



**ENACTING
COMMON VALUES
OF SOLIDARITY AND
INTERCULTURAL
DIALOGUE**

Enacting Common Values of Solidarity and Intercultural Dialogue - Valid

At a glance

During recent years, we have witnessed the emerging of intercultural tensions and social disharmony, together with the rise of citizens' discontent and their demands for higher inclusion in policy-making all over Europe. There is indeed an evident need to invest in cultural diversity and dialogue!

VALID was designed to reinforce the integration of intercultural and social perspectives into a wide range of public policies, by using them as a concept and as a policy tool basis for managing diversity and for recognizing European cities as key players in the intercultural policy. The project will be structured in a set of interlinked activities carried out at different territorial levels.

An added value of the project? The inclusion of Kosovo* as the leader of the consortium! This country, being recently eligible in the program, represents an occasion to reflect on the importance of the EU accession and enlargement process, and give impetus to the promotion of EU policy framework together with the sharing of good practices with EU counterparts.

Objectives

The project aimed at building a strong network of towns committed to intercultural exchange, using a bottom-up approach and the promotion of cultural participation. Cultural participation is seen as a tool for improving social inclusion, active citizenship, and intercultural dialogue, as well as fostering solidarity and respect for cultural diversity. In its bigger picture, the project openly aims at bridging the local and the European level, building cooperation from a grassroots approach, and at the same time constructing a European network creating a wider common intercultural frame. Go for it, VALID!

Partners

- Directorate for Culture Youth and Sport, Municipality of Peja - Lead Partner
- ALDA
- Municipality of Zavidovici
- Municipality of Niksic
- LDA Central and South Serbia
- Municipality of Patos
- Municipality of Kumanovo
- City of Ravenna
- City of Larissa
- Volunteer Centre Novo Mesto
- LDA Kosovo
- LDA Subotica

VALID in NUMBERS



4 international meetings/Conferences in:

Larissa, Greece.
Novo Mesto ,Slovenia,
Ravenna Italy
Peja, Kosovo

22 Local paths in 11 communities

organized in a plethora of activities, workshops, world cafes, meetings...



More than 1000 direct beneficiaries,

10 000 indirect beneficiaries

Intercultural Crosswords: First international kick off meeting in Larissa, Greece

Thursday and Friday the 22nd and the 23rd of April were two meaningful days for the online introduction of the project VALID – European Towns – Enacting Common Values of Solidarity and Intercultural Dialogue. This two-days online event was organised by the municipality of Larissa (Greece) together with various stakeholders placed at different level.

The main objective of the project, as M. George Soultis said during the first meeting, “is to build connections between European cities”. This strong network of cities was thought as a way to build bridges and connections while establishing a common legal frame.

Moreover, this international event offered an opportunity to reflect on different European matters such as, for example, on candidates to the EU admission. Additionally, it was the occasion to share experiences and knowledge about certain facts that might inspire other stakeholders; empathising – among other things – on the role of cities and municipalities in the establishment of a well-functioning democratic society; by insisting on the idea that changes can be made at the local level.



Intercultural City Exchange: Second international meeting in Novo Mesto, Slovenia



Over the course of the 15th and the 16th of June of 2021, the VALID project organized their second intercultural event: the Intercultural City Exchange, hosted in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, though held online over zoom. The focus is on a local level, specifically with the purpose of finding connections between groups and creating an exchange of culture, such as through cities, cultural ideas, etc.

The project is a bottom-up approach for promoting inclusion and cultural dialogue among people, and the purpose of this meeting was to facilitate that, with several speakers giving presentations with examples of local development, including people from various cultural projects, NGOs and other associations.

As well as this, ideas were shared around during the runtime of the conference and suggestions were given in terms of what can be done for cultural minorities, migrants, etc. to promote inclusiveness, cultural dialogue, and building a network of towns. The zoom meeting was also divided into breakout sessions that discussed local ways of participating and suggestions, and polls were done in order to gauge the opinions and knowledge of participants.



Possible expectations and suggestions given further increase participation, inclusion, motivation, etc. for recipients and prove to be beneficial. General things encouraged include creating things such as NGOs and consultative bodies for cultural minorities/migrants, encourage those who have the right to vote, promoting art and creativity, flexibility, approaches such as personal and “here and now” approaches, among other things.

