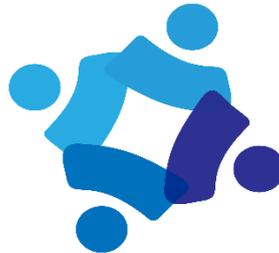# <u>Report on the pilot training</u>

Prepared within the framework of the Europe for Citizen's project "GET2IT - GETting to Active CITizenship in Europe"

Date: 03.02.2022.

I. Introduction to GET2IT and the pilot training

The project "GET2IT" has been approved for a grant worth 100.800,00 EUR from the European Union via the Europe for Citizens Programme – Measure 2.2. Networks of Towns. The lead partner of the project is **Pučko otvoreno učilište Varaždin – POU Varaždin (People's Open University Varaždin)**, which is an adult learning institution of the City of Varazdin. It is dedicated to enhancing education, creating employment opportunities and building the knowledge and skills of citizens in line with market needs. The project partnership covers 5 European countries (Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Italy and the Czech Republic). The specific partners on the project are:

- Tourist Organisation of the City of Sremska Mitrovica (TO SM) located in Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia
- Regional Development Agency of Srem Ltd. Ruma located in Ruma, Serbia
- Centro Studio e Lavoro "La Cremeria" srl located in Cavriago, Italy
- Comune di Cavriago, Italy
- Ljudska Univerza Ptuj (LUP) located in Ptuj, Slovenia
- Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s. located in Prague 6, Czech Republic

The project started in March 2020 and it will end on February 28th 2022. The main objective of the project is to engage citizens in democratic processes. Citizens are the main drivers of growth and they must be active in developing their communities. In the partner regions, citizens are unaware how they can plan & participate in local actions, and often rely on local authorities to take lead roles. There is also confusion about the EU's role in local actions. There is especially a lack of understanding about the principles of solidarity and volunteering.

In order to address these problems and shortcomings in European communities, the partnership will has created a transnational network of towns in this project that focuses on enhancing citizen engagement in local actions based on the principles of volunteering and solidarity. The project has been organized as 5 events (in Croatia, Serbia, Italy, Slovenia & Czech Republic) that focus on building citizens' understanding on how to plan and manage actions that contribute to inclusive growth.

Each event lasted 2-3 days and focused on a specific theme. Five events have been held. In Croatia, the kick-off event in Varazdin, Croatia (in October and November 2020) focused on how citizens are involved in creating education and employment opportunities. The second event in Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia (in August 2021) emphasized how citizens play a key role in cultural heritage actions and promote multiculturalism. The third event in Cavriago, Italy focused on how citizen-driven initiatives enhance environmental protection and civil defence (in October 2021). The fourth event in Cavriago, Italy focused on how volunteers play a crucial role in promoting inter-generational solidarity (in November 2021). The 5th event/final event in Prague (in January 2022) focused on how volunteers and citizen-based actions can contribute to enhancing social inclusion (especially concerning disadvantaged groups in Europe). At each event, the partnership used various methods to transfer knowledge, such as workshops, group activities, panel discussions, presentations, conferences and site visits.

The target groups of the project are representatives of local authorities, CSOs & public bodies (in education, social care, culture, environmental protection and employment), students, educators and other citizens (youth & elderly). Through the project, citizens have gained the

knowledge and skills to plan and manage actions in line with democratic principles. They have enhanced their understanding of how EU values & policies function, and have also developed new links with citizens transnationally.

One of the main ways in which the partnership has been able to sustain results and build on this project is by jointly developing **a working curriculum/training course** that focuses on the needs of volunteers. It aims to make positive changes happen in their communities. The course has been designed so that it provides volunteers the skills to prepare and develop citizen-based actions as community leaders.

As a part of the final event, the partnership designed a pilot session based on the drafted curriculum (completed in November 2021). The pilot was held on January 28th, 2021 in Prague, CZ over a two-hour period. With this report, the partnership intends to detail the contents of the training, the materials and methods used, and the feedback from the participants. It is the intention of the partnership to continue developing/refining the training programme after the project ends on February 28th, 2022.

