



# **Resilience Across Borders**

## **Best Practice Manual**



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This Best Practice Manual has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ project **Resilience, Empowerment and Active Leadership (REAL)**, running from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2027. The project brings together partner organisations from six European countries: Volunteer Ireland (Ireland), Pro Vobis - National Resource Center for Volunteering (Romania), Freiwilligen-Zentrum Augsburg (Germany), Vestre Aker Frivilligsentral (Norway), the Centre for European Volunteering (Belgium) and the Croatian Volunteer Development Centre (Croatia).

The project aims to empower community leaders, civil society representatives, volunteer managers and decision-makers by equipping them with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to foster sustainable development, social cohesion and active citizenship. The project combines capacity building, transnational networking and innovative strategies to help strengthen community resilience across Europe.

**Community resilience**, as understood within the REAL project, is the ability of a community to cope with and recover from challenges such as natural or man-made disasters. It means being prepared, adapting to changes and working together to bounce back quickly. Strong social connections, good leadership, reliable infrastructure and the capacity to adjust are all key elements.

At the heart of this manual are **15 case studies**, collected through in-depth interviews with organisations that represent good practice in areas as diverse as sustainable mobility, housing, social inclusion, youth participation, health, crisis response and environmental action. While the contexts differ, common threads emerge: the central role of volunteers, the power of collaboration across sectors and the importance of flexibility and innovation.

The manual does not aim to provide a single model to follow. Instead, it offers inspiration, practical insights and lessons learnt from real organisations working in very different contexts. By reading these stories, community leaders, volunteer managers and civil society organisations can identify approaches that resonate with their own situations and adapt them to local realities.

The case studies are presented thematically rather than by country, to better highlight cross-cutting lessons. This thematic approach reflects the shared challenges faced across Europe, whether building resilience through social inclusion, environmental sustainability, crisis preparedness or youth empowerment. The manual is organised into three thematic sections: Environmental Sustainability, Social Inclusion and Solidarity and Crisis Preparedness and Response, followed by practical guidelines and useful resources.

Ultimately, this manual is a collaborative product built on the voices of practitioners and the belief that resilient communities are created when people come together, share responsibility and act with purpose.

# Best Practice Examples

## Environmental Sustainability

Building sustainable communities requires more than technology. It depends on people. These initiatives show how environmental action, when rooted in local participation, can make climate goals tangible. From sustainable mobility and renewable energy to biodiversity, communities are finding creative ways to link environmental care with resilience.





## CIVINET Slovenia-Croatia-South East Europe Network

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia

### LEAD ORGANISATION

ODRAZ – Sustainable Community Development (acting as Secretariat);

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

ODRAZ – 2000; CIVINET Network – 2013 (renamed in 2016)

### MAIN OBJECTIVES



- Exchange of knowledge and best practices in sustainable mobility planning and management
- Development of joint projects to secure future funding for sustainable transport activities
- Networking of cities and stakeholders across six South East European countries
- Improving mobility and quality of life through citizen participation and innovative solutions

CIVINET Network was established as a voluntary initiative by several cities and organisations from Slovenia and Croatia (including ODRAZ) to promote sustainable urban mobility planning, with a focus on improving quality of life and encouraging citizen participation. ODRAZ promotes and supports sustainability-oriented change. In their work, community resilience is understood as the ability of local communities to adapt to change, face challenges and maintain quality of life through sustainable practices and participatory decision-making.

They address environmental, social and economic sustainability, empowering citizens to actively shape more resilient communities. Within the CIVINET network, ODRAZ promotes education, policy development and initiatives that strengthen resilience through sustainable mobility, environmental projects and civic engagement.

Their resilience projects build social cohesion, trust in institutions and crisis preparedness. For ODRAZ, resilience is a dynamic process measured across economic, social, environmental and infrastructural dimensions, and developed through long-term strategies and continuous adaptation.



## Core Activities and Approaches

CIVINET functions as an informal but structured network, currently uniting over 230 members across six countries. Activities include:

- Networking & knowledge exchange - sharing experience on sustainable mobility in cities and rural areas, participatory planning and citizen participation
- Conferences, workshops and study visits - peer learning and exchange of best practices
- Project development support - helping members secure funding for sustainable mobility projects
- Information dissemination - regular news, research and best practices via website, newsletter and social media
- Thematic workshops & summer schools - targeted training for students and young professionals.

CIVINET advances sustainable mobility through knowledge-sharing, workshops, webinars, study visits and academic partnerships. Its interdisciplinary workshops and summer schools engage professors, researchers and practitioners who volunteer to mentor students in creating new ideas for public transport and urban mobility.

## Financing

- Different projects that support CIVITAS (Elevate, Satellite, CAPITAL, Muse)
- Contributions from coordinating cities (Ljubljana, Rijeka, Zagreb)
- Projects led by ODRAZ and funded through national and EU funds (e.g. Horizon, EUKI, Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund in Croatia, local municipalities)
- In-kind contributions from host cities (venues, refreshments, study visits).

To ensure long-term financial sustainability, CIVINET and ODRAZ as its Secretariat rely on a mix of strategies: diversifying funding sources, developing new projects and fostering strong partnerships with local authorities, academia, civil society and European networks. Active participation in EU-funded projects (such as Horizon, EIT, EUKI) provides stable resources, while education and community empowerment activities help build sustainable local financing models. Advocacy at EU level further supports the continuation of CIVINET's work.

## Cross-sector cooperation

CIVINET collaborates with different stakeholders across sectors to strengthen community resilience and promote sustainable urban mobility through:

- Public-private partnerships – developing sustainable mobility projects with cities, businesses and civil society.
- Academic collaboration – organising interdisciplinary workshops and training for students.
- Regional and international cooperation – engaging in initiatives such as CIVITAS Muse, CLIMASUM and SPINE.
- European projects – contributing to programmes including CIVITAS, EUKI and EIT.
- Knowledge exchange – hosting conferences and study visits to showcase best practices.
- Close cooperation with other CIVINET networks, the European Economic and Social Committee and European partners in sustainable planning and public transport.





## Achievements and Impact

CIVINET has generated tangible results in strengthening community resilience:

- Traffic infrastructure improvements – member cities introduced cycling lanes, improved public transport and adopted sustainable mobility strategies.
- Cross-sector cooperation – strengthened collaboration between governments, academia, civil society and business.
- Citizen inclusion – participatory planning processes built stronger trust between local authorities and residents.
- Capacity building – summer schools and workshops empowered young professionals and volunteers, preparing the next generation of mobility experts.
- Community resilience – enhanced social cohesion, institutional trust and preparedness for future challenges.

**Through joint EU projects, municipalities accessed funding for sustainable transport, improved public spaces and participatory planning tools. Volunteers played a key role, delivering workshops and events that made these achievements possible.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



- Volunteering is the backbone of CIVINET, with members sustaining most activities by freely giving their time and expertise. They host and moderate events, lead workshops and study visits, share good practice, provide venues and refreshments, and even mentor students. ODRAZ also fulfils much of its Secretariat role on a voluntary basis.
- Motivation is nurtured through a clear vision, involvement in decision-making, mentoring and training opportunities, as well as public recognition of contributions. Volunteers often highlight the positive atmosphere and supportive environment as key reasons for staying engaged.
- The impact of these efforts is evident in strong participation rates, positive feedback and the spread of sustainable mobility practices across the region—demonstrating the vital role volunteers play in sustaining CIVINET's work and influence.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Ensuring effective cross-sector cooperation between authorities, academia, civil society and businesses.
- Securing long-term funding for activities beyond project-based financing.
- Motivating consistent citizen participation in mobility planning and awareness campaigns.
- A just transition towards climate neutrality – implementing sustainable transport solutions requires cross-sector cooperation and the adaptation of existing policies.
- Transparent communication and continuous engagement with members (website, newsletter, social media).
- Building strong cross-sector partnerships between local authorities, academia, civil society and businesses.
- Organising awareness campaigns, trainings and workshops on sustainable mobility and just transition.
- Supporting member cities in accessing EU-funded projects to improve public transport and cycling infrastructure.
- Collaborating with other CIVINET networks, associations of municipalities and international organisations (e.g. Polis, Mobiel 21, GIZ, the Transport Community).



## Sustainability Strategies

- Ensuring continuity through strategic activities, partnerships and sustainable funding.
- Strengthening international cooperation with other CIVINET networks and relevant organisations.
- Developing new projects to secure long-term financing and involve members directly.
- Monitoring EU policies on sustainable mobility, climate action and development.
- Advocating for the continuation of CIVINET networks within the European Commission and other EU bodies.



## Transferability and Scaling

- CIVINET offers a transferable model:
- Its governance and volunteer-led approach can be replicated in other regions.
- Membership continues to expand to new municipalities.
- The network supports establishment of new CIVINETs in countries like Belgium and Ukraine.
- Local workshops allow adaptation of sustainable mobility models to specific community contexts.