Among the discussion topics covered was also things that are already done for promotion of inclusion, such as daily centers (mostly for children,) activities and classes for kids and adults (such as language, IT, work help, etc.), workshops, year-wide cultural events, and more. It was also made clear that there will be future international events held across other countries.

Overall, it can be said that this event was productive and helped to share interesting ideas for cultural promotion. Of course, more events like this will be held.



Intercultural Community- Theatre Art Third international meeting in Ravenna, Italy

In 2021, the city of Ravenna celebrated the 700th anniversary of the death of the epic poet and father of the Italian Language, Dante Alighieri. With this major event passing by and in the occasion of the third transnational meeting, participants of the VALID project took the days 10-13 of September to visit the culturally monumental city and engage in various cultural exchanges and activities, alongside partners of the event presenting their own delegations. Participants included representatives of partner municipalities, local authorities of Ravenna, youth and culture groups, NGOs, artists, and interested citizens.



Looking at the activities that those involved participated in, they had plenty of opportunities to exchange amongst one another experiences such as what their respective groups are involved in and do, and special attention was paid to the theatrical and artistic side of Ravenna. The delegations had the opportunity to hear about several initiatives that the Municipality of Ravenna supports.



The “Teatro delle Albe” theater group, which is a partner of the city, presented multiple performances done by the youth of Ravenna such as plays, and the final results of a Rap Lab. This all tied further into the topic of Dante and what he means to the people of Italy. The aim of the theater troupe is to promote the local culture and bring the people of Ravenna together, and they took the time to share how they have gone about that and helped further promote the local cultural abundance. Part of the program is delegated towards the inclusion of migrants through theater, in particular, a group from Senegal, and showing that despite our differences, we can all find a shared heritage to unite us.



As part of the celebration the partners took part in the traditional reading of the Divine Comedy in front of Dante’s tomb. Several event participants read part of the Divine Comedy at the Tomb in their respective languages, with the event being livestreamed. The spectators were able to hear the lines of the famous poem in Slovenian, Macedonian, Albanian, Bosnian and Italian. It is part of a daily happening in which anyone can sign up to read part of the Divine Comedy to the tomb, restarting on a yearly basis, as the city’s gift to Dante.



Intercultural policies in EU perspective: Fourth international meeting in Peja, Kosovo

From the 22nd to the 25th of November the city of Peja in eastern Kosovo* welcomed the delegation of the Valid Project in a new opportunity to promote intercultural dialogue and collaboration between the local authorities and civil society. The Valid project aims to spread more inclusive policies and European values to cities around the region, to finally develop a network of cultural exchange and tolerance. In Peja, the delegation from different associations and cities started their stay with a meeting in the mayor's office of Mr. Gazmend Muhaxheri.

Overall, the agenda was rich of events and excursions: from a visit to the natural and cosmopolitan heritage of the municipality, to the medieval orthodox to the ottoman time; or the iconic landmarks included in the visit were the Drin Waterfall, which is the source of the river Driniand located in the gorge of Drini i Bardhe, in Zhjeb Mountain in Radavc village.



In addition, the delegation had the opportunity to listen to the Choir Siparantum Performance at Professional Theatre Istref Begolli Peja; while meeting the staff of the International Animation festival "Anibar". Gathered in the theatre next to the centre of Peja, the creators of the festival explained how the project was born, the activities that they do and even showed some of the short films that were projected during previous editions!

Within this event, to emphasize the importance of solidarity and social values, the delegation was first brought to visit the "Odhise Paskali" Art School, where the art exhibition in the school's atrium was presented. The latter was comprised of works from the classes on fashion, architecture, paint and graphic design.

Finally, the partners also had the opportunity to visit the Patriarchate of Peja, an orthodox monastery near Peja; and finally, the Bajrakli Mosque and the bazaar. By walking down, the street of the city, by talking with people and meeting local delegates, participants had the opportunity to concretely see how culture does unite people, as aimed by the project itself.

Local Paths in the spotlight

Local meeting in Knjazevac

On June 11th 2021, a group of young people engaged in youth CSOs from Knjazevac had a meeting with the representative of the local governance, the Deputy Mayor Mr. Branislav Josifovic. The topic of the activity was participation of youth in the decision-making on the local level, as well as the presentation of the recommendations for the improving the quality of life of young people in Knjaževac.

