

YOUTH ACADEMY OF DEMOCRACY

AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH EXCHANGE PROJECT



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Funded by the European Union



INTRODUCTION

This international Youth Exchange was organized as Learning Mobility Project in the frame of Erasmus+ Program by Youth Initiative Cana - Slovakia a civic association from Slovakia in cooperation with partners from Italy and Portugal. This youth exchange is made in a frame of a project



YOUTH ACADEMY OF DEMOCRACY

KOŠICE 27.4 - 5.5.2025

AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH EXCHANGE PROJECT



Organizer

YIC SLOVAKIA

www.yic.sk

The idea of the Youth Exchange "Youth Academy of Democracy" arose when young people from Slovakia, Portugal and Italy took part in an international youth exchange that was held in Košice 2024 and during informal conversations between young participants from four countries and later with partners (represented by subjects) conducted conversations about the current situation in their countries, about the problems they experience daily in their communities.

The project topics were democracy, democratic principles, human and civil rights, the functioning and institutions of the EU and thus citizenship in the EU.

In our project, we wanted to delve deeper into these topics and terms and develop the participants' understanding of them and transfer them into everyday activities within their organizations, in their lives and through non-formal education also support the development of their key life competences. It was also a opportunity for peaceful coexistence between different people with different religions, genders, political views, nationalities, etc.

Thanks to the project, young people could learn more about European diversity and at the same time cooperate on a more united Europe.

We defined the objectives of the project as follows:

- Provide young people with new ways of learning about democracy and understanding its principles;
- Increase competences in the topics of democracy, citizenship, human and civil rights;
- Promote solidarity and tolerance between groups of young people;
- Promote personal self-reflection and self-esteem;

PARTNERS

YIC – YOUTH INITIATIVE CANA SLOVAKIA
WWW.YIC.SK

CRESCER SEM RISCO PORTUGAL
WWW.CRESCERSEMRISCO.COM

MAEK APS ITALY
**HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/
MAEKITALY**

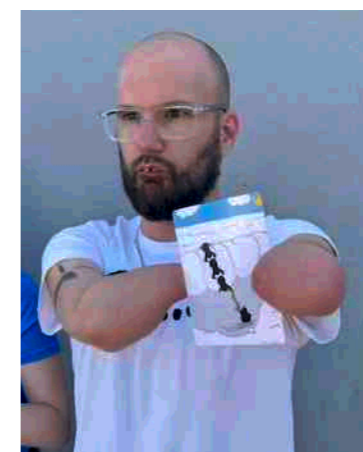
PROJECT TEAM

Tomáš Peľak - project manager from Slovakia

Martin Gbúr - facilitator from Slovakia

Martin Karen - facilitator from Slovakia

Eva Farkašovská - coach from Slovakia



Hereby we would like to thank all our partners and participants who were involved in this project.

We wish you to find interesting and inspiring information in this report!



Getting to know each other

Objectives

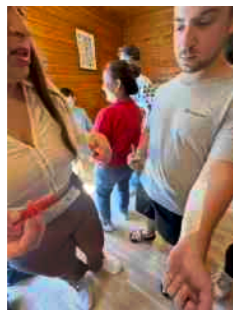
- To make the participants comfortable around each other
- To learn and remember the participants names
- To get to know each of the participants better
- Speed dating activity

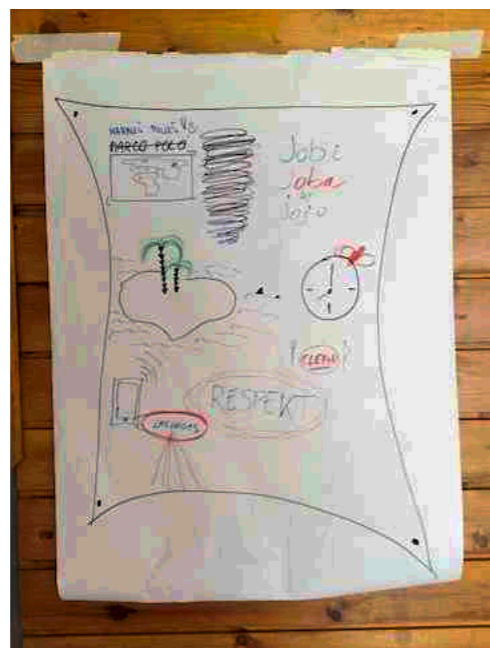
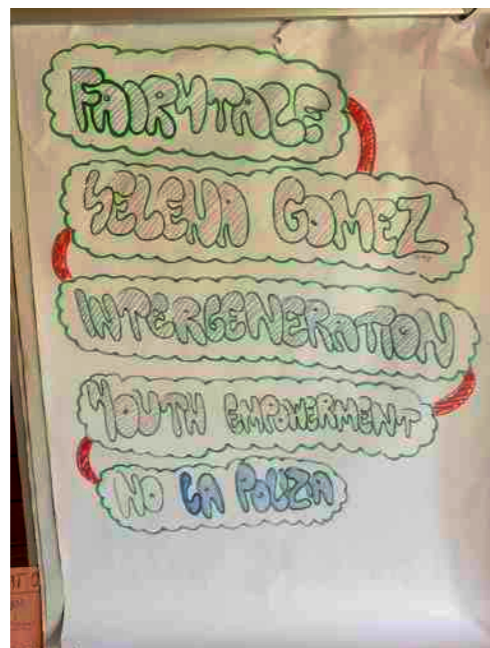
Activities

The name game involved the group standing in a circle and task was saying your own name and then doing some gesture, after that whole group had to repeat your name and your gesture. Starting from facilitator turns go in clockwise direction, so group repeats each person's name and gesture.