**CIVINET demonstrates that cross-border collaboration, volunteer energy and citizen-centred approaches can transform mobility planning into a driver of resilience and quality of life.**

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

- Define your objectives clearly and identify organisations with which you can form meaningful partnerships to drive the initiative forward.
- Engage key stakeholders – collaborating with local authorities, organisations, and community members will significantly increase your chances of success.
- Secure financial sustainability – explore funding opportunities through EU programmes, national schemes, donations, and volunteer contributions.
- Communicate effectively and raise awareness – clear communication and community education are crucial for building long-term support.
- Tailor strategies to local needs – each community has its own challenges, so it is important to adapt your approach accordingly.
- Innovate with your partners – developing unique approaches will help distinguish your initiative from similar projects and attract and retain participants.

***“Above all, it is essential to believe in your initiative’s vision, its contribution to sustainable development, and its potential to improve the quality of life within local communities. Seek partners who share your vision and are ready to collaborate in embarking on something new.”***

Odraž, 2025



## Clujul Sustenabil

### LOCATION

Romania

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Clujul Sustenabil

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2020

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To create a collaborative space for sustainability and urban resilience in Cluj-Napoca, connecting professionals, activists and citizens

Clujul Sustenabil was founded in 2020 by Cami Gui as an informal civic initiative during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its aim was to create a collaborative space for sustainability and urban resilience in Cluj-Napoca, connecting professionals, activists and citizens.

The group began as an informal gathering of citizens, eventually affiliating with an existing NGO to gain legal standing while preserving its collaborative and open spirit

The initiative was born from frustration with fragmented civic efforts and a lack of dialogue during the pandemic. Clujul Sustenabil believes resilience comes from collaboration, emotional safety and the ability to co-create the city's future.

***"I didn't start with a strategy. I just knew I wanted to gather people who care and see what emerges."***

Cami Gui, Clujul Sustenabil, 2025





## Core Activities and Approaches

During the pandemic, people in Cluj-Napoca were increasingly isolated, disconnected, and skeptical about participation. Civic initiatives existed, but were fragmented. There was a strong need to create space for co-creation, visibility, and trust-building among professionals, activists, and ordinary citizens. Challenges like urban mobility, green space access, and inclusive policies needed collaborative solutions—not isolated efforts.

Starting with Zoom calls and open invitations, the group quickly expanded into public debates, co-creation workshops, and collaborative campaigns. Concrete activities included:

- a guide for neighbourhood community gardens
- advocacy on school mobility and safe routes
- participation in revising the General Urban Plan (PUG)
- a pilot intervention in a city square, proving participatory urbanism works
- support for reclaiming public space for play or markets.

The structure remained intentionally fluid and open, with no rigid hierarchy. People could join at their own pace, creating an atmosphere of inclusion.

## Financing

As an informal group later affiliated with an NGO, Clujul Sustenabil operated with modest resources. Sustainability relied on voluntary contributions, small partnerships and the dedication of participants.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- The initiative connected urban planners, educators, mediators, activists, parents and young people. It also acted as a bridge between NGOs and local authorities, encouraging collaboration instead of competition.

***“We helped people feel they’re not alone. That their voice matters, and that collaboration is possible—even joyful.”***

Cami Gui, Clujul Sustenabil, 2025



## Achievements and Impact

Clujul Sustenabil successfully co-created a network of trust and collaboration between civil society actors and local authorities. It offered a space for shared learning and connection. The group influenced Cluj's General Urban Plan (PUG) by contributing feedback on walkability, school mobility, and neighborhood regeneration.

The initiative helped increase the visibility of sustainability concerns and empowered new civic actors. Several people who joined the group later went on to start their own initiatives or joined larger projects focused on participatory urbanism, education, or the environment. The action also contributed to a shift in local policy-making culture, demonstrating that collaborative dialogue is not only possible but beneficial.

**One tangible success was the pilot public space intervention, which changed how institutions saw citizen input.**

**"Officials told us: 'We didn't know citizens could do this.' That moment shifted something."**

Cami Gui, Clujul Sustenabil, 2025

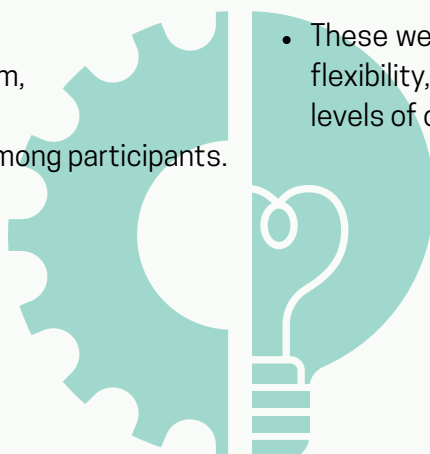
## Community & volunteer engagement



Clujul Sustenabil focused on emotional safety and long-term trust, not fast outcomes. Engagement was based on openness and emotional safety. People could show up as they were, without pressure and formalities. Tensions and burnout were navigated with humour, presence and flexibility. This created a culture of trust that encouraged participation from diverse groups, including those often excluded from formal processes, and proved that community resilience is not just surviving a crisis, but transforming how people relate to each other and to power.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Challenges included :
  - maintaining momentum,
  - preventing burnout,
  - navigating tensions among participants.
- These were addressed through humour, flexibility, and respect for different levels of commitment.





## Sustainability Strategies

The initiative sustained itself by staying informal for as long as possible, avoiding over-formalisation that might scare participants. It gradually affiliated with an NGO for legal status while keeping its collaborative spirit intact.



## Transferability and Scaling

The model is transferable to other cities: start small, stay open, and let clarity emerge through action. By prioritising emotional safety and inclusiveness, similar initiatives can build trust and influence local policy.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

### Start before you're ready:

**"If I waited to have a strategy, we'd still be waiting. Start, and clarity comes with doing."**

### Emotional safety enables innovation:

**"We didn't ask people to be perfect. We asked them to be present."**

### Trust the process of co-creation:

**"Good things happen when people feel seen, not evaluated."**

### Allow fluid participation:

**"Not everyone can join every meeting. So what? They show up when it matters."**

### Stay informal longer than you think you should:

**"Formality scares people. Openness attracts them."**

**"Don't wait for the perfect moment. Create the moment. The city needs all of us—messy, passionate, tired, hopeful."**





## Transition Town Kinsale (TTK)

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

County Cork, Ireland (local, regional, global influence)

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Transition Town Kinsale, volunteer-led community group

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

Early 2000s (from Kinsale College Permaculture Design Course);  
Energy Descent Action Plan launched 2005

### MAIN OBJECTIVES



- Reducing fossil fuel dependency,
- Localising food and energy systems,
- Addressing climate change and biodiversity loss,
- Building strong community ties.

Transition Town Kinsale (TTK) began about 20 years ago from a pioneering Permaculture Design Course at Kinsale College and became the world's first Transition Town. Its main goal is to help the community shift from fossil fuels to a resilient, sustainable, and self-sufficient local model.

Education is key, with free or low-cost workshops making sustainable living accessible to all. Ultimately, TTK empowers the community to create a sustainable future, believing local efforts can inspire global change.

For TTK, resilience means reconnecting with nature, localising food and energy systems, promoting renewables, and building strong community ties. It encompasses mental, physical, social, and ecological well-being. It is not just about preparing for crises but about reshaping how people live, share and care for the environment.



## Core Activities and Approaches

Transition Town Kinsale combines practical action, education, and community events, all driven by committed volunteers aiming to build local resilience.

Key initiatives include:

- Community Energy Project, which promotes solar power and enables neighbours to bulk-buy panels, making renewables more affordable and accessible.
- The Meadow Project, where schools plant wildflowers to learn about biodiversity.
- Regenerate, a social enterprise producing educational videos on ecological food growing and meadow care.
- Public engagement through events, seed sharing, skills exchanges, and trials like a Repair Café.

## Financing

- Funding mainly comes from grants, which are applied for as opportunities arise.
- TTK rely mostly on occasional grants.
- Occasional donations, which help to fund more projects.
- To ensure financial sustainability, the focus is on improving grant writing skills since securing grants has been key, as well as considering small fundraising events like table quizzes to diversify income.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- TTK collaborates with local businesses, community groups, and government bodies to promote sustainability, though progress can sometimes be slow. The loss of the town council weakened coordination, but participation in the Public Participation Network (PPN) and the county's Environment and Climate Action Committee ensures community voices are heard in decision-making.
- Partnerships with groups like the Minane Bridge Biodiversity Group support joint activities such as tree planting and events, and TTK has explored wider networking across East Cork, though local challenges have slowed this effort. Positive changes, such as allowing meadows to grow on public land, show a gradual cultural shift toward nature and resilience.
- However, structural issues like the housing crisis, which drives younger and lower-income residents away, remain a key barrier to building long-term partnerships and sustaining volunteer engagement.





