

**The project « Fostering Intercultural Dialogue and Mutual Understanding in Rural Environment of the EU » was funded with the support of the European Union under the Programme "Europe for Citizens"**

**Applicable to the Strand 2 – Measure 2.1 "Town-Twinning"**

**Participation:** The project involved 212 citizens, notably 43 participants from the community of Racu (Csikrákos, Romania), 25 participants from the community of Soimeni (Csikcsomortán, Romania), 9 participants from the community of Trešnjevák (Oromhegyes, Serbia), 42 participants from the community of Jászladány (Hungary), 81 participants from the community of Csép (Hungary), 12 participants from the community of Zalagyömörő (Hungary) and approximately 300 participants from the host community Brestovec (Slovakia).

**Location/ Dates:** The event took place in Brestovec (Komárno district, Slovakia), from 29/08/2019 to 01/09/2019.

**Short description:**

The aim of the project was to demonstrate to the participants the need for mutual understanding in multicultural Europe and thus to contribute mainly to the programme priorities "to foster intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding and combatting the stigmatization of migrants and minority groups" and "to promote solidarity in times of crisis". This was declared on the example of two relatively recent historical events: the recent event of the partner community of Trešnjevák - the founding of the Zitzer's Spiritual Republic and the related Zitzer's Club bar in Trešnjevák, which was an important gathering place for those, who resisted the ongoing war in former Yugoslavia (1991-2001) and the life and destiny of interesting controversial Slovak interwar figure - János Esterházy - an important minority politician, the founder of the Hungarian Party in Slovakia, who on the one hand sought to join Slovakia to Hungary and on the another - moderated tensions between Slovaks and Hungarians. His biggest contribution to the minority issue during the World War II. was that in 1942 (May 15) he voted as the only MP of then Slovak parliament against the constitutional law of the state no. 68/1942 on the eviction of Jews from Slovakia. In 1944, he helped hundreds of persecuted Jews, Czechs and Slovaks escape from Slovakia through Hungary. He was sentenced to death in 1947 for his activities and beliefs, later relieved and sentenced to his life imprisonment.

To sum up the project, the main project activity was citizens gathering of the twinned or partner communities; Slovak Brestovec, Romanian Racu and Soimeni (associated partner that was not mentioned in the application), Hungarian Jászladány, Csép and Zalagyömörő (next associated partner not mentioned in the application) and Serbian Trešnjevák. The represented villages shared their experiences with the implementation of minority policies at their - local level, demonstrated their culture and cuisine in Brestovec, district Komárno, Slovakia.

**The day of 29/08/2019 (Thursday)** was dedicated to the arrival of the foreign participants and the Visit of the Fortress and the Square of Europe in Komárno - a symbol of multicultural Europe. Representatives of partner municipalities met with the city mayor and its management.

**The day of 30/08/2019 (Friday)** was dedicated mainly to the foreign participants and their visit of the western-Slovak village of Dolné Obdokovce, where the pilgrimage site of János Esterházy - a controversial historical figure of interwar history of Slovakia - is located. The tour of the museum was followed by a screening of the movie about his life and deeds in defending minority rights during the World War II. Everyone thoughtfully listened to an interesting lecture.

After arriving in Brestovec, the artistic performances followed. Firstly, the Kutyomfitty association humorously demonstrated the local customs of the Brestovec inhabitants during their harvest time and related folk music. In the evening, there was a discussion with a guest - Vujity Tvrtko (a well-known journalist and traveller of Croatian nationality), who made regular reports during the war in the former Yugoslavia (1991- 2001). About 400 people were listening to his stories. During his presentation, there was a heart-taking encounter between the presenter and Mr. Lajos Balla who led the delegation from Serbian village Trešnjevac. They both knew each other from wartime. Vujity Tvrtko sent his papers just from Lajos Balla house. This naturally resulted in Mr. Balla's talk about how they founded the Zitzer Spiritual Republic in 1992 in Trešnjevac with its own constitution.

**The day of 31/08/2019 (Saturday)** was dedicated to the screening of the movie about Zitzer. This was followed by a presentation about the minority life and rights in Asia and the EU made by Mr. Eva Balogh - a local minority expert. This was followed by a presentation by Tamás Vörös who went on a bike around the Black Sea (approx. 8000 km) in 52 days, focusing in particular on encounters with diverse cultures in this relatively small geopolitical place and how they live among themselves.

The lunch was followed by a ceremonial opening of the memorial to the honour of this event in Brestovec (Komárno district, Slovakia). Individual representatives of the participating municipalities presented their minorities on the external stage. It was interesting to listen about minority life and its differences in particular European countries.

At lunch began Gastro Fest, where the present minorities cooked and served their specialities and where there was a langoš frying competition, whose participants were happy to participate in it. The Gastro Fest participants were also happy to participate in local pottery demonstrations, thus testing their skills in such a craft.

Friday and Saturday evenings were enriched with; musical performances of invited bands and music productions representing minorities of individual partner villages.

**The day of 01/09/2019 (Sunday)** was dedicated to the ceremony of the special holy mass in the chapel in the local manor-house garden. It was early in the morning. The holy mass was followed by a debate on the impressions from the visit of Komárno and Friday's visit to Dolné Obdokovce. Then, the Yugoslav Wars was discussed, where it was interesting to hear that the minorities from Vojvodina (Hungarian, Slovak and Romanian ones) were being recruited for war that did not concern them at all.

Then there was a performance of the local dance group Margareta, which operates at the local Seniors' Club. The performance was followed by the ceremonial lunch and farewell to the foreign guests who then set off on a journey to their homes.