Name game with paper balls. Participants stand in a circle and throw a paper ball to each other in order, saying their names. Gradually, more balls are included in the game.

Getting to know activity under name "Speed dating" participants sit opposite each other in pairs and talk for a few minutes. The topics of the interviews are determined by the facilitator. The topics change after 5 minutes and are focused on areas so that people can learn as much as possible about themselves





Learning goals and agreement

Objectives

- Introducing Non-formal learning
- Establishing learning needs
- Sharing expectations

Activities:

Whole team was divided in smaller groups, in those mini groups they could share answers on following questions: what are my expectations about the project? What are my fears? What are my learning needs?

After working in little groups, participants were able to share their thoughts in big circle, answers on aforementioned questions gave final form to program and working specific.

Last part was reflection of the whole day, participants were reflecting on the following questions: what did you like today? What have you learnt today? What would you modify/add/change? Participants were sharing their answers in big circle.

Outcomes:

- Formation of the working specific
- Establishing learning goals

Team building

Objectives:

- To make the group of participants one team
- To rise team spirit
- To make group work together
- To get them used to each other

Activities

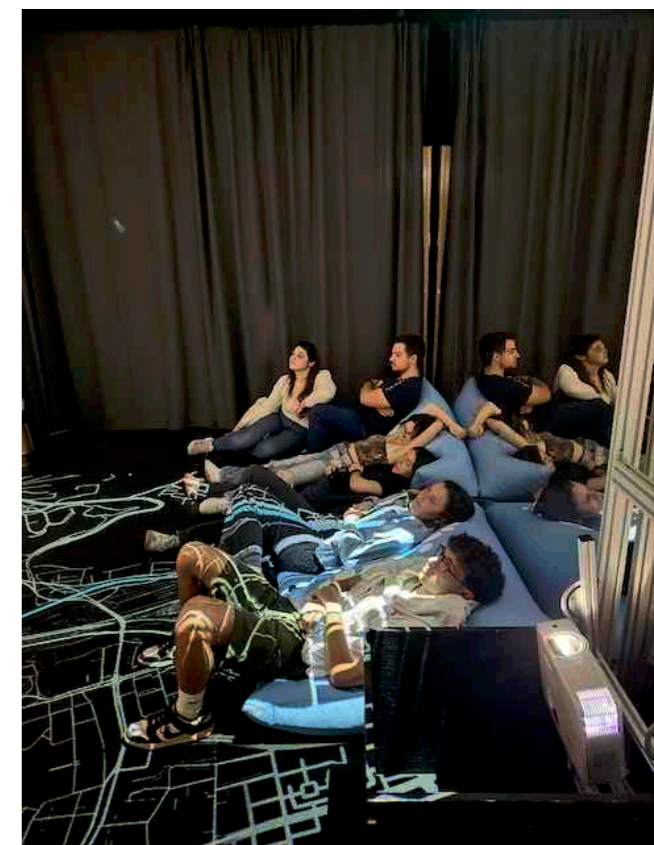
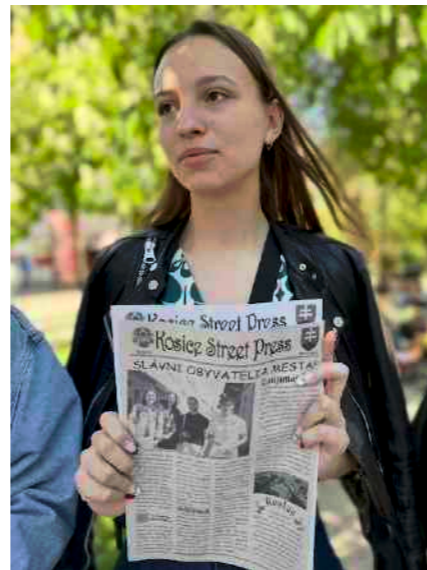
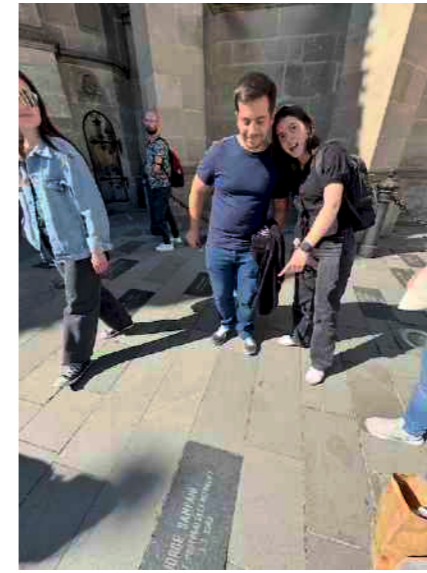
City game is popular activity, the aim was to try to improve their ability of working as a group. Participants were given proper instruction with different missions in it, the main task was to complete all of the missions together.

Mission consisted from: create a team name, make picture with 5 locals, find out the name of the mayor of town Košice and others...

Outcomes

Activity helped team members to get to know each other better and to get used to each other as well.

Making pictures, found out interesting places in old town of Košice, meet locals and create a positive working atmosphere. Debriefing of Mission Impossible led participants to acknowledge importance of specific strategy while working as a team.