II. Brief description of the training programme and the pilot training

In November 2021, POU Varaždin in cooperation with the partners drafted a training programme that focuses on promoting ***community leadership***. The term **'community leader'** has various definitions. They can be volunteers, entrepreneurs, politicians and even concerned citizens, but in order to establish a clear goal in this course, the partnership has defined a community leader as <u>someone who is communicative, inspires action, and capable of organizing resources for set goals that benefit the community</u>. The course drafted in this project will work towards developing the skills and competences of citizens in line with this definition.

The expected results of the course are:

1) <u>Citizens gain knowledge & skills to plan/manage actions in line with EU policies and local needs</u>: This is of particular benefit to volunteers & CSO reps. By learning how to engage different stakeholder groups locally and regionally, understanding EU policies & democratic processes, and converting ideas into projects; citizens will engage in local development actions. This ensures that policies meet various needs and the citizens (as volunteers) are included as a driver of change.

2) <u>Enhanced awareness among citizens about how EU policies/integration positively impact the quality of life</u>: This training course will demonstrate how EU programmes & values (solidarity, intercultural dialogue) foster action locally. Since the training will be transnational, it will also serve as a means allowing citizens to cooperate transnationally and exchange new ideas and approaches regarding local community development.

The course content in the training programme includes:
- Leadership in the community
- Examining the situation and developing solutions
- Resolving conflict as a leader
- Advocacy in the community
- Group assignment and final presentation

The following technical aspects were also defined by the partnership in November 2021:

- The course should have a transnational character and be open to citizens in the partners' regions. Participants taking part in the course (when it runs) should be from various regions;
- Due to the fact that the course would be transnational in nature, the working language should be English since it is the most common second-language in Europe;
- There should be a blended or hybrid format for the course; meaning that online tools and in-person classes should be applied. This is due to the current circumstances regarding COVID-19. This approach also allows for flexibility.
- The first groups (2-3 groups) that take part in the course should be able to do so free of charge. After the course has a track record (i.e., concrete indicators and results), the course organizers can consider monetizing the course.
- The course is jointly managed/run by the partnership – Each partner runs a part of the course that they are experienced in;
- For all of the partners, youth between the ages of 18-35 are considered the most suitable target group. They will be the main participants in the programme. They will have completed secondary education; will probably be working in a volunteer organization; and have the goal of contributing to local development initiatives as leaders.
- Due to the fact this programme is in the initial phases, it will be limited in the number of hours and sessions.
- Each session lasts a max. of 3 hours (4 school hours under the Croatian system).

The pilot training session was prepared based on the content defined in the training programme and the application form. The partnership agreed that the pilot training should follow these parameters:

- The training would last a maximum of 2 hours (on Friday, January 28th from 11:00 – 13:00 at the final event in Prague, CZ)
- The pilot training would be organized in a hybrid format. It was foreseen that there would be participants in-situ and online;
- The methods of the training would include quizes, group work and lecturing. Materials would be developed by POU Varaždin (PowerPoints and group materials);
- The training would be held in English due to the transnational nature of the project;
- The training would be open to any interested citizen (in line with the conditions of the Europe for Citizens Programme). By taking this approach, feedback from various persons could be gathered at the end of the training)
- After the training, a short evaluation questionnaire would be distributed to the participants via Slido, Google Forms or some other suitable format;
- The training should be in line with current trends. Many of the partners noted that NGOs in their area and their volunteers are encountering tense situations (connected to COVID mainly). Based on this, it was agreed that the training should focus on conflict management (i.e. under the topic "Resolving conflict as a leader" included in the programme). Such a topic would generate the most interest from participants.

III. The implementation and outcomes of the training

During the week before the event, it should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic forced the hosting partner (Institut pro regionalni rozvoj, o. p. s.) to make some organizational changes such as having more participants take part online and fewer participants being able to take part on-site. Despite this situation, there were no major changes to the approach and content of the pilot training foreseen in the project. It was held at the scheduled time in line with the materials prepared beforehand.

