



## Project Summary: "Together for Change Twin Town Forum" (TFCh-TTF)

### Project Background and Overall Objectives

The international town twinning program coordinated by the Municipality of Plăieșii de Jos in Romania, carried out within the framework of the European Union's CERV Town Twinning Program, has been successfully completed. The primary goal of the professional forums and meetings held over the past year was to address the most pressing social challenges affecting our rural and isolated regions. The program centered on strengthening democratic engagement, actively involving youth and women in local decision-making, and promoting the social inclusion of disadvantaged or minority groups.

The professional forums and meetings implemented within the project built upon one another, ensuring continuous cooperation between the partner municipalities. During the joint work, special attention was paid to sharing professional experiences, deepening partnership relations, and defining future development directions. This period enriched our cooperation with significant value, both professionally and personally.

### Main Milestones

During the project, hundreds of local citizens, as well as experts, municipal leaders, civil society organizations, and youth representatives from the partner countries, were directly involved in the programs. The joint work took place along the following main pillars:

#### ***1. Building new and deeper international connections***

In addition to nurturing our existing town twinning relationships, the program opened doors to launching entirely new regional partnerships. During the structured roundtable discussions, municipalities and civil organizations used interactive presentations to showcase their communities' strengths and challenges, thereby laying the groundwork for long-term cooperation.

#### ***2. Mapping cultural heritage and regional identity***

During the meetings, emphasis was placed on introducing participants to the unique cultural and historical heritage of the region, which brought the different delegations closer together:



- *Historical and material heritage*: the meetings provided an opportunity to jointly review the region's past, historical significance, and cultural values, which provided an important foundation for discussions on civic engagement and shared memory.
- *Traditions and gastronomy*: the programs showcased traditions related to the local lifestyle, elements of traditional farming, and the specialities of the region's gastronomy. The cultural and gastronomic presentations provided an informal space for a free exchange of experiences.
- *Folk art and crafts*: participants gained insight into the region's rich crafting traditions, learning about the work of local masters.

### **3. Structured Exchange of Experiences on Rural Challenges**

During the meetings, we placed a strong emphasis on practical workshops that went beyond theoretical levels:

#### *Women's leadership and equal opportunities*

Organized by women's groups and involving university experts, we held interactive workshops. Here, we examined the real barriers to women's participation in public life in rural areas, dismantling gender stereotypes and creating supportive mentoring networks.

#### *Youth civic engagement*

Through targeted youth roundtables and dialogue circles, young people themselves formulated the obstacles that hinder them in local public life. Participants shared their experiences with successful Erasmus+ and other international exchange programs, which serve as models for mobilizing youth locally.

#### *Social inclusion and inclusive planning*

During the professional workshops, we explored practical methods that help municipalities and local organizations reach out to disadvantaged or minority groups. The goal was to integrate their views and needs into local development plans.

### **4. Community building, culture, and intergenerational dialogue**

The professional programs were accompanied by large-scale events that moved the wider local community, ensuring that all age groups were active parts of the project.

#### *Sport and teamwork*

Friendly football and ping-pong tournaments helped the integration of international and local participants.



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### *Cultural performances*

The events featured the local pensioners' club, young classical musicians, as well as local and international folk dance groups, presenting the customs of minority communities. The evenings concluded with live pop-rock and retro music concerts.

### *Child- and family-friendly programs*

We paid special attention to the youngest participants: a musical theatre concert, a puppet show, face painting, an asphalt drawing competition, and a traditional games corner ensured the involvement of families.

### *Living folk customs and heritage preservation*

Experiencing local folk customs and cultural heritage played a prominent role during the programs. Participants directly experienced how deep-rooted traditions and community rituals are still able to maintain their identity-shaping role today, providing a living, intergenerational link in modern everyday life.

## **5. Joint future projects and sustainability**

One of the most important results of the partnership was that participants paid close attention to long-term cooperation. The strategic action plan developed during the joint work defines future development directions, from which concrete project ideas were born. The partner institutions committed themselves to submitting joint EU applications in the coming periods, with special regard to youth programs and supporting women's participation in public life, thus ensuring the long-term sustainability of the established international network.

*This project could not have happened without the support of the European Union and the collaboration of the participants. We are very grateful to our partner and twin towns for the joint work, to the Kazun Association for co-organizing the events, and to the Local Landownership Associations for their essential support. We would also like to thank all local volunteers, civil organizations, and residents who gave their time and experience to help plan our common future.*

Plăieșii de Jos, 30.06.2026.