Dávid's presentation we summarised the halftime results of the exchange program in the form of a roundtable discussion. Keeping some of the advice received as feedback, we amended the upcoming days' agenda.



The afternoon was about taking long walks: first, in the town of Egerszalók where we visited the unique cave-flats, and second in Eger, where we had an engaging activity in which participants used maps and quizzes to learn more about the most precious and protected parts of the city. We discussed issues related to environmental protection and sustainability during the brief excursion. Before returning to the program's venue, participants joined a presentation about the importance of purchasing local goods delivered by Mercédesz Németh, Kárpátikum Foundation's volunteer at the local university. The day's program was complete with the cultural night of the Polish partner organisation.



Day 6

After the morning stretching exercises, participants started sketching their own businesses. While working in smaller groups, they had to come up with a business idea in agriculture that could potentially create new vacancies. The plans were later presented in front of everyone. The aim of the activity was to improve the youth's way of thinking and strengthen their creativity – all by recalling previously acquired knowledge.

Participants listened to a “tale” about the natural beauties, told by one of the locals. The storyteller then proceeded to help participants create their first mandala, made out of twigs, pebbles and seeds.



The group discovered the values and beauties of the Bükk mountain range while taking a short excursion on one of the tourist paths.

Upon arriving back to the venue, the youth could showcase a previously prepared set of folk songs and music, thus elevating the positive atmosphere of the evening.

Participants also had the chance to try their skills in a baking contest – the jury evaluated the scrumptious desserts, and once the winners were announced, everyone could taste the cookies.



Day 7

Participants visited the Aggtelek National Park in the morning, where they could discover the natural wonders of the region.



Later that afternoon, a lecturer from the Eszterházy Károly University spoke about exciting novelties and interesting facts in a seminar called “Water on Mars”.



This day’s program was finished with a movie night in which different short films and clips were shown about environmental protection and selective waste collection.

Day 8

We started the day with a roundtable discussion and explored the different environmental and natural problems we have to face. Results of the session were posted on the wall, thus creating a so-called problem-tree. All participants actively engaged and enjoyed the exercise a lot.

Following the workshop, participants drew their “river of life” and they shared what their predictions are for the future regarding their own lives, plus they also exchanged their ideas and gave advice to one another.



The youth formed smaller groups in the afternoon to phrase their mutual goals, which – later on – they used for creating the concept of a green economy, and putting together some promotional material for it.



We ended the day by taking a walk in the Bükk range where we analysed and talked about the natural values we ought to protect.

Day 9

The penultimate day was kicked off with designing posters so that the effects of the exchange program could be visible from every angle. Following this exercise, participants planned a good practice that focusses on sustainability in a roundtable discussion. They phrased their questions and agreed on the various tasks based on the knowledge they had acquired earlier during the exchange program.



Following the roundtable discussion participants filled out the feedback sheets, providing valuable input on the effects of the youth exchange program for the organisers.

The end of the day was about farewells – participants discussed how they could further develop the program, they exchanged contact cards and did a lot of brainstorming about the possibility of future cooperation.



Day 10

The last day was about summarising what we had learnt. Participants shared their experiences from the projects, filled out quizzes measuring the professional knowledge which also helped us to gauge the success of the exchange program. Following that, we jointly evaluated the results of the quizzes. The remaining time was about discussing the afterlife of the project. We talked to great lengths about the program's results and came up with a rough outline of this booklet as well. Every participant received their Youthpass certificate, which was also filled in every day during the exchange program. Once we had discussed the topic of the next youth exchange, future cooperation and other possibilities, everyone left the venue with valuable experiences and memories.



Feedback and experience from the participants

“Unfortunately I had never had the chance to attend such an event. At first I was a little bit shy but I shook it off as the days passed by. My favourite program was when we listened to that tale about nature and prepared our own mandala. I would have never thought that you can create such amazing things out of stuff like pebbles, twigs and seeds. I’ll definitely prepare another one once I get home! If I have to pick my favourite indoor activity, it has to be that exercise when we had to create our own green economy. Should I start a business in the future, I’ll definitely make good use of the things I learnt and experienced here?” (youth from Upper Hungary)

“The exchange program enabled us to experience how a truly organised program looks like – something I hadn’t really had the opportunity to take part in. We had interesting activities all the way – we hiked, prepared our own mandala, and visited the local university. We have visited the unique cave flats and also listened to the stories about them. We also had cultural nights where we could taste the local specialities of each country. We played plenty of teambuilding games so that we can forge a cooperative team. I totally loved it. It felt like we were one big family, and every activity was organised well – all in the picturesque location of Noszvaj.” (youth from Transylvania)



Over the course of the exchange program we had acquired useful experience about topics related to environmental protection and Hungary’s natural wonders. I loved that we could basically ask anything from our “lecturers” during the discussions. Having arrived from Poland, it was delightful to visit Eger and its vicinity, which was made even more unforgettable thanks to a colourful group of participants. We still keep in touch and I honestly hope we’re going to meet at some point in the future.” (youth from Poland)

On behalf of Kárpátikum Foundation, we’re grateful for all who participated. We feel that new friendships and possible future cooperation were forged amongst the participants. We honestly hope that we will meet, work and learn in the future and that the experience we acquired during this exchange program can be used in our lives both as individuals and as active members of the society.” (youth of Kárpátikum)



Gallery









„Ever vigilant, evergreen”



Noszvaj-Várkút

2018.