## Achievements and Impact

- TTK's work has clearly strengthened community resilience by combining practical sustainability with social connection.
- Food initiatives such as allotments and a new community garden build skills in growing and self-reliance, while workshops on polytunnel setup and seed saving offer hands-on learning. Renewable energy projects have achieved record solar generation, reducing dependence on external systems and demonstrating a shift toward cleaner, local power.
- While awareness of TTK's name is still developing, many see its projects as a local source of pride. Initiatives such as the €90,000 community garden, the coffee cup recycling scheme with schools and cafes, and Creative Kinsale's blend of drama and sustainability highlight both environmental and cultural impact.
- Though adoption of some projects is gradual, overall engagement continues to grow, embedding sustainability in everyday life and fostering a stronger, more connected community.

**Since launching, the initiative has made steady progress in building community resilience and sustainability. Popular workshops regularly fill up, with participants applying what they learn in their daily lives. Practical projects like tree planting and solar panel installations have delivered visible environmental benefits, while creative groups have flourished with their support, strengthening social connections and mental health.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



TTK involves the community through newsletters, social media, local ads, and partnerships with the Volunteer Centre and Kinsale College. This helps attract both short-term student volunteers and longer-term supporters.

Volunteer engagement is flexible: a core group leads projects while others “dip in and out” based on skills and availability. Volunteers also take on planning, fundraising, and resource development, meeting bi-monthly to keep projects sustainable and avoid burnout.

Although formal training is limited, members contribute their own expertise and benefit from external workshops through networks like the PPN and The Wheel. TTK is exploring more structured training and feedback to strengthen long-term volunteer coordination.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Recruiting and retaining volunteers, especially younger people.
- Housing crisis reducing diversity and long-term volunteer availability.
- Collaboration with authorities slowed by bureaucracy.
- Limited access to land for community projects.
- Flexible “dip in and out” volunteering model.
- Leveraging external networks and training (PPN, The Wheel).
- Seeking council cooperation for public spaces.
- Exploring youth group development (Young TTK).



## Sustainability Strategies

- TTK's long-term future relies on passing its energy to a new generation. Attracting younger volunteers and nurturing them into leadership roles is a key priority, not to replace current leaders but to ensure continuity and fresh ideas.
- Plans include developing a youth group, Young TTK, to engage motivated students from local environmental projects. Mentoring and supporting these young volunteers is seen as central to keeping the initiative vibrant and sustainable into the future.



## Transferability and Scaling

- TTK's Seed Library shows how small-scale projects can be replicated elsewhere. Housed in the local library and managed by volunteers, it provides free vegetable and flower seeds to the community. The model is designed for easy transfer, with ready-to-go seed boxes that could be adopted by other libraries and sustained by local volunteers.
- While TTK has limited additional expansion plans, its work is part of the wider global Transition movement, demonstrating how community-led initiatives can inspire similar efforts internationally

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



*Start small and local—get to know your neighbours and begin conversations about sustainability. The Transition Network offers lots of resources worldwide, including a program called Transition Street that helps people connect on a street-by-street level. Simple projects like sharing compost scraps for hens and eggs can build community spirit*

*Use existing structures, like community gardens or sustainable energy groups, to avoid reinventing the wheel. For example, SEAL supports sustainable energy communities—you can start with just one building and grow from there.*

*Also, look at ideas like “open house” events where people share how they make their homes more sustainable (solar panels, rainwater collection, growing food). These inspire others and create momentum.*

*Connect with local schools too; projects like school gardens where each year a group learns to grow a specific crop can be really effective.*

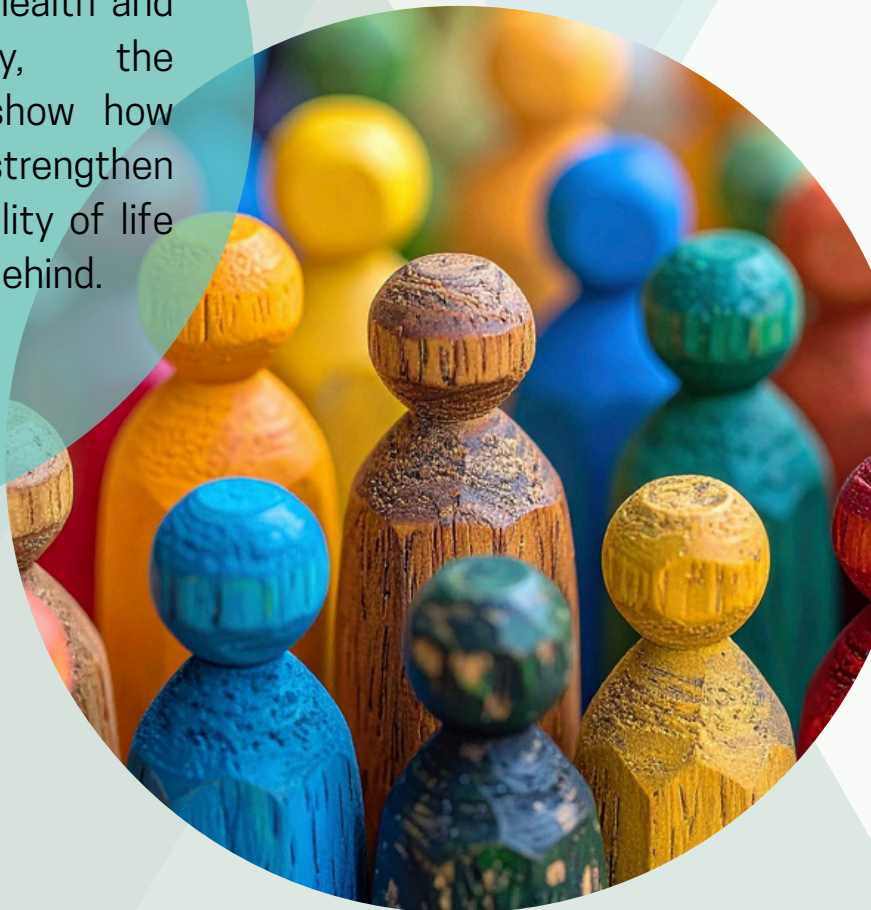
*Ultimately, just start small, build gradually, and involve others—you don't need to do everything at once.*

Donal Chambers and Raffaella Valenti, Transition Town Kinsale, 2025

# Best Practice Examples

## Social Inclusion & Solidarity

Resilience is as much social as it is structural. By addressing homelessness, youth engagement, housing, health and intergenerational solidarity, the initiatives in this section show how inclusion, care and wellbeing strengthen the social fabric, improve quality of life and ensure that no one is left behind.





## “A di si ti?!” Humanitarian Flea Market

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Split, Croatia (with a regional outreach in Split-Dalmatia County)

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Association MoSt

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2002 (the flea market initiated in 2000, held annually since then)

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Provide direct support to beneficiaries of the Centre for the Homeless (medication, documents, food vouchers, hygiene supplies).
- Promote volunteering, inclusion, equality and solidarity.
- Mobilise citizens, schools, businesses, institutions and cultural organisations to jointly support the most vulnerable citizens.
- Foster a culture of empathy, shared responsibility, and active citizenship.

The humanitarian fair *A di si ti?!* was launched in 2000 and has since become one of the longest-running and most recognisable solidarity events in Split. Organised every December, it brings together thousands of citizens, students, volunteers, artists and businesses to collect and sell donated items at symbolic prices. All proceeds directly support the users of MoSt’s homeless centre, covering basic needs such as medicine, food vouchers and hygiene products.

Beyond fundraising, *A di si ti?!* has grown into a symbol of civic spirit, active citizenship and solidarity in action. It has become part of Split’s identity, showing how a grassroots initiative can transform into a tradition that inspires resilience across generations.

For MoSt, community resilience means connecting citizens, schools, institutions and the media to jointly address challenges. Real change comes from the bottom up through volunteering, solidarity and concrete actions such as *A di si ti?!*.





## Core Activities and Approaches

The flea market is organised annually in December, close to the Association's founding date (15 December). Organising the fair requires careful planning months in advance. The process includes:

- defining goals and choosing locations
- securing permits from the city and police
- mobilising volunteers for logistics, promotion and event management
- collecting donations of books, toys, jewellery, art and household items
- setting up stalls, running the fair and coordinating sales
- ensuring clean-up and positive community relations afterwards.

Successful implementation requires thorough coordination, clear communication and careful planning of every detail, while the sense of togetherness and the strong response from citizens confirm the value of the effort invested.

## Financing

The fair is entirely volunteer-driven. Everyone involved – from MoSt staff to school pupils and business partners – contributes their time and skills free of charge. Additional funds for logistics, such as renting stalls, are occasionally secured through local or national projects. Long-term sustainability rests not on financial models but on the enduring flame of solidarity and the belief that helping others strengthens the entire community.

## Cross-sector cooperation

MoSt Association works closely with local authorities, schools, healthcare providers, civil society and businesses to strengthen resilience and improve the lives of vulnerable groups. By gathering citizens, institutions and organisations around shared goals, the association fosters solidarity, social cohesion and crisis preparedness.