The trainer was Mr. Patrick Galeski, the director of Galeski Management Services Ltd., located in Varaždin, Croatia. Galeski is a consultant. He has been working in the field of EU project management for over 15 years, and works on numerous projects where different parties need to come to a consensus on various issues. He prepared a PowerPoint presentation that described the basics of conflict and conflict management, quizzes and group work activities that would bring participants together and allow them to share ideas, experience and know-how relating to conflict management (and resolution) in civil society actions.

Galeski presented on what conflict is considered (and what it is not), the different types of conflicts that exist in organizations (process conflict, task conflict, inner conflict, and relationship conflict), and conflict management styles (accommodating, compromising, competing, avoiding, and collaborating styles). The PowerPoint was designed in a way so that individuals could test their knowledge on the spot. Galeski organized two short quizzes on conflict management styles and types of conflicts. After discussing these points with the participants, Galeski provided his own tips and advice regarding conflict management and presented on the factors that someone needs to consider before choosing a specific approach to solving a conflict. Before going into the group work, Galeski had the participants rearrange a table showing the "**do's and don'ts**" of conflict management. He instructed the participants to find the advice that was put in the wrong columns, and correct the table according to what they had learned during the presentation.

See the tables below for full details:
Table 1. The incorrect table that participants examined (and that they had to correct):

Do!	Don't!
• Staying calm • Manage your emotions – Your visible frustration or stress can make things worse • Let your emotions erupt in public (i.e. express your anger directly) • Listen to the other side and ask questions • Speak up and speak clearly • Be thoughtful and professional • Focus on the problem, not the people on the other side • Use "dirt" or "gossip" on someone you are negotiating with; • let your face do the talking when you are upset (e.g. angry face)	- Manage your emotions: Your visible frustration or stress can make things worse - Speak quickly or mumble - Yell at the other side when you are angry at them – that'll show them! - Undermine the other side: interrupt: them in the middle of their sentences - Be thoughtful and professional - let your face do the talking when you are upset (e.g. angry face) - Be aware of non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions and posture, - Think about the present and don't focus on the past

Table 2: The correct table presented

Do!	Don't!
• Staying calm • Manage your emotions – Your visible frustration or stress can make things worse • Listen to the other side and ask questions • Speak up and speak clearly • Be thoughtful and professional • Focus on the problem, not the people on the other side • Think about the present and don't focus on the past • Be aware of non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions and posture,	- Let your emotions erupt in public (i.e. express your anger directly) - Speak quickly or mumble - Yell at the other side when you are angry at them – that'll show them! - Undermine the other side by interrupting them in the middle of their sentences - Use "dirt" or "gossip" on someone you are negotiating with; - let your face do the talking when you are upset (e.g. angry face)

After this, Galeski started the group activities. The main idea behind the group work was to allow the participants to interact with each other, discuss similar issues and experiences re: conflict, and become more familiar with each other.

The participants were broken down into 4 groups. There was one online group, and 3 in-situ groups. Each group had between 5-12 participants. The situations that were examined by the groups included:

- Situation 1 - a former volunteer (supposedly) steals from the organization
- Situation 2 - a sponsor of your organization informs you that they are exiting a campaign that you organized
- Situation 3 - an activist from your organization makes a public statement that is inaccurate and that puts unexpected pressures on your team
- Situation 4 - two of your team members create a toxic workplace because of their negative relationship

Each group was given one situation to examine. A full description of the scenario (in word format) was provided to the participants so they understood what was happening in each story. The groups were given the following tasks and questions for their specific situation:
  1) Read the scenarios
  2) Define the central problem. Describe how it is affecting the organization.
  3) What steps do you take to resolve the conflict?
  4) What conflict management styles can you use? Why those?
  5) What is the best outcome? What could be the worst outcome?