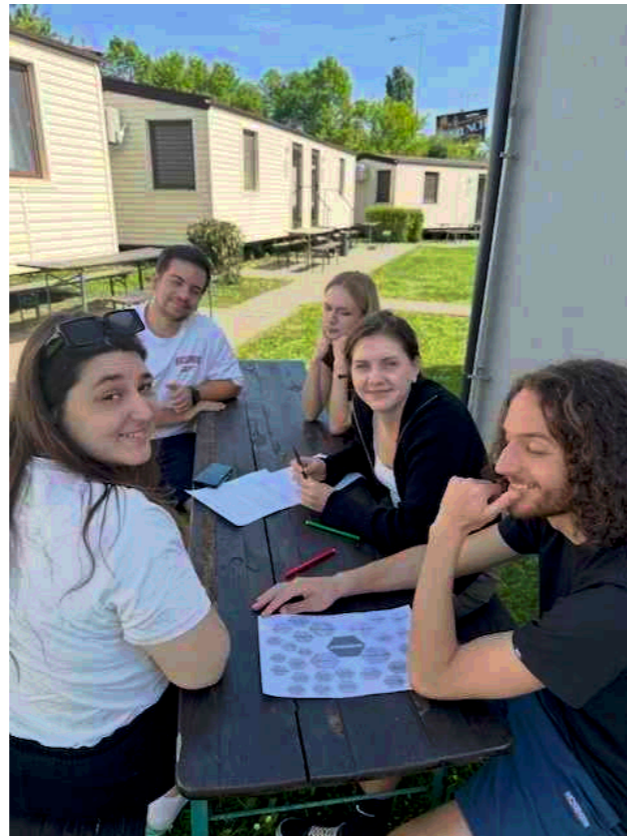




Democracy - Human Rights

Discovering term Democracy and Human rights in our countries and comparing with present situation – Expectations vs. Reality.

Together we discussed the meaning of the terms and how we are affected by other people's behaviors in our societies. We continued the discussion in this topic with NGO organisations in Košice.





Meeting in SaplinQ - PRIZMA NGO

We had also a meeting in Civic association SaplinQ in Košice and we had a nice discussion with director of the organisation Mr. Adam Olešiak who informed us about the SaplinQ organisation, their activities and the current situation of LGBTIQ community in Slovakia and in town Košice. We discussed topics related to our project such as Human Rights, Rule of Law and Tolerance and Respect toward this community in Slovak society.

Adam also informed us about the PRIZMA Counseling Center which is currently the only counseling center for LGBTI+ people and their relatives in eastern Slovakia.

People from all over Slovakia contact PRIZMA and receive free legal, psychological, and social counseling.

SaplinQ is also a receiving and sending organisation in the European Solidarity Corps programme and is currently hosting several volunteers in Košice.





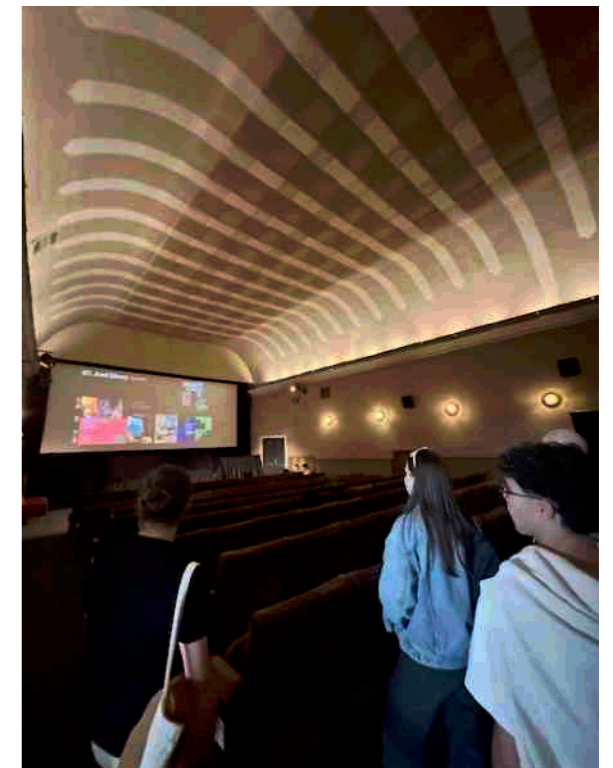
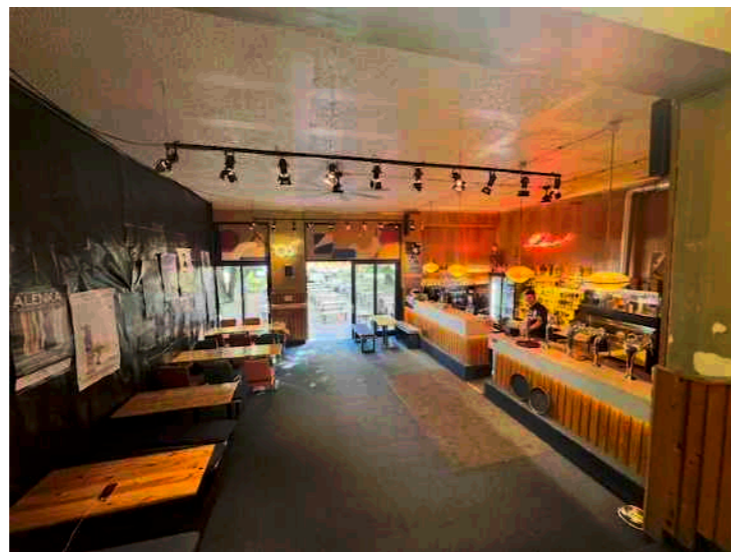
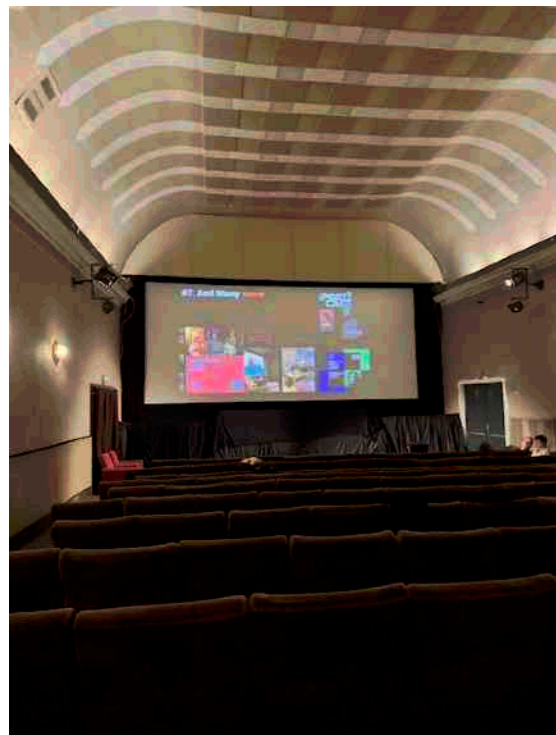
Meeting in Cinema Usmev in Košice

We had also a interesting meeting in Cinema Usmev in Košice - old town.