- Partnerships with local government align user needs with public policies, while collaboration with businesses drives innovation and social responsibility.
- Cooperation with civil society organisations — through campaigns, education, advocacy and networks — ensures better crisis response, wider service access and stronger visibility of social issues.

MoSt values horizontal relationships built on trust, dialogue and shared learning. This approach not only enhances support for people at risk of homelessness, young people and care leavers, but also strengthens the civil sector as a key actor in building a sustainable and inclusive community.

***Through the involvement of all stakeholders, “A di si ti?” has grown into a movement that strengthens the community, fosters solidarity and shifts social awareness both in Split and beyond.***

MoSt, 2025





## Achievements and Impact

The initiative's impact is both measurable and deeply human:

- The number of volunteers and participating organisations grows every year
- Young people gain their first volunteering experiences and often continue with other community projects
- Participants gain confidence, communication skills and a sense of self-worth, often becoming change-makers in their communities, schools and peer groups.
- Awareness of homelessness, social exclusion and poverty has significantly increased in Split
- Schools and CSOs now collaborate more closely, creating lasting volunteer programmes.
- A strong network of volunteers and organisations has made the community more connected, supportive and better prepared for future crises.

**A powerful example is the collaboration with a local primary school. Pupils organised a campaign for the homeless centre, collecting goods and writing personal messages of support. This experience developed empathy, confidence and civic responsibility in children – and led the school to include volunteering in its annual plan.**

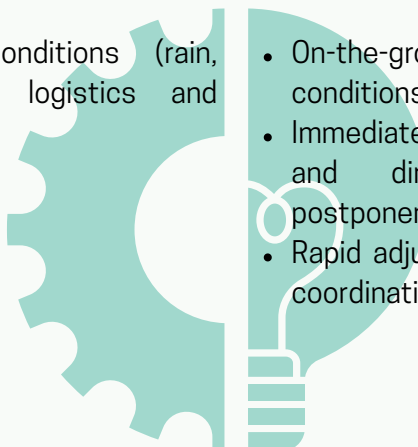
## Community & volunteer engagement



- Volunteers are the heart of the “A di si ti?” humanitarian flea market, supporting everything from donation collection to logistics. For many young people it is their first volunteering experience, which often leads to further community involvement. MoSt ensures their contribution is valued through guidance, education and recognition.
- Schools, local businesses and artisans also take part by donating time, items and services, making the initiative a true community effort. Over the years, it has grown into a movement that strengthens solidarity and raises social awareness in Split and beyond.
- Volunteer motivation is nurtured through clear communication of impact, teamwork, informal gatherings and a celebratory party, creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Unpredictable weather conditions (rain, strong winds) impacting logistics and participation.
- On-the-ground monitoring by staff to assess conditions.
- Immediate communication via social media and direct contact to announce postponements.
- Rapid adjustments in logistics and volunteer coordination.





## Sustainability Strategies

The fair continues to thrive because it is rooted in community ownership. Each year more schools, organisations and individuals join, demonstrating its embeddedness in local culture. MoSt seeks to secure part of the necessary funds through applications to national projects as well as support from the City and County, ensuring the financial means required to organise the humanitarian fair.



## Transferability and Scaling

While there are no immediate plans for expansion, MoSt is open to supporting other communities wishing to replicate the model. The simplicity and universality of the concept – donating, volunteering and helping those in need – makes it easily transferable.

***“People sign up to take part months in advance, proving that the market belongs to the citizens as much as to the organisers.”***

MoSt, 2025

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



***Start with a clear purpose and the courage to take the first step, even if it feels daunting. Build slowly, year by year. Patience and persistence are essential, but the long-term impact on community spirit is profound. Above all, never underestimate the power of solidarity to transform both individuals and the wider community.***

MoSt, 2025



PRONI Centar za  
socijalno podučavanje



## PRONI Centre for Social Education

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Osijek, Vukovar and Pirovac, Croatia (with activities in Osijek-Baranja County, Vukovar-Syrmia County and Šibenik-Knin County)

### LEAD ORGANISATION

PRONI Centre for Social Education

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

Registered in 1998 (pilot project launched in 1997)

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Promote reconciliation and social cohesion through non-formal youth education.
- Develop personal, social and civic participation skills of young people.
- Empower young people to engage in community life and contribute to a responsible civil society.
- Address key youth needs such as mental health, employment, social skills, and active citizenship.
- Strengthen youth participation in policy-making and community resilience.

PRONI was founded in 1998, following a pilot project in 1997 supported by Jönköping University, Sweden. Its original mission was reconciliation and social cohesion in post-war Croatia, achieved through non-formal education for young people. Over time, PRONI evolved into a comprehensive centre for youth participation, volunteering and civic engagement.

The organisation empowers young people by developing social, civic and leadership skills, encouraging active participation in community life and supporting the creation of inclusive and democratic societies.

For PRONI, community resilience is about empowering young people and local institutions to adapt to crises, such as the pandemic or mental health challenges. Resilience means giving young people the tools to understand their needs, shape their environment and co-create sustainable change. It is achieved through continuous education, support and building safe spaces for dialogue with decision-makers.

PRONI views resilience as both individual and collective: young people become more confident and skilled, while communities gain the capacity to respond to challenges together.



## Core Activities and Approaches

PRONI's work begins with assessing youth needs through surveys, focus groups and consultations. Based on this input, it organises a wide range of activities:

- Workshops and trainings on mental health, social skills, employment and civic participation.
- Public debates bringing together youth and decision-makers.
- Policy recommendations and strategies developed collaboratively with young people.
- Projects in rural areas to reach underserved youth.
- Info-centre and volunteer centre that serve as hubs for youth engagement.
- All volunteers are provided with structured training and mentoring.

Through this holistic approach and participatory planning methods, PRONI not only educates but also ensures that young people's voices shape local and national policies.

## Financing

- The initiative is funded through a diverse mix of sources, including EU programmes such as Erasmus+, the European Social Fund and the European Solidarity Corps, as well as support from ministries, embassies, local authorities and county budgets.
- Additional resources come via project partners, international donors (e.g. Norwegian and Swiss funds) and educational institutions.
- By diversifying funding streams and developing self-sustaining programmes such as a training catalogue and the Pirovac Training Centre, PRONI reduces dependency on any single source and increases stability. Strong partnerships with other organisations ensure knowledge transfer and a wider reach, while regular evaluations underpin new project applications. Volunteers play a vital role not only in programme delivery but also as ambassadors and future leaders, further strengthening long-term sustainability.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- PRONI maintains close cooperation with local governments, counties, schools, universities and other CSOs. Examples include "Youth for the City" with the City of Osijek, and "How are you, Youth?" with Osijek-Baranja County.
- It is also active in European and international networks, sharing expertise and learning from peers, and is networking with the private sector through the Erasmus+ and ESF support.
- Info and volunteer centres coordinate activities with experienced youth organisations and educational institutions.
- PRONI also engages in civil society networks to exchange knowledge, standardise good practices and develop project and methodological cooperation with other NGOs.
- The Forum for Social Innovation, organised in partnership with a US university and international partners, highlights PRONI's ability to bring together diverse stakeholders in meaningful dialogue.



## Achievements and Impact

- PRONI is recognised as a leading youth organisation in Osijek and beyond, with strong partnerships across civil society, schools, universities and local authorities.
- Research, policy outcomes and youth feedback confirm its relevance, while media coverage has highlighted its role as a trusted actor in youth work.
- Through info centres and volunteer structures, PRONI has strengthened youth support systems, improved community preparedness and fostered closer cooperation between institutions and civil society.
- Most importantly, it has empowered young people with the skills, confidence and agency to become change-makers in their own communities.

**The project “How Are You, Youth?” engaged over 1,200 young people in shaping recommendations for mental health support in Osijek-Baranja County. Young people from rural areas were also included, ensuring their voices were represented in the County’s official Youth Programme. Volunteers involved gained facilitation, leadership and organisational skills.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



- Volunteers contribute through workshops, centres and projects, with hours and outcomes carefully recorded and evaluated. Their involvement strengthens both the visibility and impact of PRONI’s initiatives, and many continue to volunteer even after project activities end. Each year, around 1200 hours of training are delivered, alongside certificates, recommendations and practical experience to support personal and professional growth.
- PRONI fosters a supportive environment where volunteering becomes a tool for learning, confidence-building and active participation. Info and volunteer centres in Osijek and Vukovar serve as hubs where young people organise activities, share information and shape local policies through initiatives. By encouraging youth to design and lead their own projects, PRONI ensures that volunteering is both personally meaningful and socially transformative.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Reaching young people in rural areas with limited access to resources and opportunities.
- Inconsistent availability of public funding for civil society projects, affecting long-term planning.
- Motivating decision-makers to adopt recommendations into practice.
- Maintaining continuity of activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A constant need to invest in direct work with volunteers to maintain strong engagement.
- Use of blended online/offline methods (e.g. “#zoomiraj se”) to reach young people in remote areas.
- Leveraging EU programmes’ (Erasmus+, ESF, European Solidarity Corps) accreditation systems to secure ongoing funding.
- Developing social entrepreneurship initiatives (e.g. non-formal education training centre in Pirovac).
- Strengthening direct youth-policy dialogue to keep decision-makers accountable.
- Supporting volunteers through recognition, training and showcasing their impact.





