

Learning, Engaging, Acting for Democracy (LEAD)

April 2025

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Contract No. 2024-1-RO01-KA151-YOU-000207051

Youth Exchange Project



About *LEAD*

Core Activity

The main activity of the project is a 9-day youth mobility taking place from April 5–13, 2025, in Horezu, Vâlcea County, Romania, with the participation of:

- 40 young people,
- 5 youth leaders,
- 1 facilitator,
- from the five partner countries.

Project Aim

The project aims to encourage and empower young people to engage actively in the democratic, civic, social, and cultural life of Europe.

“Learning, Engaging, Acting for Democracy (LEAD)” is a youth exchange project taking place between June 1, 2024 – August 31, 2025, implemented by Asociația Pro Dezvoltare DACIA (APDD) from Drăgășani, Romania, in partnership with:

- STD “Bacho Kiro” – Bulgaria
- Creative Youth Academy – Hungary
- Imece Network Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği – Turkey
- Youthpath – Greece

The project is co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme and represents APDD's third project developed under the Erasmus+ Youth Accreditation (2020-1-RO01-KA150-YOU-095921).



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About the organizations involved

- STD “Bacho Kiro” – Bulgaria
 - STD "Bacho Kiro" is a non-profit association, registered in 2018 in the town of Dryanovo, Gabrovo region, Bulgaria, which inherits 100-years old tourist organization "Bacho Kiro". The association provides training of children's and youth in eco-club of tourism, in orienteering sports club "Bacho Kiro-94" /SKO Bacho Kiro/, in cave club "Strinava" /PK Strinava/, there are an adult tourism club, a motorcycle club "Bacho Kiro Riders", a club of Veteran Tourists and a Cycling club. The work with children and youth is an important emphasis, as generations of Dryanovo residents have grown up in STD clubs and continue to engage in sports and tourist activities as adults. Currently, three of the clubs actively work with children and youth.
- Creative Youth Academy – Hungary
 - Creative Youth Academy is a dynamic organization dedicated to fostering the creative talents and skills of young individuals in Hungary. Our mission is to provide a platform where young people can explore and express their creativity, whether it be in the arts, technology, or other innovative fields.
- Imece Network Eğitim ve Kültür Derneği – Turkey
 - Imece Network is an International Youth Platform Organisation on Education, Culture and Sports. Our Vision: A better world featured by integrated social collaboration, respecting human rights, understanding of cultural diversity, international cooperation and participation. Our Mission: Imece Network has the passion and courage to establish an effective network of collaboration between youth organizations through which we shall impact overall strategies to address the critical challenges of our time that affect youth, thus becoming a main promoter of the empowerment of young people and youth organizations.
- Youthpath – Greece
 - Youthpath is a youth organization in Athens, Greece that offers non-formal education opportunities to young people. Through non-formal education mobilities and workshops, we shape programs that seek not only the transfer of knowledge but also the development of young people's skills.



How the LEAD Project Was Created?

The LEAD – Learning, Engaging, Acting for Democracy project was developed under the Erasmus+ Accreditation in the Youth Field (2020-1-RO01-KA150-YOU-095921), which APDD – Pro Dezvoltare Dacia (Romania) obtained in 2020.

Through this accreditation, APDD committed to implementing a series of high-quality mobility projects for young people and youth workers between 2020 and 2027. The accreditation acts like a “membership card” in Erasmus+, offering the organization a stable framework to plan long-term activities and respond to the real needs of young people.

LEAD was one of these accredited projects. It was designed in collaboration with trusted partners from Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey, and Greece, all active in youth development and civic engagement. Together, the organizations co-created the project's concept, starting from the observation that many young people in Europe lack opportunities to practice democracy, understand their rights, and engage actively in civic life.

The project was formally approved in 2024 under Contract No. 2024-1-RO01-KA151-YOU-000207051, co-funded by the European Union. Its main activity was a 9-day youth exchange in Horezu, Romania, gathering 40 young people, 5 youth leaders, and 1 facilitator.

As part of the Erasmus+ accreditation spirit, LEAD was not just a one-time activity but a step in a long-term strategy: empowering youth to be more active citizens, strengthening international cooperation, and developing sustainable good practices that can be reused in future projects.