Cinema Usmev (means Smile) is now playing an important role in the local community of town Košice.

It is not only cinema but also a community meeting place that is open for every type of sub-culture and variety of audience.

In cinema we saw installed technology that provides help for people with visual, hearing and movement limitations and we discussed also how they approach people with different cultural backgrounds.





Meeting in with Mr. Marián Horenský

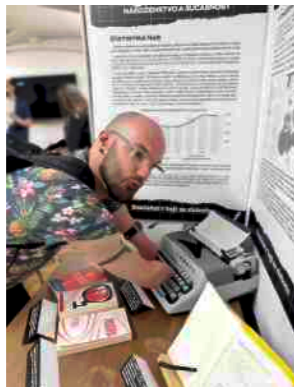
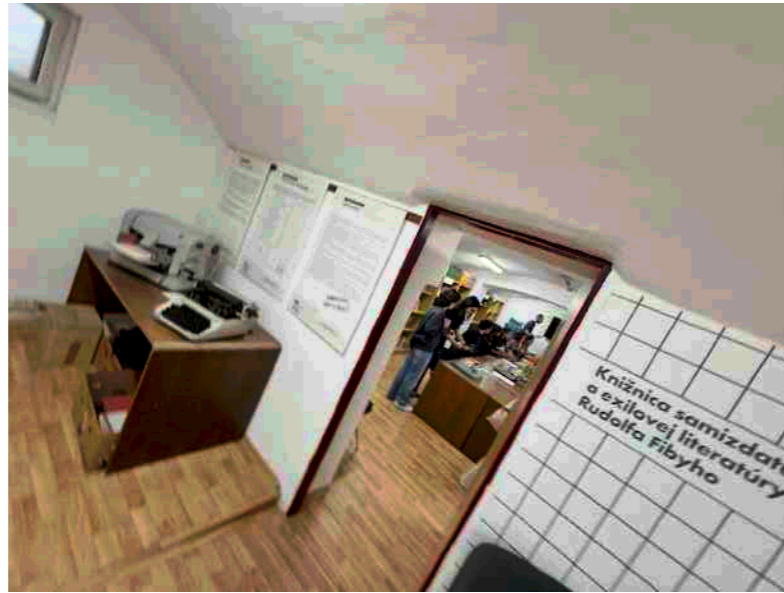
We had an interesting meeting with the city councilor, Mr. Marián Horenský, who told us his story of how he went from a local committed volunteer to a civic activist who, after years of working for the community, decided to enter politics because it is the only way you can really change things for the better. The key is to have an impact on legislation, because without it it is almost impossible to push through anything. And we also learned that someone always has to have your back.. you have to have a good family background that allows you to be at various meetings, activities, events for hours and days.





Museum of Victims of the Communism in ČSSR

We also visited a very unique place in Košice and also in Slovakia. We visited the only one Museum of Victims of the Communism regime in Czechoslovakia. It is the first multimedia museum that exists in Slovakia. The museum opens up the topic of victims who were persecuted for various political reasons during the 40 years of communism. It covers two periods of communism - the years 1945 to 1968 - the so-called harsh persecutions and the period from 1969 to 1989 - the so-called a period of normalization when citizens were persecuted with sophistic methods that kept people in constant fear.



DREAM SOCIETY - workshop

To encourage participants to envision their ideal society, understand different democratic structures, and promote cooperative learning and creativity.

OBJECTIVES:

- To imagine and articulate a vision of an ideal society
- To understand different forms of democracy and decision-making
- To develop collaborative and creative problem-solving skills

COMPETENCES ADRESSED:

Critical thinking

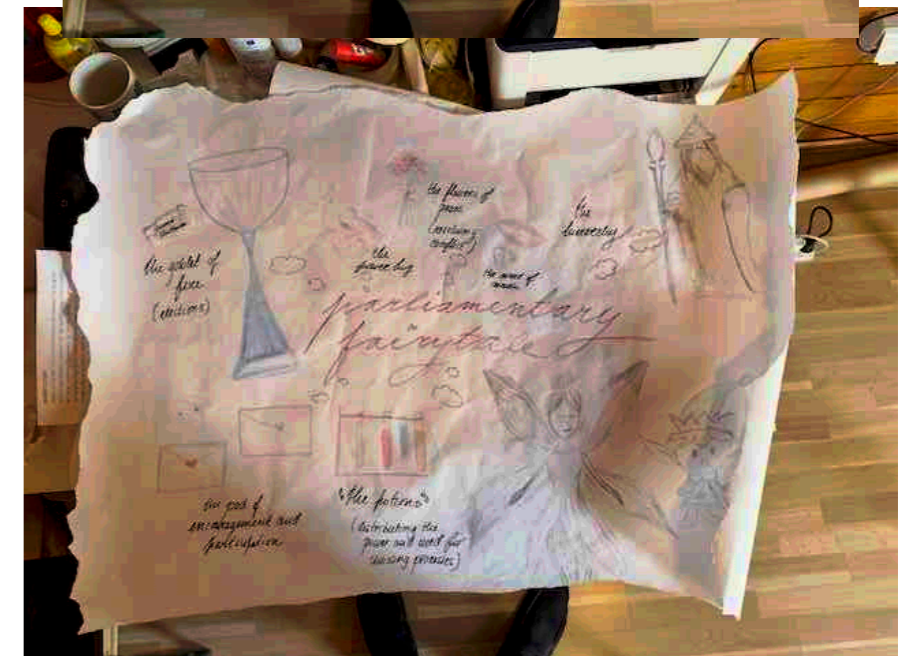
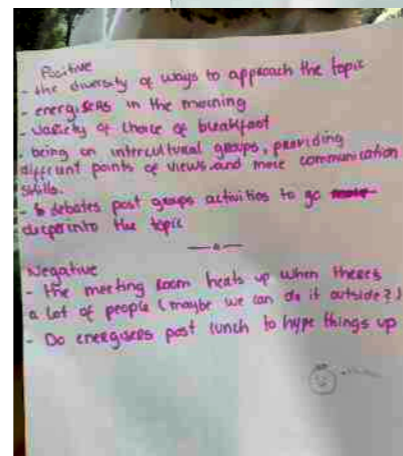
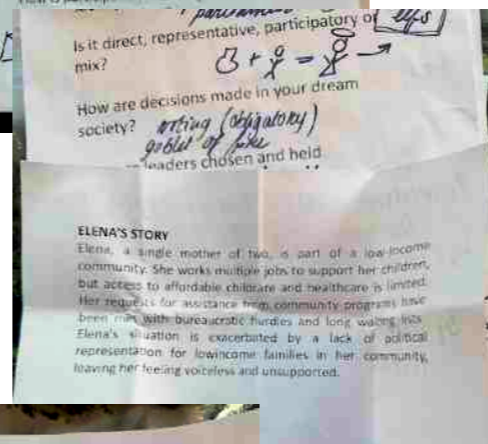
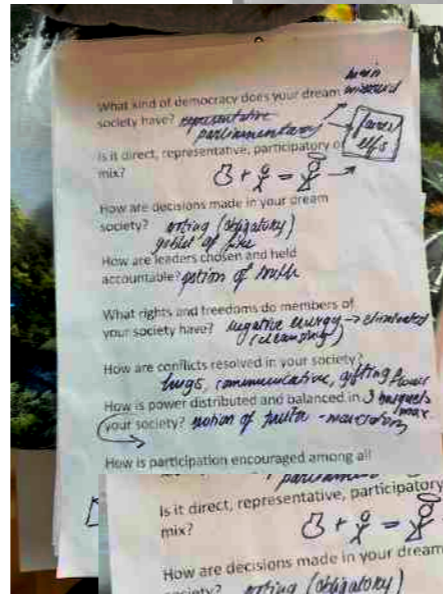
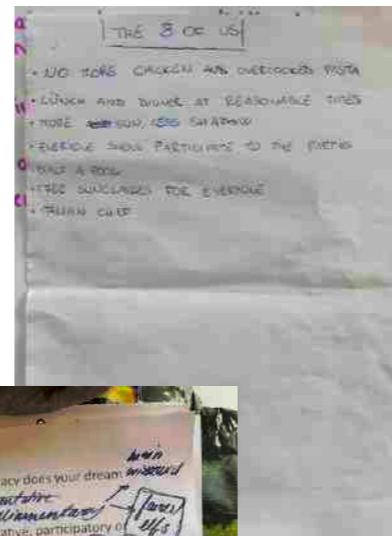
Teamwork

Communication skills

Creativity

Problem-solving

Civic knowledge and engagement

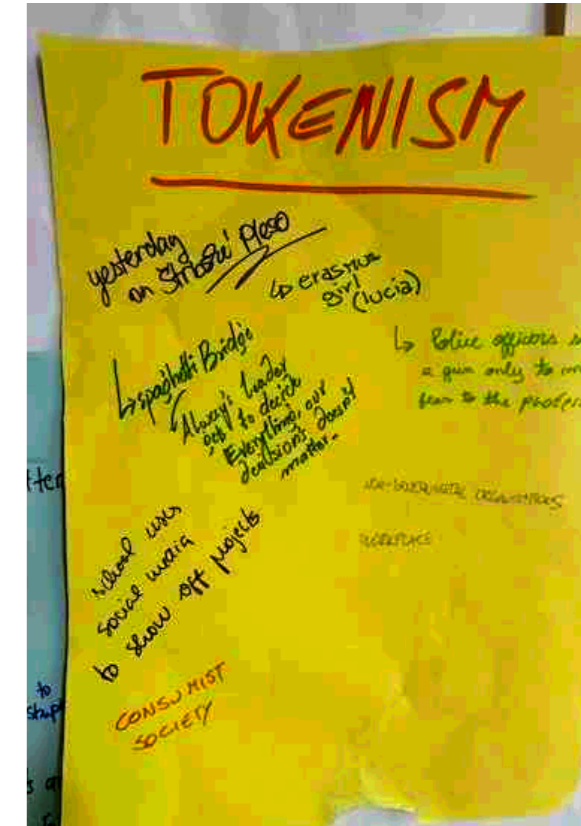


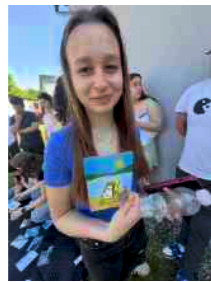
The Ladder of Participation theory

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation is a conceptual model that illustrates different levels of young people's involvement in decision-making processes.

It was developed to highlight the importance of meaningful youth participation and to distinguish genuine involvement from tokenism or manipulation.