## Sustainability Strategies

Future continuity is ensured through several strategies:

- Diversifying funding and strengthening partnerships (EU funds and social entrepreneurship).
- Expanding educational models and training services to foster continuity and local inclusion.
- Maintaining strong volunteer networks that carry forward activities
- Developing strategic documents (e.g. Youth Programme) that institutionalise results and provide greater visibility of the initiative.
- Expanding the project model to other communities and organisations, ensuring wider application and lasting impact.

This multi-layered approach ensures that PRONI remains both flexible and sustainable, adapting to new challenges while keeping youth at the heart of its activities.



## Transferability and Scaling

- There are clear plans to expand and adapt PRONI's model to other communities. The info centres and educational activities already operating in Osijek and Vukovar demonstrate how the approach can be replicated elsewhere. The advisory boards of the Youth Info Centres, a unique example of cross-sector cooperation, are particularly promising for wider adoption.
- PRONI's project methods (dialogue, public debates, and participatory planning) are easily transferable and already shared through civil society networks. Participation in Erasmus and other EU programmes further enables PRONI to spread its practices and results internationally, supporting long-term impact across regions.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations:



*Start from the ground up: clearly define the needs of your community through research and open dialogue with local people. This ensures activities respond to real challenges.*

*Think early about financial sustainability. Secure diverse funding sources—a mix of EU funds, national and local budgets, donations and elements of self-sustainability. This reduces risk and increases flexibility.*

*Involve young people from the very beginning. Through volunteering and active participation in planning and delivery, they become genuine agents of change. At the same time, build strong partnerships with institutions, schools, NGOs and employers.*

*Finally, take a long-term view. Strengthen local structures and formalise recommendations so that results last beyond individual projects. Starting something new is never easy, but with a clear vision and collective effort—it is absolutely possible.*

PRONI Centre, 2025



## Habitat for Humanity Romania

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Romania

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Habitat for Humanity Romania

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

1996

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To bring people together - volunteers, communities, institutions - to build homes, communities and hope.

Habitat for Humanity Romania, founded in 1996, is part of the global Habitat network. Its mission is to bring people together to build homes, communities and hope. The organisation addresses both the immediate need for safe housing and the systemic challenges of resilience in disaster-prone or marginalised communities.

For Habitat, resilience means more than building houses. It is about building dignity, security and belonging. Communities recover not only when they have roofs over their heads, but when they feel empowered, included and able to face the future with confidence.



## Core Activities and Approaches

This initiative stands out for its holistic approach to resilience—addressing both the physical and social dimensions of vulnerability. It goes beyond infrastructure.

Habitat for Humanity Romania developed a three-phase intervention model:

- Rapid response: needs assessments and emergency kits delivered within 72–96 hours.
- Early recovery: restoring functionality through repairs.
- Long-term reconstruction: building safer, smarter homes and resilience systems.

The model is participatory:

Families contribute financially through a revolving fund and physically by working on construction sites. This participatory approach transforms beneficiaries into active agents of change.

## Financing

- Funding is secured through partnerships with companies, CSR/ESG programmes, volunteer contributions, local authorities as well as national and international donors.
- Corporate involvement is not limited to donations—employee volunteering is a major component.
- The families contribute financially through a revolving fund.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- Local authorities - providing land, access to utilities and formal support.
- Volunteers - local, national and international, many of whom return year after year.
- Companies - through CSR/ESG partnerships and employee volunteering programmes.
- Other NGOs - including SOS Children's Villages, Hospice Casa Speranței, Romanian Red Cross, but also small grassroots organisations.
- The projects bridge institutional collaboration with grassroots empowerment, combining local knowledge, expert planning and shared responsibility.



## Achievements and Impact

Since its founding, the organisation has assisted over 100,000 people through various interventions - housing, infrastructure and advocacy:

- Since 1996, Habitat for Humanity Romania has built or rehabilitated over 5,000 homes.
- Thousands were reached through housing-related education and disaster response.
- Construction of schools, health centers and COVID emergency units, such as the one in Bacău (serving 20,000+ people).
- The beneficiary families are part of the process. They contribute financially through a revolving fund and physically, by working on site. It changes how they see themselves and their role in the community. These interventions didn't just provide shelter—they triggered broader transformation, self-worth and opportunity.

### **Galați County:**

"The homes we built in 2010 withstood the 2024 floods with minimal damage. That's what resilience means in practice."

### **Vâlcea County:**

"We transformed an informal settlement into a community. People now have jobs, start businesses and hold their heads high."

### **Bacău:**

A neglected urban land turned into vibrant housing communities, through strong partnerships with the municipality.

Roberto Pătrașcoiu, Habitat for Humanity Romania, 2025

## Community & volunteer engagement



Volunteers are seen not only as builders but as catalysts for social change. Families work side by side with incoming volunteers, creating bonds of solidarity. Volunteers often return year after year, driven by the transformative experience of contributing.

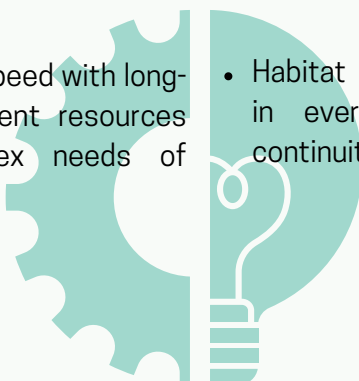
Community ownership is key. The beneficiaries are not passive - they are engaged, empowered and transformed.

***"A volunteer is not just someone hammering a nail.  
They're a catalyst for social change."***

Roberto Pătrașcoiu, Habitat for Humanity Romania, 2025

## Challenges & Solutions

- Challenges include balancing speed with long-term quality, securing sufficient resources and addressing the complex needs of marginalised communities.
- Habitat responds by embedding resilience in every stage, focusing on dignity, continuity and partnerships.







## Sustainability Strategies

The revolving fund model ensures that investments are reinvested. Long-term partnerships with companies and municipalities secure continuity. Habitat for Humanity Romania invests in advocacy to influence systemic housing policies, embedding resilience beyond individual projects.



## Transferability and Scaling

The three-phase model is transferable to any context facing disasters or housing crises. Its combination of rapid response, co-creation and long-term resilience planning has already been replicated nationally and internationally.



## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

***Start with housing, end with dignity: secure shelter is the base from which people rebuild their lives.***

***Don't over-focus on speed—recovery is also about building relationships, not just walls.***

***Volunteering is transformative—for the community and for the volunteer.***

***Volunteers are not just helpers; they become part of the story.”***

***Anecdotes matter, but so do long-term studies: “We need more longitudinal research to fully capture the impact. But stories help us feel the truth behind the data.”***

***Work with—not for—communities. Co-creation increases sustainability and trust.***

***Cross-sector collaboration creates systemic change: “NGOs, local governments and businesses must come together if we want to build communities that last.”***

Roberto Pătraşcoiu, Habitat for Humanity Romania, 2025





## Leitrim Volunteer Centre

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Ireland (national, with strong local presence in towns and parishes)

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Leitrim Volunteer Centre

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2020

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- Strengthening community resilience by connecting people with causes that matter
- Building collaboration across North and South Leitrim, traditionally divided by geography
- Shifting from a culture of scarcity to one of shared capacity and mutual support



Founded in October 2020, Leitrim Volunteer Centre (LVC) grew out of a small local volunteer information service into a county-wide hub connecting volunteers and organisations. With support from Volunteer Ireland and early outreach by its first staff member, the centre quickly built strong county-wide relationships. It provides training, support, and Garda vetting, all aimed at strengthening local capacity. Post-pandemic, the centre introduced the Community Volunteers programme and partnered with the county council on initiatives like a community car scheme and supporting new arrivals from Ukraine and elsewhere into the county.

For LVC, community resilience means nurturing strong internal teamwork and external partnerships—with the county council and local groups alike. It's about replacing competition with collaboration, moving beyond a scarcity mindset to build a culture of mutual support. Though it takes time, this collective approach is key to creating a more connected, resilient county.



## Core Activities and Approaches

- Leitrim Volunteer Centre tailors its work to local needs, beginning each year with outreach to link volunteers and organisations, strengthening both services and social connections. Daily activities include registering volunteers, supporting community groups, and running cultural and wellbeing events that engage Ukrainian and international protection communities.
- The former community car scheme illustrated how volunteer-led initiatives can fill service gaps, support vulnerable residents, and reduce pressure on emergency services. More broadly, LVC prepares communities for crisis by building everyday networks of support and resilience.
- Training and outreach are central tools. Recent workshops focused on communication and listening skills, as well as a team-building exercise using the Enneagram model. This improved self-awareness and collaboration among staff and volunteers alike, strengthening the foundation for collective action.