After each group examined the questions, and came up with answers showing how they would manage (or resolve) the conflict, each group needed to present their findings to the rest of the participants. Each group needed to also nominate a spokesperson. Overall, this part of the pilot took 40 minutes. According to the feedback, this part of the training was considered the most interactive part and as the most effective way to build knowledge in conflict management.
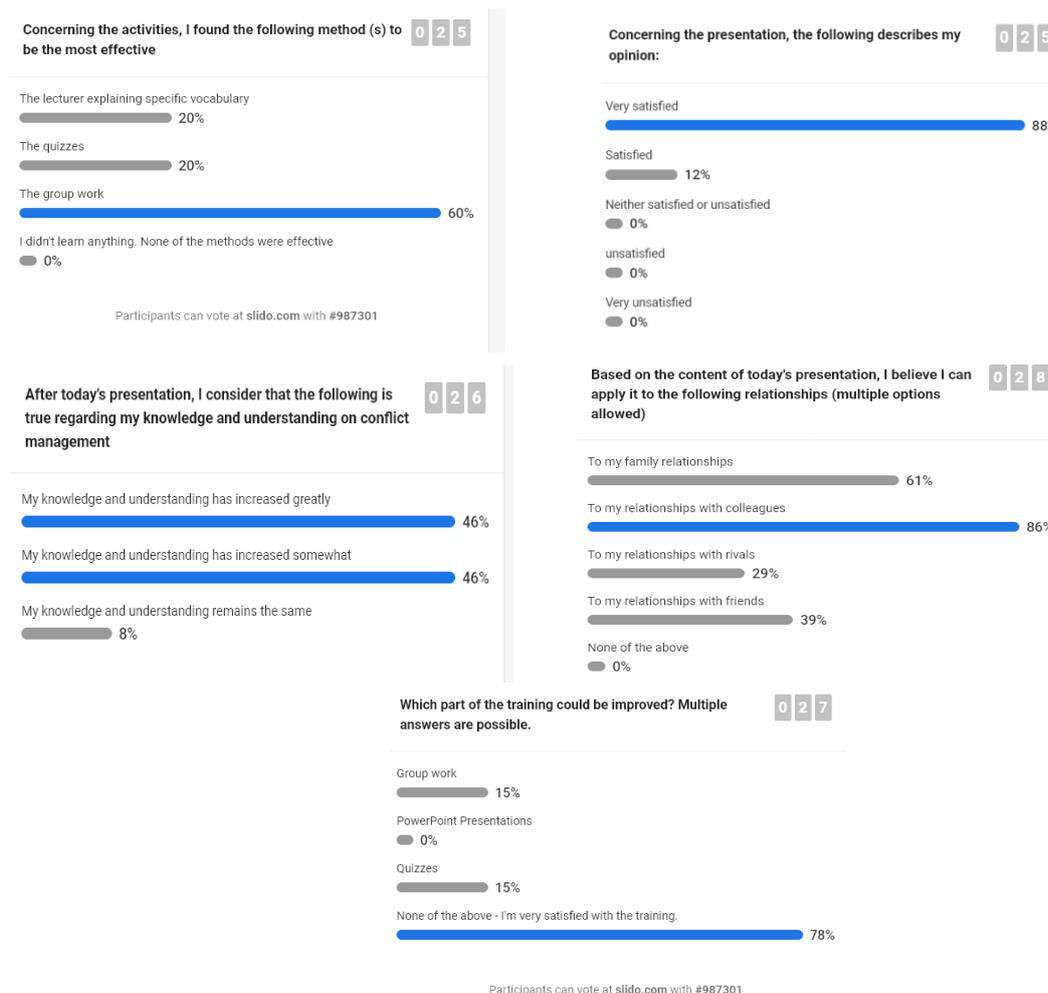
The following pictures show how the training was conducted:
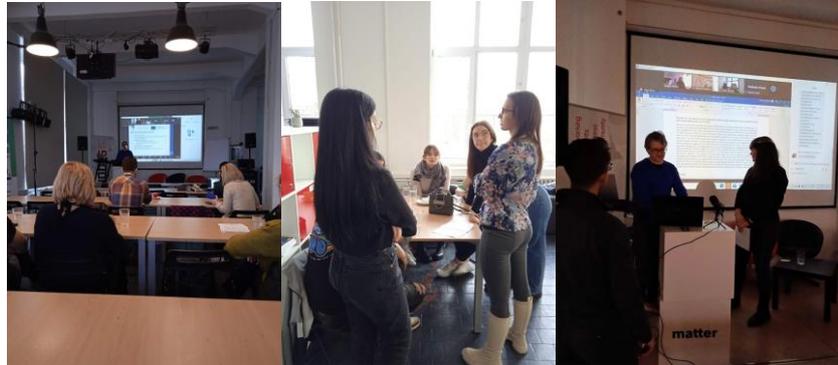
Description from left to right: The picture on the left was taken during the initial part where Galeski was lecturing. The picture in the middle shows how the groups were working on resolving the situation that they were given. The picture on the right shows how spokespersons were presenting the situations that they worked on and how they solved them.