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What happened during *LEAD*?

Objectives

- To develop key skills that improved the active participation of 40 young people from five European countries in democratic, civic, social, and intercultural life.
- To encourage young people to take an active role in their communities and societies.
- To provide knowledge and awareness that enhanced civic, democratic, social, and intercultural competences.

Methodology

The project applied non-formal, informal, and participatory learning methods, which fostered creativity, communication, interaction, critical thinking, intuition, and teamwork. Activities included:

- creative workshops,
- role-plays and simulations,
- meetings with local representatives and experts,
- outdoor sessions and study visits,
- intercultural evenings,
- energizers, team-building games, and reflection moments.

All sessions were participant-centered and designed to be interactive, inclusive, and empowering.

At the end of the mobility, all participants received the Youthpass certificate, a recognized European validation tool useful for continuing education or employment opportunities.



Good Practices from *LEAD*?

1. Getting to Know Each Other & Group Cohesion

- Ice-breakers and energizers – helped reduce barriers and create a friendly atmosphere from day one.
 - Creative team-building – activities focused on collaboration and communication among youth from different cultures.
- 👉 Recommendation: use these daily, especially in the mornings or after breaks, to build trust and keep energy high.

2. Democracy and the European Union

- Building an ideal democratic society – a visual exercise with limited resources (flipchart, markers, cardboard) to understand values and principles of democracy.
 - Concept map “What is Europe?” – a collaborative method to recall and visualize knowledge about geography, symbols, and European diversity.
 - Role-play “Portrait of a European Citizen” – helped participants understand rights and responsibilities in a civic context.
- 👉 Recommendation: visual and interactive methods are ideal for complex topics, as they increase engagement and knowledge retention.



Good Practices from *LEAD*?

3. Consequences, Inclusion & Diversity

- “Chain of Consequences” – a participatory workshop linking individual actions to social and environmental impacts.
- “European Train” – a simulation that challenged stereotypes and encouraged reflection on inclusion and cohesion.
- “One Step Forward” – a role-play activity that highlighted inequalities and fostered empathy.

👉 Recommendation: these methods provoke personal reflection and authentic dialogue, especially in multicultural groups.

4. Local Democracy & Decision-Making

- Visit to Horezu City Hall & meeting local representatives – direct learning from real-life governance.
- Simulation of a local council meeting (“Game of Democracy”) – participants played roles, debated ideas, and voted on community decisions.
- “If I Were President” – teams managed an imaginary budget, justifying their priorities in front of peers.

👉 Recommendation: simulations and study visits give practical experience and develop negotiation and critical thinking skills.



Good Practices from *LEAD*?

5. Values, Identity & Culture

- “The Values of My Nation” – creative presentations (digital or visual) about national cultural values.
- “Magic Microphone” – a structured reflection tool giving everyone the chance to share thoughts.
- Cultural visit to Hurezi Monastery – connecting heritage with intercultural dialogue.

👉 Recommendation: combining creativity with reflection helps young people connect personal identity to European diversity.

6. Active Citizenship & Social Responsibility

- “Citizens’ Charter: Me and My Role” – participants created commitments and responsibilities as active citizens.
- “Living Library” – young people became “living books,” sharing real-life stories from their communities.
- The Unequal Puzzle – a simulation of resource inequality followed by group reflection.

👉 Recommendation: storytelling and experiential methods build empathy and social awareness.



Good Practices from *LEAD*?

7. Civic Action & Public Visibility

- Flashmob “Our Voice – for Democracy” – a public performance using synchronized movement to send a message about solidarity and civic engagement.
- Final video presentations – creative group outputs summarizing experiences, messages, and lessons learned.

👉 Recommendation: public actions increase project visibility and give youth the sense that their voice truly matters.

📌 Conclusion:

The LEAD project successfully combined non-formal education methods (games, simulations, role-play) with experiential learning (study visits, real stories, public actions). The most impactful practices were those fostering direct engagement, personal reflection, and collective outputs (posters, maps, videos, booklet).



