

Romania Good Practices: Volunteering, a bridge between ethnic groups

Main Goals

- to contribute to the development of three multi-ethnic rural communities from Cluj County
- to address issues related to multiethnic communities and their development through volunteering
- to mobilize all the local actors to generate positive changes

Objectives

- to develop weekly intercultural clubs in each school
- to train and empower local municipalities in the effective management of inter-ethnic relations
- to create the context of interaction and involvement among all members of the community

Resources needed

- competent learning and community facilitators
- learning and teaching space and materials
- resources depending on the community actions

Challenges

- reticence of community members to take part in community actions

The project and its activities were designed at the crossroad of two main aspects: *the need* of the multi-ethnic (Romanian, Hungarian, and Roma) communities in Cluj County to develop and be more involved on one side and *the mission* of the organization to develop voluntarism as a means of involving citizens in solving the problems of the Cluj community on the other.

The proposed activities in the three communities involved *several lines of action, each with different type of beneficiaries of the same community*:

1. development of a weekly *intercultural club* in each beneficiary school, intended to encourage positive relationships between primary school children of different ethnicities;
2. training and empowerment of local municipalities in the effective management of inter-ethnic relations through a *training course* for the City Hall's representatives, through a *job shadowing* activity in Norway, but also through permanent involvement in all actions taken in the community;
3. creating the context for *interaction and involvement* among the members in all the communities through the proposed community actions, promoting events etc.

Example of activities addressing the entire community were the *volunteering actions* in the rural villages, organized in order to solve a need that had been identified by the children of the clubs. Another example of activity was a *Photovoice exhibition* in 4 public institutions with photos taken and messages written by the children of the clubs, capturing the aspects the children appreciated and those which could have been changed into better.

All along the project, local and international volunteers had a major role in facilitation of the clubs, as well as in the preparation and implementation of various activities targeting the children and the local community.



community volunteering action in Tureni, Cluj County



This extensive project was outstanding for me because it had three different working directions in order to reach the proposed goals and objectives - addressing children, decision makers and the local community.

- Mariann, facilitator -

Facts and points:

- ✓ 14 months
- ✓ 3 full-time staff members
- ✓ 18 local and 12 international volunteers with 2466 volunteering hours
- ✓ 133 primary school children through 81 intercultural clubs
- ✓ 520 students, 29 teachers, and 32 parents through other activities of the project
- ✓ 12 representatives of public institutions through a training course on the management of multi-ethnic communities