After the group work ended, the participants were asked to complete a final survey (4 questions) via Slido.com. It should be noted that some participants didn't provide answers. 28 participants completed the survey. The final survey results are presented below:

Concerning the activities, I found the following method (s) to be the most effective | 0 2 5

The lecturer explaining specific vocabulary — 20%
The quizzes — 20%
The group work — 60%
I didn't learn anything. None of the methods were effective — 0%

Participants can vote at slido.com with #987301

Concerning the presentation, the following describes my opinion: | 0 2 5

Very satisfied — 88%
Satisfied — 12%
Neither satisfied or unsatisfied — 0%
unsatisfied — 0%
Very unsatisfied — 0%

After today's presentation, I consider that the following is true regarding my knowledge and understanding on conflict management | 0 2 6

My knowledge and understanding has increased greatly — 46%
My knowledge and understanding has increased somewhat — 46%
My knowledge and understanding remains the same — 8%

Based on the content of today's presentation, I believe I can apply it to the following relationships (multiple options allowed) | 0 2 8

To my family relationships — 61%
To my relationships with colleagues — 86%
To my relationships with rivals — 29%
To my relationships with friends — 39%
None of the above — 0%

Which part of the training could be improved? Multiple answers are possible. | 0 2 7

Group work — 15%
PowerPoint Presentations — 0%
Quizzes — 15%
None of the above - I'm very satisfied with the training. — 78%

Participants can vote at slido.com with #987301

Based on the survey results, the following feedback was recorded:

- The group work was considered the most effective part of the training, but overall the participants were satisfied with all of methods used;
- The majority (92%) of the participants gained new knowledge from the training relating to conflict management. 46% of participants stated that their knowledge greatly increased and 46% stated that their knowledge somewhat increased.
- All of the participants were satisfied (12%) or very satisfied (88%) with the presentation (PPT)
- 61% of respondents stated that the training (materials, knowledge gained, etc.) could be applied to their work with colleagues.
- 78% respondents stated that no changes to the approach were required.

These findings show that the approach applied during the pilot effectively contributes to building know-how on relevant topics, facilitates new interactions, and contributes to the efforts of volunteers. It is recommended that a similar approach is taken in order to train volunteers (community leaders) and ensure that more effective community actions are organized at the local level. Despite the positive outcomes, it should be noted that this was first time sections of the training programme had been tested. In order to ensure all parts of the training programme meet citizens' needs, further pilots should be organized.

IV. Final remarks and recommendations

Based on the feedback gathered after the pilot training, it was found that all of the participants were satisfied with the approach and methods used to teach them about conflict management. Overall, the participants consider that they have gained new knowledge on conflict management; and they were satisfied with the approach.

It was assumed that the best way to teach participants was through a mixed method (held in-situ and online). The trainer used lectures, quizzes and group work to engage participants. These methods ensured that they could gain know-how and apply it to possible situations they may encounter as community leaders. Overall, the preparation and assumptions concerning the participants were found to be accurate, and similar training should be prepared in a similar way.

Concerning the training programme prepared by the GET2IT partnership, it is recommended that further testing is organized in order to ascertain what approaches and methods should be used while teaching the remaining topics (i.e. leadership in the community, examining the situation and developing solutions, advocacy in the community, and the group assignment and final presentation). This could be organized as a separate project that is co-financed by the EU (via Erasmus+, INTERREG, CERV, etc.) or other international donors (e.g. EEA and Norway Grants). By taking this approach to developing the training programme further, any deficiencies/discrepancies will be identified and resolved.

The representatives of the partnership have also noted that during the training the participants were engaged and interactive through the group work. Based on these findings, the partnership recommends that other project promoters take a similar approach to training volunteers. The partnership hopes that others can learn from the GET2IT experience.