The ladder consists of eight rungs, grouped into three main categories: non-participation, tokenism, and genuine participation.





Youthpass

At the end of our youth exchange we did the second activity connected to Youthpass.

The first was held in a beginning of the training and for most of the participants was Youthpass a well-known tool.

Facilitators prepared 8 areas with description of 8 key competences areas according to Youthpass.

Participants evaluated individually and then in a big group their learning outcomes.

Evaluation and Reflection

The session began with self-reflection. Each participant had a time to think about what they liked, what are they taking with them, what are they leaving behind, for what are they thankful.

After that participants in the general circle they have chosen a card or cards that best expresses their emotions associated with this exchange and have presented them..

And then we also evaluated our exchange in funny way. After that they evaluated the exchange also through the online evaluation form.

Evaluation process

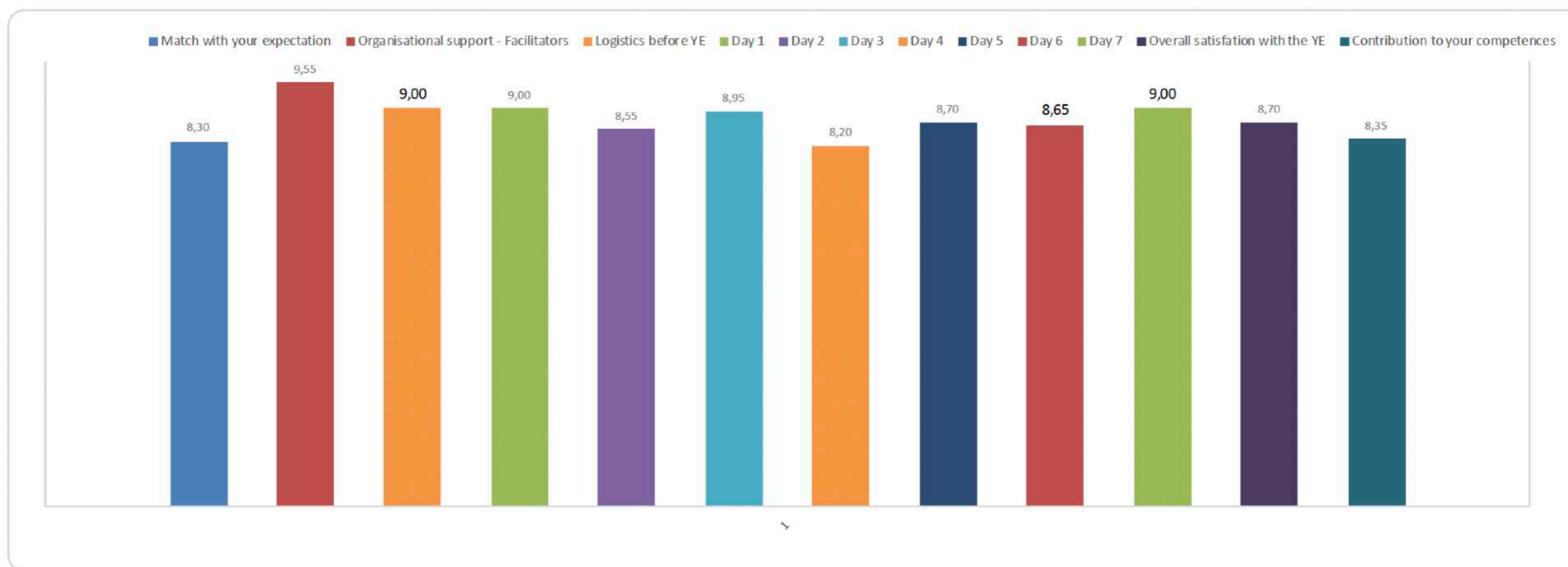
The evaluation of the youth exchange took place on several levels. Before the YE, the participants filled out a questionnaire in which we asked them about the level of knowledge of the topics. At the beginning of the YE, we checked their level of knowledge and also addressed their expectations. Every day, we reflected on the day and the education achieved, and at the end of the youth exchange, in addition to the verbal personal evaluation, we also evaluated the written evaluation or filled out our online questionnaire. They also devoted themselves to creating their Youthpass at the end of the training.



EVALUATION

YE - Youth Academy of Democracy
28. - 4.5.2025, Kosice, Slovakia

Here we present the results from the online questionnaire.



How much has this YE contributed to/improved your competencies?	8,35	83,50%
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Overall satisfaction with the Youth Exchange	8,70	87,00%
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THEORIES FOR FUTURE READING



The Ladder of Participation

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation (1992) is a conceptual model that illustrates different levels of young people's involvement in decision-making processes. It was developed to highlight the importance of meaningful youth participation and to distinguish genuine involvement from tokenism or manipulation.

The ladder consists of eight rungs, grouped into three main categories: non-participation, tokenism, and genuine participation.

1. Non-Participation (Rungs 1–3)

- **Manipulation:** Adults use young people to support their ideas without giving them real understanding or choice.
- **Decoration:** Young people are used as a visual presence or symbol without meaningful engagement.
- **Tokenism:** Young people appear to have a voice but have little influence; they may not understand the issues or decisions being made.