## Financing

- Leitrim Volunteer Centre is primarily funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development, with additional income from Garda vetting services and room rentals to the local employment service. These smaller funding streams provide useful “extras” that help keep operations running smoothly.
- Financial sustainability is supported through transparent reporting and consistent communication of results to funders such as the Department and Volunteer Ireland. Demonstrating clear impact justifies continued investment. Locally, adaptability to evolving community needs—whether linked to climate change or other challenges—ensures the Centre remains relevant and strengthens the case for ongoing support.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- Leitrim Volunteer Centre works closely with local partners, such as the Leitrim Age Friendly Alliance, to coordinate initiatives that address community needs, including transport and integration supports for asylum seekers and Ukrainians. Volunteer engagement through festivals, newsletters, training, and check-ins strengthens communication and creates a resilient network for shared goals.
- Collaboration with neighbouring Volunteer Centres, especially Sligo, is also central. The centres exchange ideas, coordinate around events like National Volunteer Week, and refer volunteers to each other’s projects. This spirit of sharing resources rather than competing ensures stronger services, avoids duplication, and ultimately enhances community resilience.



## Achievements and Impact

- Leitrim Volunteer Centre has strengthened community resilience by fostering positivity, empowerment and a sense of shared purpose. In a context often dominated by negative news, the Centre shows people they can make a difference, helping communities unite and recover more effectively from challenges.
- Impact is measured through iVOL, the national volunteering database, and regular surveys, with around 90% positive feedback. Alongside this, personal stories highlight the real difference the Centre makes.
- Since its launch, LVC has become a valued part of the county, recognised by local authorities, development companies, and the PPN. Nearly 1,000 volunteers and 125 organisations are now involved, impressive numbers for a small rural area. Collaboration with the PPN has further expanded reach, supporting training in governance, Canva, risk assessment, and racism awareness, while building stronger networks and trust across the community.

**A standout example is the nature mural at Childhood Days daycare in Drumshambo, created by 15 volunteers from Ireland and different international communities. The vibrant mural brightened the space and fostered meaningful volunteer experiences, boosting community engagement and inspiring others. Alongside this, support for cancer patients, asylum seekers, and Ukrainian communities strengthens ties and builds resilience through collaboration.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



- Community engagement often begins with events, creating pathways for deeper involvement.
- While outreach uses the national database, success mainly comes from personal follow-up—turning positive experiences into lasting connections. This flexible, relationship-based approach, including outreach to IPAS centres, helps build trust and sustain engagement.
- Volunteer involvement is maintained through training, free courses and social activities that help people feel valued and connected.
- Diversity workshops and team-building further strengthen resilience and inclusion.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Transport is one of the biggest and most persistent challenges, with limited options affecting access and inclusion.
- Progress can feel slow and frustrating, with little immediate change.
- Risk of discouragement when barriers remain despite repeated efforts.
- Engaging at every level—local government, national government, TDs, MEPs—to keep the issue on the agenda.
- Using persistence and advocacy as long-term strategies, “planting seeds” and keeping the problem visible until change is possible.
- Maintaining courage and resilience, acting as a consistent voice for the community and building momentum over time.



## Sustainability Strategies

- The future of the initiative relies on strong resources and committed people. Support from the Department of Rural and Community Development has grown in recent years, with leadership from officials who bring valuable expertise. Locally, maintaining a capable and dedicated team—both staff and board—is essential, alongside active collaboration with community, voluntary, and statutory partners.
- Long-term sustainability will come from persistence: continuing what works, learning from mistakes, and adapting to new challenges. This steady commitment ensures the Centre can keep growing and serving the community into the future.

## Transferability and Scaling

LVC is part of Ireland's network of 29 Volunteer Centres, ensuring replication in every county. Its collaboration with Sligo demonstrates how models can be adapted across borders.



## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



**To start a community group in Leitrim, it's essential to first research and confirm there's a genuine need for your project. Gathering clear evidence helps ensure you're addressing real community priorities. Next, bring together a small team of passionate people who want to make a difference. Registering with the PPN connects you to other local groups and valuable resources.**

**Compliance—making sure policies, procedures, and risk assessments are in place—can be daunting, but the Volunteer Centre offers support to help navigate these requirements. Finding the right volunteers is key; it's about quality and commitment, not just numbers.**

**Throughout the process, don't hesitate to ask for help and lean on support networks. Starting a community initiative is gradual and requires flexibility, persistence, and collaboration to build lasting resilience.**

Josephine Stroker, Leitrim Volunteer Centre, 2025





## From Light to Legacy: Building Community Resilience through Art, Memory and Presence

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Cluj-Napoca, Romania

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Daisler Association

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2016

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To create emotionally resonant public spaces that connect people to each other and their environment
- To make art and culture accessible to underserved or disconnected communities
- To use memory, identity and storytelling as tools for inclusion and resilience
- To rebuild trust through continuity and emotional presence, not formal interventions
- To empower communities to express and shape their own narratives through light and public messages

Founded in Cluj-Napoca, the Daisler Association is a cultural NGO dedicated to strengthening resilience through public art, memory, light and long-term presence. Their work includes multiple projects like Lights On, Memoriile Luminii, Spotlight on Heritage, Pop-Up Light Lab, and Collaboratorium, each designed to amplify community voices, connect people emotionally, and cultivate trust and agency. By meeting people where they are - emotionally, physically, and culturally - the association offers authentic, non-institutional experiences that lead to sustained transformation.

For Daisler, resilience is built through presence. Community resilience does not emerge from strategies on paper but from authentic encounters where people feel seen, heard and remembered. The association believes that resilience grows when memories, emotions and everyday lives are recognised in public spaces. "We bring light, but it's the people who give it meaning," says director Andi Daiszler.





## Core Activities and Approaches

The association runs multiple projects, each addressing a specific social or emotional need:

- Lights On brings illuminated words into public spaces, creating shared experiences of beauty and reflection.
- Memoriile Luminii collects stories about light from older generations and turns them into installations that honour memory and identity.
- Spotlight on Heritage reimagines neglected heritage sites, making them visible again through light art.
- Pop-Up Light Lab opens playful, inclusive explorations of science and creativity for children and families.
- Collaboratorium places artists in residence within small towns, where they live alongside locals and co-create interventions grounded in daily life.

A typical workflow starts with listening, continues through co-creation, and is sustained by returning. Small gestures like sharing meals, remembering names or involving the same people again, are intentional acts of continuity that build long-term trust.

## Financing

- Funding is often scarce, coming from modest grants, corporate support for logistics, and small donations.
- The association leverages its reputation for care and authenticity to attract resources.
- Companies donate materials because they connect emotionally with the mission.
- Sustainability depends less on infrastructure and more on intention, alliances and the credibility built with communities.

## Cross-sector cooperation

Collaboration is never symbolic but embedded in every step:

- Residents choose the phrases for installations, children invent vocabulary for light, elders contribute their stories, and artists join not for prestige but for meaningful connection.
- Local authorities are increasingly open to the work because they see the tangible civic effects.
- Corporations have provided materials or logistical support with genuine enthusiasm.



## Achievements and Impact

- Emotional healing and connection in fragmented or under-engaged communities
- Spontaneous acts of civic engagement: clean-ups, decorations, volunteerism
- Increased sense of pride and ownership of public spaces
- More inclusive participation from people often outside cultural programs
- Local authorities increasingly open to cultural and emotional interventions
- Deep community trust due to long-term presence and return visits
- Youth engagement through play, curiosity, and memory-based interventions

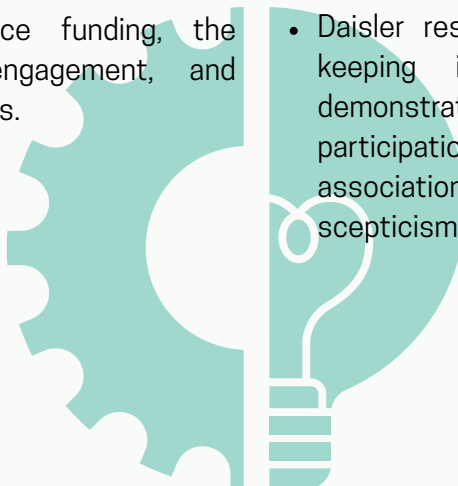
## Community & volunteer engagement



- Participation is not symbolic—it is core. Residents choose the light messages, contribute stories, and help set up installations. Children define vocabulary for light, elders donate emotional memories, and artists join not for fame but for meaningful work.
- In a Cluj neighborhood, the phrase “Together is Better” was not just a slogan—it led to neighbors cleaning, decorating, and protecting their shared space.
- In another setting, a volunteer said: “For the first time, I feel useful.” A senior wept seeing her childhood story projected across a building: “It felt like my memory came alive again.”
- Corporations supported logistics, not out of obligation, but because the work resonated — “We also want to bring light,” said a cable company director when donating materials.
- Artists are chosen not just for skill but for emotional availability — “You have to be present, not just perform.”

