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## Infopack ESC Volunteering project

# **“Community Heroes”**

### Marasesti - Focsani, ROMANIA

01/10/2020 – 30/06/2021

### Project description

Civic participation of children and involvement in the community life of which they belong to, is of great importance for the child's development and the future adult, but also for the development of the community, of the society as a whole, so affected by passivity, lack of civic involvement, initiative. In this project we start from the premise that active participation cannot be taught by listening to or memorising norms and rules, but by practising and getting involved in the community.

The project involves 16 ESC volunteers who are going to support community mini-projects initiated in a voluntary manner by children/youngsters with the help of the ESC volunteers.

We want the project to transform children from spectators into architects of change in their own community. Children and young people, together with ESC volunteers and teachers become active agents of change through social entrepreneurship and community involvement. They will work as a team, gain confidence in their ability to create change and develop their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. By being directly involved in the change they want to bring in the community, children, young people and volunteers will have the opportunity to feel on their own how they themselves can help solve community problems.

**The aim** of the project is to encourage the involvement of children and young people in community life and to support initiatives that contribute to the promotion of *active citizenship* and *sustainable development*.

**Objectives** of the project:

1. Children and young people from the 15 school institutions in Vrancea county will develop their civic spirit, communication skills, ability to manage civic initiatives and manage difficult situations, together with the 16 ESC volunteers, by the end of the project.
2. The children and young people from Mărășești, Focșani, Garoafa, Ciuslea, Panciu, will become active citizens, able to mobilize their colleagues to bring improvements in their life, school, environment and community, by the end of the project.
3. The children and young people from the communities participating in the project will identify the needs of the community together with the 16 ESC volunteers and will seek community development solutions during the 9-month volunteering stage.
4. The 16 volunteers together with the target group of the project will promote solidarity in their own communities through volunteering actions carried out by the end of the project.

**Duration of activity:** 9 months from **01 October 2020 – 30 June 2021**

**Venue:** The project takes place in Mărășești and Focșani, but the activities will also cover other towns and rural areas from Vrancea county, such as Garoafa, Ciușlea, Panciu.

### **Project activities:**

All project activities will be carried out with young people and children in kindergartens, schools and high schools, in the form of practical workshops that will turn into actions of civic involvement and sustainable development. The ESC volunteers will work in teams of 4 and their role will be to encourage the actions of young people and children and to get involved with them in various civic actions, campaigns, environmental actions, practical volunteering activities.

The project activities will be guided after 4 steps: Feel, Imagine, Act and Share, and ESC volunteers along with educators and teachers will encourage children and young people to best define their ideas of civic participation and change in the community and to put them into practice. Through the proposed activities we encourage children and young people to actively participate in the community and to make their own voice and ideas heard. Volunteers will work with children and youngsters during the homeroom/advisory classes, civic education, social education, English, physical education, art and craft classes, so as not to interfere with the school's schedule and curriculum.

The preparation of an activity will have several steps: the first step - **FEEL** - in which the children/youngsters will be put in front of different situations in order to generate change. They will watch some motivational videos to inspire them in what they intend to do and thus outline ideas of activities that are beneficial to them and the community. In this phase, they must feel the real problems in which they want to intervene, bring about change and outline the causes that produce or sustain them.

Starting from a problem faced by a person, a group of people or the community, the children/youngsters will begin to **IMAGINE** how they can intervene in changing it for the better, so that they will have a rapid impact, be bold and have long-term impact.

In the **ACTION** phase, the ESC volunteers assisted by the teachers in the class will guide the children/youngsters to make their own action plan in which they will take into account the following steps: detailed description of the action, list of materials, delegation of responsibilities and their framing in time. Then follows the implementation of the volunteer activity focused on feelings ( how the ESC volunteers, youngsters, vulnerable groups feel), action (to make a video of the activity) change and transformation (How have ESC volunteers changed, the children/youngsters, community, vulnerable group, those who received the intervention).

In the **SHARE** phase - each group of children/youngsters will create their own story about their action and how they produced change in the community. The videos will be uploaded on the schools websites, Youtube, our organisation's website, partners' websites and facebook project group.

Through the project activities we want to reinforce the idea that every child can become an active agent of change in the community when they discover through their own experiences their power to bring about change.

## Expected learning outcomes:

By the end of the 9-month stage the volunteers will be able to improve/acquire:

- critical thinking, analytical skills and attitudes designed to stimulate active participation in the field of education and society.
- communication skills in English and his/her own mother language; knowledge of basic Romanian language;
- skills to work in an international team;
- skills in managing the relationship with children/youngsters;
- knowledge of the organization of NGOs, experience in volunteering and interculturalism;
- time management skills, team coordination skills, they will learn what it means to bring a change in the environment where they live and they will also develop the European and intercultural dimension;
- entrepreneurial skills – the volunteers will develop their sense of initiative and entrepreneurship by designing and coordinating project activities;
- coordination skills, teamwork, leadership, partnership management and project management, that serve them in future projects;
- the volunteers will also improve their social and networking skills and will become more motivated to engage in community life as a result of their working with children and youngsters during the project;
- development of some life skills and transversal key competences useful for their personal and professional future;
- knowledge about the Romanian culture, traditions, customs, gastronomy.

## Other details:

**Accommodation:** The volunteers will live in rented flats in Marasesti and Focşani, in shared bedrooms (2 volunteers will share a room), individual beds, with common area, shared cooking, washing, laundry and social facilities, free wi-fi included.

**Food:** Volunteers will receive a monthly food allowance of 150 Euro to buy food products and cook for themselves. They will also receive a monthly allowance of 90 Euro in form of “pocket money”.