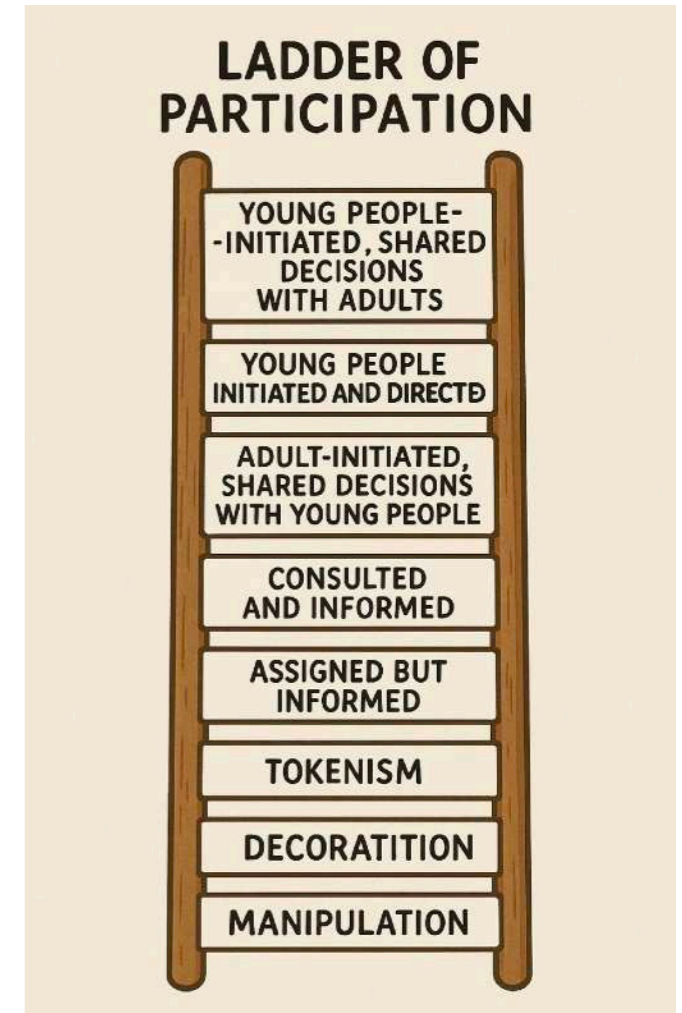
2. Degrees of Participation (Rungs 4–6)

- **Assigned but Informed:** Young people are given specific roles and understand the purpose and context.
- **Consulted and Informed:** Adults seek young people's opinions and provide feedback on how their input will be used.
- **Adult-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Young**

People: Adults initiate a project but involve young people in significant decision-making processes.

3. Genuine Participation (Rungs 7–8)

- **Young People-Initiated and Directed:** Young people design and lead activities or projects independently.
- **Young People-Initiated, Shared Decisions with Adults:** Young people take the lead but collaborate with adults for guidance and shared decision-making.



Hart emphasizes that the goal is not always to reach the top rung, as different contexts require different levels of participation. However, the ladder encourages moving beyond tokenistic involvement toward empowering young people as active partners.

The theory is widely used in youth work, education, and community development to assess participation levels and to design strategies that promote ownership, agency, and meaningful engagement. It also aligns with principles of democratic involvement, ensuring that young people's voices are respected and their contributions have real impact.

DEMOCRACY

OFFICIAL DEFINITIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Definition 1: United Nations

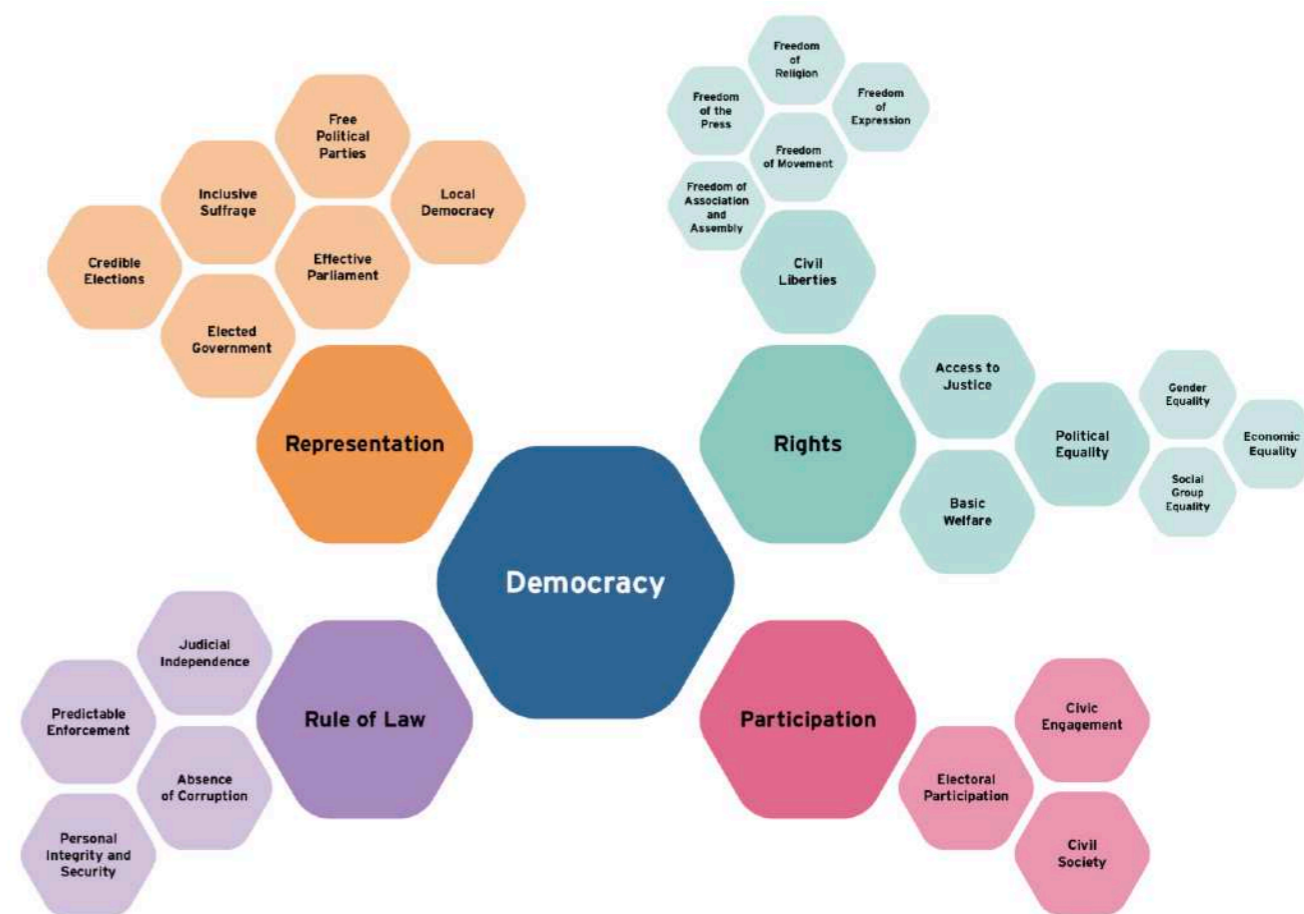
"The UN defines democracy as a system of government where the citizens exercise power by voting. It is built on the principles of inclusivity, equality, and participation, emphasizing the rule of law, the separation of powers, and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights."