## Challenges & Solutions

- Challenges include scarce funding, the fragility of informal engagement, and scepticism from institutions.
- Daisler responds by staying consistent, keeping interventions low-cost, and demonstrating impact through authentic participation. By maintaining presence, the association has gradually turned scepticism into trust





## Sustainability Strategies

- The work is often underfunded, yet it persists through alliances, modest resources, and a reputation for care. Because the community sees it as real, they help sustain it.
- The model is sustainable because it is light, flexible and relational. No installation is identical, but all share a sincerity that communities recognise. The association relies on intention, trust and the willingness of communities to carry forward the spirit of the work.

## Transferability and Scaling

- Daisler's model is lightweight, relational, and replicable. It works because it adapts to context — no installation looks the same, but all share emotional truth.
- Its transferability lies in simplicity and sincerity: emotional relevance, co-creation, low-cost logistics, and a non-institutional tone. Projects have been replicated in other cities and rural towns across Romania.



## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



***"You don't build resilience by naming it—you build it by being there, again and again."***

***"We bring light, but it's the people who give it meaning."***

***"We didn't plan for impact. We followed emotion, and the rest followed us."***

Andi Daiszler, Daisler Association, 2025



## Ja til eldre – The Think Tank at Bogstad

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Oslo, Norway – with national digital reach

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Informal senior think tank coordinated by Odd Grann

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2008

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To enhance quality of life and resilience among older people by promoting mental activity, relationships, and civic engagement.

Established in 2008, Ja til eldre (“Yes to the Elderly”) is an informal think tank based in Oslo with a national digital reach. Its main purpose is to enhance quality of life and resilience among older adults by promoting intellectual activity, relationships and civic engagement. The initiative demonstrates that ageing does not mean withdrawal but rather active contribution to society.

For Ja til eldre, resilience means maintaining mental agility, strong social networks and civic influence at an age when people are often overlooked. The group sees seniors not as passive recipients of care but as co-creators of solutions that benefit entire communities.



## Core Activities and Approaches

The initiative is centered around a small, consistent group of seniors who meet bi-weekly at Bogstad to discuss topics relevant to older people and society at large. Each meeting includes:

- a prepared introduction on a relevant issue
- a structured roundtable discussion
- a follow-up session if needed.

Ideas are developed into proposals and, where appropriate, passed to public authorities, organisations or the media.

Beyond the think tank, the initiative hosts:

- Stormøter (“large meetings”) twice a year with 100+ attendees, music and expert speakers
- smaller recurring gatherings in Lillestrøm, attended by 50–100 people
- livestreamed events reaching up to 4,000 digital followers
- Tiden Nå, an online publication focusing on senior issues.

## Financing

Funding has come from Gjensidigestiftelsen, local sponsorships, crowdfunding and modest membership contributions. Private donors also support the initiative. Financial resources are always limited, as most foundations prioritise children and youth. The group compensates for scarce funding with creativity, volunteer spirit and low-cost operations.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- While the initiative does not operate formal partnerships, it successfully promotes ideas to:
- Local governments and city departments
- Public broadcasters (e.g. NRK)
- Transport authorities (e.g. Ruter)
- Schools and churches (for intergenerational learning)





## Achievements and Impact

Impact is measured through attendance, participation, social media interaction and direct feedback.

Key achievements include:

- creation of new senior-focused media and transport services
- public protest campaigns that reinstated NRK P1+ after threatened closure
- improved elderly mobility across Oslo through “Pink Buses”
- documented cases of emergency ID cards saving lives
- thousands of seniors connected through events and digital platforms
- The group was awarded the Oslo Vestre Aker Culture Prize in 2020 for its contribution to senior welfare and innovation.
- The initiative builds mental resilience, reduces loneliness, and creates opportunities for active participation and learning – all of which are critical for societal preparedness and cohesion.

**When NRK attempted to cancel P1+, public backlash – coordinated by the group – led to the programme’s reinstatement. The “Pink Buses” continue to improve accessibility and well-being for thousands of seniors across Oslo.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



The think tank is entirely volunteer-driven. Seniors participate because the discussions are meaningful and stimulating. Retention relies on intellectual engagement, friendships and a sense of purpose, rather than formal structures. Younger volunteers have also joined as tutors in intergenerational projects, gaining valuable experience.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Natural attrition: the aging group is shrinking
- Difficulty attracting new participants due to stigma around the word “elderly”
- Limited media attention and public visibility
- Financial constraints limiting outreach
- Developed small-group dialogue models to lower participation barriers
- Encouraged peer recruitment among friends and neighbors
- Took a strategic pause to rebuild contact lists and rebrand outreach
- Created practical tools (e.g., emergency cards) and appealing content (e.g., P1+ programming)



## Sustainability Strategies

The group aims to transform its current venue in Lillestrøm into a national meeting hub for senior initiatives, combining physical events with digital broadcasting. Themes like safe living at home and digital mastery are central.



## Transferability and Scaling

The model is fully open for replication. It has already inspired similar groups in other towns. The think tank promotes its methods freely and encourages others to form localised discussion forums.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

***“Start small. Define a real, specific need. Don't begin with a desire to help – begin with understanding exactly what is needed. If you meet a real need, others will follow.”***



***“The people you want to help are your customers. And so are the volunteers. Listen to them both.”***

Ja til eldre, 2025





## Building Resilience Through Care – The Story of Norwegian Women’s Public Health Association

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Nationwide (Norway)

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Norwegian Women's Public Health Association, with 500 local chapters, 19 regional branches, and a national secretariat in Oslo

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

1896

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To strengthen community resilience through care, health, preparedness and inclusion, with a particular focus on women and families.

Founded in 1896, NKS (Norske Kvinners Sanitetsforening) is one of Norway’s oldest and largest women’s organisations. With 500 local chapters, 19 regional branches and a national secretariat, its mission is to strengthen resilience through care, health, preparedness and inclusion, especially for women and families.

For NKS, resilience is deeply practical and relational. It means ensuring communities are prepared for emergencies, while also building emotional and social safety nets. Care, health knowledge and women’s leadership form the backbone of its approach.



## Core Activities and Approaches

NKS operates across three levels: national, regional (fylkeslag), and local (lokallag). Local chapters are autonomous legal entities that lead all operational work, including volunteer mobilisation, events, and emergency response. Their typical activities include:

- Emergency preparedness drills and collaborations with municipalities
- “Safety gatherings” (Trygghetstreff) promoting practical and emotional preparedness
- Public outreach on personal emergency planning
- Registering defibrillators and conducting first aid training
- Educational outreach in schools and universities
- Ongoing recruitment and support of volunteers
- Maintaining volunteer contact groups ready to be mobilised in crisis situations.
- Typical working methods include digital briefings and monthly webinars, national training programmes in health and care, role-specific on-boarding and guidance, awareness campaigns (e.g., “7-day emergency supply” checklist).

## Financing

- Membership fees
- Grassroots fundraising events
- Contributions to national funds (Women’s Health Research Fund and Children & Youth Fund)
- Project-based grants from public and private sources
- Political advocacy for earmarked state funding

## Cross-sector cooperation

- NKS maintains formal agreements with municipalities for crisis mobilisation. It works closely with police, fire brigades, civil defence and the home guard.
- Partnerships with the private sector are limited and carefully managed to preserve independence.



## Achievements and Impact

Through preparedness education, care-based initiatives, and long-term community presence, NKS significantly strengthens both psychological and practical resilience in Norwegian society.

Impact is evident in:

- Membership growth and engagement
- Feedback and participation in public events
- Institutional adoption of past initiatives (e.g., municipal takeover of maternal health clinics originally developed by NKS)
- Increased awareness of emergency preparedness and mental resilience
- Empowerment of women and volunteers at grassroots level
- Better preparedness and inclusion in local communities
- Public mental health support through initiatives like the Counselling Centres for Relatives of Substance Abusers
- Elevated societal discussion around personal and collective emergency readiness.
- Community response is generally positive, though public awareness of NKS remains lower than desired. Fastelavnsris (decorated twigs sold annually) is one of the most recognised public symbols, and its proceeds fund vital research in women's health.

