



REAL Project:

**Resilience, Empowerment,
Active Leadership**

**A comparative research
report – summary**



Resilience
Empowerment
Active Leadership



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REAL is a European Erasmus+ project supporting local communities across Europe to become more resilient – better able to adapt, respond, and recover from ongoing and future crises such as climate change, inequality, and economic stress.

Project goals

- Understand how resilience functions in different local contexts
- Share practical tools and training to support grassroots responses
- Strengthen links between local practice and EU policy
- Promote inclusive, community-led, and equitable approaches

A comparative report

The main objective of the comparative report was to compare strengths and challenges in communities across the partner countries by utilising research findings from different sources. Each partner country conducted desk research, surveyed relevant participants and produced a national report on community resilience initiatives. From these reports, a final research report with analysis was then created.

Key findings across countries

Challenges identified

- Communities face multiple, overlapping stressors: environmental, economic, and social
- Civil society organisations often lack stable funding and coordination support
- Volunteer involvement is rising but poorly integrated into official systems
- Local knowledge and digital tools are not being used to full potential

What builds resilience

- Community agency and local leadership
- Strong social networks and shared values
- Inclusive access to resources and decision-making
- Training, partnerships, and effective communication strategies

Survey insights – 148 organisations

Focus Areas

- Events, education, mental health, and crisis preparedness
- Support for community-building and social care initiatives

Key Needs

- Funding stability
- Access to training and peer learning
- Stronger collaboration across sectors

Effective Strategies

- Grassroots engagement and leadership
- Capacity building through networks
- Focus on well-being and inclusion

Main challenges

- Insufficient and unstable resources
- Digital divides, especially in rural areas
- Low public awareness and participation
- Inequality in who benefits from resilience efforts
- Limited roles and recognition for spontaneous volunteers

EU Policy & context

Resilience is now central to EU strategies in crisis response, climate adaptation, and social cohesion. The EU defines resilience as the capacity to withstand, adapt to, and recover from shocks—whether pandemics, natural disasters, or social unrest.

Key EU mechanisms

- EU Civil Protection Mechanism
- Solidarity & Emergency Aid Reserve
- Climate Adaptation Strategy
- EU Cohesion Policy & IPCR (Integrated Political Crisis Response)

These frameworks enable rapid response and promote resource sharing among member states.

Volunteer engagement

Volunteers are essential in crisis response but often face:

- Gaps in coordination and safety
- Lack of training and formal recognition

Greater integration and support for volunteers is a growing EU priority.

What's needed going forward

- Stronger connections between EU policy and local realities
- Inclusive, place-based strategies led by communities
- Investment in digital infrastructure and human capacity
- Recognition, training, and coordination for volunteers and grassroots actors

Next steps for the REAL Project

- Continue sharing cross-country findings and insights
- Develop practical, adaptable tools and training packages

[Click HERE to read the full comparative report](#)