Definition 2: The European Union

"Democracy is defined by the EU as a form of government in which all eligible citizens participate equally—either directly or through elected representatives—in the proposal, development, and creation of laws. It ensures adherence to the rule of law, protection of human rights, and equal access to power."

Definition 3: The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

"According to IDEA, democracy is a political system that allows for the participation of the people in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. It is characterised by free and fair elections, the protection of human rights, and the accountability of government officials."



Picture is downloaded from - <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/about-the-democracy-tracker>

The Rule of Law in the European Union

The Rule of Law is one of the founding principles of the European Union (EU), enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU).

It refers to a system where all public powers act within the constraints set by law, in accordance with democratic values, and under the control of independent and impartial courts. The principle ensures that no one is above the law, and that rights and obligations are applied equally to all individuals and institutions.

The Rule of Law, as recognized by the EU, draws from common constitutional traditions of Member States, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and the case law of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU). It is a prerequisite for trust between Member States and for the proper functioning of the EU's legal system.

According to the European Commission and the CJEU, the Rule of Law includes several essential components:

1. **Legality** – Transparent, accountable, democratic, and pluralistic law-making processes.
2. **Legal Certainty** – Laws must be clear, predictable, and consistently applied.
3. **Prohibition of Arbitrary Executive Power** – Public authorities cannot act without legal basis.

4. **Independent and Impartial Courts** – Judiciary must be free from political influence, ensuring fair trials.

5. **Effective Judicial Review** – Access to courts and effective remedies for individuals.

6. **Separation of Powers** – Clear division between legislative, executive, and judicial functions.

7. **Equality Before the Law** – All individuals and entities are treated equally under legal frameworks.

The Rule of Law is not just a legal principle but a fundamental value safeguarding democracy, equality, and fundamental rights in the EU. It ensures accountability of governments, protection of individual freedoms, and uniform application of EU law. Its respect is indispensable for maintaining trust and cooperation within the Union.

Sources: Official EU Resources on the Rule of Law

1. **Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) – EU Values**

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12012M002>

2. **European Commission – Rule of Law Policy**
https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rule-law_en

3. **2023 Rule of Law Report (by Country)**
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2023-rule-law-report_en

4. **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT>

Recommended resources

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1. UNICEF – Roger Hart: Children’s Participation (1992) https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf
2. Democracy Tracker - <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/about-the-democracy-tracker>
3. Fundamental Rights in EU - <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/democracy-and-human-rights/fundamental-rights-in-the-eu>
4. Education Pack “All Different - All Equal”, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe, 2nd edition <https://rm.coe.int/1680700aac>
5. Compass – Manual for human rights education with young people - Council of Europe <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>
6. The training kits (T-kits) are methodological publications for trainers and facilitators with young people, written by teams of field experts.
<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kits>
7. Salto-Youth Toolbox - 3x different activities <https://www.salto-youth.net>
8. Salto-Youth Toolbox - Educational program: Inclusion, Non-Discrimination, Democratic participation - link to -> [Manual](#)

Authors and Trainers



Martin Gbúr is a trainer, facilitator, coach, and active member of the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education, Sciences, Research and Sport in Slovak republic. Certified lector in the non-formal education field, a former teacher in the Dual education system in Slovakia. Cooperates with NIVAM - National Institute of Education and Youth in Slovak republic as a member of a pool of trainers for programs Erasmus+ and European solidarity corps.

As a trainer, he is active at the national and international levels. Supports youth initiatives and as a coach in the European Solidarity Corps program. He has also experience with European voluntary service, he spent 12 months in Poland in the Edith Stein organization.

[Email: martin.gbur@gmail.com](mailto:martin.gbur@gmail.com)



Martin Karen is a trainer, facilitator and a inspirational person.

He grew up in an institution for the physically disabled children. Martin has no fingers and palm, but he has enthusiasm to give away! He started tying shoelaces at the age of 13, he can even crack eggs. But he doesn't know one thing. Separate the whites from the yolks. And despite that, today he has his own YouTube channel about cooking. He likes to move around in the kitchen and maybe inspire someone with his videos.

As a trainer and facilitator, he is active at the national and international levels. Supports youth initiatives in Brno (Czechia) and in Košice (his home town). He has also experience with European voluntary service, he spent 10 months in Berlin in Germany. Martin has a lot of experiences with international youth exchanges and projects, public speaking and Living Library method.

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This international Youth Exchange was organised as Learning Mobility Project in the frame of the Erasmus+ Program



Erasmus+



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NIVAM

NÁRODNÝ INŠTITÚT VZDELÁVANIA A MLÁDEŽE