Impact

How did the activities went?

LEAD Project – A Story of Youth, Democracy & Action

The LEAD project brought together young people from five countries for nine inspiring days. It began with ice-breakers and group games to help participants connect and understand the project's goals. They quickly dove into European history and democracy, building models of ideal societies, exploring EU geography, and reflecting on citizenship through creative tasks and debates.

Next, they explored the impact of everyday actions in the “Chain of Consequences” and challenged their own biases through roleplay. A visit to Horezu City Hall gave them a glimpse into local governance, followed by a simulation of a council meeting.

They then tackled values, cultural identity, and democratic decisions, presenting their countries' traditions and participating in engaging group discussions. Through activities like the “Citizens' Charter” and “Living Library,” they explored active citizenship and real-life social challenges.

A visit to Craiova allowed them to reflect and express their ideas through a civic flashmob called “Our Voice.” Day 8 was spent reviewing their journey and creating a final project booklet. The ninth and final day closed the project with celebrations, certificates, and heartfelt goodbyes.



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testimonials

LEAD



1. Darius, Romania

"Participating in Game of Democracy changed my perspective on civic engagement. It was fascinating to understand how the decision-making process works and how important it is to communicate effectively when representing the interests of your community. I discovered that democracy is not just about voting, but about listening, dialogue, and responsibility."

2. Ewa, Bulgaria

"The Chain of Consequences activity was a revelation for me. I understood that every individual choice can have an effect on the environment, the economy, and society. It was a lesson in responsibility and how much cooperation matters in making the right decisions."

3. Abdul, Hungary

"In the workshop on European Union values, I learned to connect them to my own reality. I discovered how freedom, equality, and respect for diversity are reflected in our daily lives. I was impressed by how each team presented the cultural values of their country with such creativity and pride."

4. Elif, Turkey

"For me, the most moving activity was the Living Library. I listened to real stories about life, courage, and diversity, and each dialogue made me reflect on my own identity and European values.

It was a lesson in empathy and understanding."



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testimonials

LEAD



5. Kostas, Greece

"The visit to Horezu Town Hall showed me how democracy works at the local level. I talked to representatives of the authorities and understood how important dialogue between citizens and institutions is. After this experience, I decided to get involved in civic activities at home."

6. Medeea, Romania

"For me, LEAD was a perfect example of learning through experience. I saw how non-formal activities can inspire young people to become more active and empathetic. I went home with the energy of a united team and the confidence that democratic education can change generations."

7. Doni, Bulgaria

"One Step Forward made me realize how different life chances can be depending on context. At that moment, I felt how important it is to have empathy and get involved in reducing inequalities. It was a deeply human experience that changed the way I look at the world."

8. Ahmad, Hungary

"I was amazed by the involvement of young people in activities such as the European Train or Game of Democracy. From the first days to the final flash mob in Craiova, I noticed a real evolution: participants learned to listen, collaborate, and build democratic solutions together. It was a truly educational experience."



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9. Omer, Turkey

"The Flashmob for Democracy in Craiova was a moment I will never forget. Seeing people stop in the street to watch our symbolic dance about freedom and solidarity was incredible. I felt that art can be a powerful form of civic expression."

10. Lefkotea, Greece

"The last days of the project, when we worked on the booklet and videos, were very special. We reviewed everything we had learned, from creative activities to moments of reflection, and realized how much we had grown as a team. LEAD was a real lesson in European life."

Facilitator – Andreea Balasa (Romania)

"The LEAD project was more than a series of activities — it was an experience of collective growth. Every day, I saw how young people from the five countries opened up, learned from each other, and turned ideas into action.

I am glad that we managed to build a safe space together, where diversity became a resource, not a barrier. Activities such as Chain of Consequences, One Step Forward, and the European Train brought moments of deep reflection, while Game of Democracy and the Flashmob for Democracy showed how non-formal learning can inspire real initiatives.

My role was to guide, but in reality,
I learned a lot myself. I saw how democracy
is lived, not just learned, through dialogue,
empathy, and the courage to listen. For me,
LEAD was proof that when young people
collaborate across borders,
Europe becomes more united and stronger."



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