**Local Transport:** The volunteers’ flat apartments are situated near the location of the activities, so the volunteers will walk to the place where the activities take place. For transport to the other schools in villages, volunteers will travel by minibuses, which run daily every half an hour. The bus tickets will be reimbursed.

**Holidays:** ESC volunteers will work 6 hours per day, 5 days a week, two consecutive days off per week and two days off per month. National Holidays are also free days.

**Travel:** The volunteers together with their Sending Organisations will be responsible for arranging their travel. The travel costs will be reimbursed at the end of the project according to the distance band limits imposed by the European Commission:

- For travel distances between 100 and 499 Km: EUR 180 per participant
- For travel distances between 500 and 1 999 Km: EUR 275 per participant
- For travel distances between 2000 and 2999 Km: EUR 360 per participant
- For travel distances between 3000 and 3999 Km: EUR 530 per participant

The volunteers need to arrive at Bucharest – Otopeni (Henri Coanda International Airport). From Bucharest to Focsani/Marasesti there are regular buses every day directly from the airport. We can arrange to book the bus tickets for you.

### **Training during the project**

The volunteers will be accompanied and supported at all times during the activities by coordinators and staff of our organization and they will receive training at the beginning of their stage to become familiar with the way the activities will be implemented.

The volunteers will attend the On-Arrival Training and Mid-Term Evaluation, organized by the Romanian National Agency.

The volunteers will also receive Romanian language training for the first 3 months.

### **Health insurance**

Sending organization is responsible to register the volunteers to the CIGNA INSURANCE at least 14 days before departure. Volunteers will also receive from the sending organization information about the coverage and the procedure of CIGNA INSURANCE. Volunteers are strongly advised to have the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) with them given by their national provider.

### **Money and Currency**

The currency of Romania is Leu (RON). 1 Romanian Leu equals 0.21 Euro

### **Other recommendations**

◆ you should bring your regular clothes and personal hygiene products. Bed clothes, covers and towels are provided by host organisation.

◆ in Romania it is usually very cold in the winter and sometimes there is a lot of snow. During December, January and February the temperatures can go down to -15° below 0° Celsius), so you should also bring some warm clothes with you: a warm hat and gloves, boots, a winter jacket!

You should also bring:

- ◆ Medication, if needed.
- ◆ Laptop
- ◆ Motivation and good mood!

## Project Environment



**Mărășești** is a small town in Vrancea county, situated in the east of Romania. **Mărășești** is known as a town with a great historical significance because here a major battle took place during the First World War. The Mausoleum of Marasesti, one of the most important memorial sites in Europe, was built in the place where, in the summer of 1917, great battles were fought between Germany and Romania. Nowadays, Mărășești is the poorest town of Vrancea County, with a population of approximately 11,000 inhabitants on the decrease comparing to previous years. The town is a disadvantaged area, with no economy and most of its inhabitants receive social security benefits or are in extreme poverty. Nevertheless, in this town there are 4 elementary schools attended by 1200 children aged 6-14 years old and one High School attended by 200 students who are facing the absence of positive role models and conscious leaders. The town is characterized by the absence of recreational facilities and places for youth. The offer of Marasesti town, in terms of music, sports, arts, activities for young people is almost zero and most of the youngsters are facing the absence of positive role models and conscious leaders. All projects of our organisation are targeted at children/young people/elderly in our region.

**Focșani** is the capital city of Vrancea county, situated in the east of Romania, in the historical region of Moldavia. The city lies 180 km north-northeast of Bucharest. Focșani is the centre of a wine-making region that has been famous for its vineyards since the 15th century. Focșani is also an industrial city, processing dairy products and manufacturing furniture and clothing.



## About us

**Asociatia Voluntariat pentru Viata** is an NGO, based in Romania, founded in November 2012 on the initiative of some specialists in the field of education, art, history, social assistance.

The mission of Asociatia Voluntariat pentru Viata is to promote volunteering and civic consciousness by developing activities that contribute to increased public awareness of the contribution of volunteers to the local community and to the society in general.

Asociatia Voluntariat pentru Viata performs the following duties:

- develops activities based on non-formal education aiming to enhance social functioning, integration and cooperation among young people;
- provides counsel, therapy and specialized assistance in order to prevent social marginalization.

**Asociatia Voluntariat pentru Viata** was created with the purpose of having a tool to better access the needs of young people living in the local community and to provide a concrete contribution to meeting their demands in terms of participation, active citizenship, the feeling of belonging to a common Europe, tolerance and antiracism. An important goal of our organisation is to bring young people closer to European issues, to bring a European dimension to a region which is far away from decision-making centers and peripheral in terms of geographical and economic position.

In 2012, Asociatia Voluntariat Pentru Viata started its work in Marasesti town in order to support a sustainable local development. First, the Organization developed and implemented youth projects in the framework of **Youth in Action** programme (Youth Initiatives promoting cultural heritage and environment). Then, the Organisation started to develop European projects under the **Erasmus+** programme. Starting from 2018, Asociatia Voluntariat Pentru Viata began to implement Solidarity Projects and Volunteering Projects in the framework of the new programme **European Solidarity Corps**.

A large part of the activities that we carry out are focused around supporting the disadvantaged children and their families to have access to education and involving young people, in particular, and community members in volunteering actions.

Asociatia Voluntariat pentru Viata carries out its work in partnership with local and regional schools and local social centers, offering the chance to their target groups to participate in the projects. Our Organization also initiated an on-going collaboration with the School Centre for Inclusive Education "Elena Doamna" from Focsani, an institution which schools more than 300 students with special educational needs, but also children from families with fewer opportunities who are at risk of marginalization and social exclusion. Our Organization wants to change the view on these children and wants to start working directly with children and young people who are at risk of social marginalization because of their disabilities.

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