Prior to this meeting, the street action was organized, where the young activists asked the citizens to vote on their recommendations and to add their suggestions. In the document presented to the local authorities, there were four recommendations for improving the quality of life for young people in municipality of Knjazevac that had the most votes:

1. to establish a youth centre,
2. to create more opportunities for recreational sports,
3. to have a counselling program for young people and
4. to have more cultural and entertaining activities for youth, organized according to their interests.



Coffee with the President in Niksic



On June 11th, 2021, a local activity "Coffee with the President" was realized in Niksic, in which the President of the Municipal Assembly of Niksic, Mr Nemanja Vukovic, participated. The event was attended by representatives of the Municipality of Niksic, representatives of state institutions, the NGO sector, entrepreneurs, interested citizens, 5 representatives of the Municipality of Niksic, representatives of the academic community and media.

The event was of an interactive type and all participants have participated in the discussion. In addition to the topics envisaged by the agenda, the participants initiated a conversation on topics related to environmental protection, the politics in local communities, the position of the Roma and Egyptian population, cultural creativity and others.

Over 50 questions were asked and more than 20 initiatives and 10 proposals for solving current problems burdening the citizens of Niksic were sent. The President of the Municipal Assembly of Niksic answered all the questions and promised that he would consider all initiatives and proposals to work together to solve the problem. A model of future cooperation between the Municipality of Niksic and the civil sector and citizens has been agreed, preconditions have been created for good cooperation between representatives of the NGO sector, citizens and decision-makers.



“For a new life of...rubbles” in Municipality of Peja

The Local Democracy Agency, together with the Rrjeti i Organizatave të Kulturës (The Network of Culture Organizations) in Peja, have organized a common activity on 12th November 2021, involving pupils of the School of Arts together with an acoustical performance by the local artist Agon Goqi. Through this activity both organizations have organized an exhibition inside the old and decaying structures of a former public bank.

35 participants attended the activity among pupils of the School of Arts, children coming from different ethnic entities and citizens. The pupils of the School of Arts have exhibited their operas in the spaces of the old structures of a former public bank. A video has been created to convey the message of the activity to the general public.

The aim of the exhibition was to convey the message that public and social structures can easily be transformed in spaces where culture activities can be implemented and through which culture can be conveyed. In short, through this activity the organizations aimed at conveying the message that a new life can come out of the rubbles. The message that old public and social buildings can be reused for cultural activities has been conveyed to the participants that were present in the activity, and to the general public through the social media.



Intercultural Democracy in Action! - Workshop in Patos

On 19 November 2021 in Patos, Albania 26 young people from Patos engaged in a workshop and working lunch. The main idea of the workshop was to discuss with them about social inclusion in decision-making processes.

The VALID Team shared to the participants the policies that the Municipality of Patos has reflected considering the recommendations of the young people from the first local event. Encouraging them to participate in decision-making processes such as the public hearings on the local budget and fiscal package for next year was one of the main points that oriented the interactive discussion with the participants.

With the participation of two experts from the region, one specialized in communication and the other on intercultural dialogue the group discussed the importance of citizens' involvement regardless of their ethnic, social and cultural affiliation in the decision-making processes of their community.

The experts encouraged discussions on how much intercultural democracy influences local action, while the project team explained through a poster exhibition concrete initiatives that the youth of the city have undertaken in various topics, specifically those with a social theme.

The participants agreed to participate in the public hearings that the Municipality will organize during December 2021 with regard to the drafting and the approval of the city budget and fiscal package for the next year and were encouraged to be part of the Youth Advisory Group of Patos, an advisory group at the Municipality.



What did we learn ?



The principle of local participation is a key factor in making sustainable cities in the future

Sharing Best practices and discussing how they can be replicated in every community is important step in development of new and relevant policies for communities

Culture is a universal tool for battling all stereotypes, fears and inequalities. It is universal, can be used with all age groups, responds to needs of every community and offers a big field to play in. Cooperation in culture is key for development.

To emphasize the importance of solidarity and social values it is important to develop a network of cultural exchange and tolerance, which is the aim of this project. The creation of an intercultural community that celebrates differences and supports local development is a goal that every project should achieve.

VALID



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