**NKS' network of counselling centres for families affected by substance abuse provides free support nationwide. This initiative, now partially funded by the state budget, has had measurable effects on individuals, families, and public policy.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



Volunteers are involved in both continuous and ad-hoc activities. Maintaining motivation and involvement is done through:

- Low-threshold, meaningful activities (e.g., crafting, baking, sharing knowledge)
- Regular digital meetings and updates from the secretariat
- Large national and regional gatherings with training and socialisation
- Opportunities to develop leadership and specialisation within the organisation.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Recruitment of new members, especially younger generations
- Visibility in the public space
- Avoiding overreliance on aging volunteer groups
- Balancing volunteer ethos with potential commercial partnerships
- Increased focus on accessible, interest-based entry points for new volunteers
- Outreach through schools, health institutions, and community centres
- Public-facing activities like information stands and school visits
- Strategic use of national media and policy influence





## Sustainability Strategies

- Active political engagement to secure funding for critical initiatives
- Maintaining grassroots fundraising through raffles, bazaars, and sale of “fastelavnsris”.
- Building internal capacity through training and decentralised responsibility
- Focusing on low-cost, high-impact initiatives that align with community values.

## Transferability and Scaling

As NKS already operates in nearly every community across Norway, expansion focuses on reaching new demographics and increasing participation. The model itself is flexible and could be adapted internationally.



## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



***Start simple. Offer meaningful, low-barrier ways to participate. Harness people's existing interests—whether it's knitting or organising—to build engagement. Trust in the power of care and community.***

Norske Kvinners Sanitetsforening, 2025





# Best Practice Examples

## Crisis Preparedness & Response

Preparedness is not only about responding when disaster strikes. It is about having systems, partnerships and networks in place long before. The following examples show how communities can mobilise volunteers, strengthen coordination with authorities and remain flexible in the face of emergencies.





## Local Volunteer Centre “Pack mas” - Building Bridges for Engagement and Resilience in Times of Crisis

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Rottal-Inn district, Germany

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Local Volunteer Centre “Pack mas”

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

2017

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To find and advise volunteers, organisations, and associations, as well as to operate the Arnsdorf food bank.
- The agency sees itself as a link between civil society, the municipality, aid organisations and other stakeholders.

**pack  
ma's** Freiwilligenagentur  
Hans Lindner Stiftung

Since 2017, the volunteer agency “Pack mas” has been active in the Rottal-Inn district, supported by the Hans Lindner Foundation, a private charitable foundation established by an entrepreneurial family. Pack mas is responsible for the entire district, which has a population of around 120,000. Together with the local Civic Engagement Coordination Office (KoBE) of the district government, responsibilities are clearly divided.

For Pack mas, resilience means active networking and effective communication. It involves flexible mobilisation of resources and a learning approach – adapting processes based on lessons from each crisis. Central to this is the volunteer pool, quickly mobilised if necessary.

The organisation learns from past events and adapts for future crises.



## Core Activities and Approaches

The volunteer agency has developed fixed crisis procedures:

- Activating existing networks, such as convening round tables with relevant stakeholders at short notice
- Operating the volunteer database Freinet, which enables quick registration and deployment of volunteers.
- In addition to the volunteer database, the agency relies on continuous information transfer, situation-specific coordination, and targeted training for volunteers and employees.

**During the Ukraine crisis, Freinet managed 250 host family contacts. Volunteers provided accommodation, organised aid transports, ran language courses and helped with childcare. Community involvement is based on matching skills with needs, making contributions meaningful.**

## Financing

- Funding comes mainly from the Hans Lindner Foundation and the Bavarian Ministry of Social Affairs.
- Sustainability requires continued mixed financing and recognition of the agency's added value, with ambitions to secure funding from the disaster control sector.

## Cross-sector cooperation

Cooperation with other sectors is multi-layered:

- Cooperation with authorities and emergency services takes place via committees, such as the Volunteering Round Table.
- There are also selective project collaborations with the private sector for donations in kind or logistical support.
- However, the presence of a large company (Lindner enterprise as owner of the foundation for the volunteer centre) makes it difficult to involve smaller companies.



## Achievements and Impact

Key impacts include:

- Improved crisis cooperation between municipality, aid organisations and volunteers.
- More efficient processes due to familiar structures and well-established networks
- Increased appreciation by local authorities and growing acceptance by emergency services organizations.

The local community was initially skeptical but became open and grateful after successful cooperation. The central role of the volunteer agency in providing information and support to host families during the Ukraine crisis significantly increased trust.

Resilience in the district has noticeably increased, particularly through better networking, clear responsibilities, and the ability to quickly activate established structures.

## Community & volunteer engagement



- The involvement of the local community is needs-oriented. Volunteers are placed according to their skills and interests, whether it be shopping services, organising clothing, language courses, or childcare.
- During the Ukraine crisis, independent structures formed, such as in a Volunteers are supported with transparent communication, ongoing updates and recognition from official bodies.
- Even post-crisis, the agency maintains contact with many, building a permanent core team. This group ensures knowledge transfer and preparedness for the next crisis.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Integrating spontaneous volunteers into existing structures.
- An oversupply of help with limited deployment options.
- Unclear formulation of needs by social institutions in crisis situations.
- The distinction between state responsibilities and volunteer work.
- New communication channels had to be developed because the usual channels, such as notices, did not work.





## Sustainability Strategies

Future sustainability depends on:

- Securing broader funding.
- Stronger integration with authorities and aid organizations.
- Expansion of functioning concepts and preventive structures.



## Transferability and Scaling

The Pack mas model shows how rural districts can establish effective volunteer coordination through clear role-sharing, digital databases and long-term community trust.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



***Similar initiatives should avoid isolated efforts and integrate into existing systems. They should also close gaps in coverage, be patient and persistent in pursuing goals, and foster personal resilience to withstand high stress levels in times of crisis.***

Sonja Geigenberger, Volunteer Centre "Pack mas", 2025



## lagfa bayern - Building Bridges for Engagement and Resilience in Times of Crisis

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Bavaria, Germany

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freiwilligenagenturen Bayern" (lagfa bayern)

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

lagfa bayern has existed since 1998 and has been organized as a registered association since 2008

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To encourage people to volunteer based on their skills and interests.
- Promoting favourable conditions for civic engagement, networking relevant stakeholders and recognising volunteering as an important democratic value.



lagfa bayern, established in 1998 and registered in 2008, is the umbrella organisation for volunteer agencies in Bavaria. It acts as a bridge between civil society, government and business, supporting local volunteer centres, promoting favourable conditions for volunteering and recognising it as a democratic value.

For lagfa, community resilience means having volunteer structures ready to act in crises. Local volunteer centres play a crucial role in coordinating spontaneous helpers, who often cannot be integrated into emergency services. By building stable networks and facilitating knowledge exchange, lagfa strengthens the collective capacity to respond to crises.



## Core Activities and Approaches

In crisis situations, lagfa:

- Rapidly assesses the situation to clarify the roles of lagfa and its partners.
- Establishes communication channels ("Who informs whom and when?").
- Collects and passes information from the state level to local authorities.
- Prepares assistance (e.g., addressing insurance issues for the vaccination service).
- lagfa uses digital solutions, such as online registration and databases, to quickly register and coordinate volunteers.
- Additionally, on-site and further training on crisis preparedness is offered to employees of volunteer centres. These agencies are also represented on civil protection committees, either automatically in the case of municipal agencies or depending on their own initiative and networking in the case of independent agencies.

Past crisis knowledge is collected and applied to future situations, resulting in shorter response times (e.g. from the asylum crisis to the Corona crisis to the Ukraine war).

## Financing

lagfa is funded primarily by the Bavarian state. However, the goal is to secure long-term funding from the civil protection sector to ensure the sustainability of its efforts. .

## Cross-sector cooperation

- Cooperation with civil society is generally straightforward. Initiatives and associations are usually open to joint projects and flexible cooperation.
- One possibility of lagfa to work with government agencies is by participating in nationwide committees. For example, lagfa participated in the Bavarian Integration Coordination Group during the asylum crisis after 2015. lagfa represented there the interests of volunteers and ensures that state and voluntary tasks remain clearly separated.
- Cooperation with the private sector is primarily project-based and local. For instance, construction companies provided machinery and personnel support during flood disasters.



## Achievements and Impact

- One important indicator of impact is the number of agencies active in neighbourhood support projects during the Coronavirus pandemic. This demonstrates that inactivity during one crisis can lead to reduced capacity to act during the next one.
- Since the start of the project, there has been a clear professionalization of volunteer agencies in crisis management. They have become more recognized and involved in civil protection management groups. Knowledge gained from past crises has led to faster, more targeted responses.
- Local authorities are also recognizing the added value of volunteer agencies as supplements to established civil protection organizations. These positive effects include increased appreciation, clearer responsibilities, and better cooperation in crisis situations. Thanks to networks, exchange formats, handouts, and guidance, local resilience has measurably increased. Those involved now know more quickly who to contact and the order in which steps need to be taken

## Community & volunteer engagement



Volunteers are usually recruited through local volunteer centres. Spontaneous volunteers are a valuable resource, but they often do not fit into the rigid organizational structures of emergency services. Therefore, many volunteer agencies took on the task of coordinating these people, assigning them meaningful tasks, and integrating them into existing processes.

To maintain long-term volunteer commitment, lagfa relies on mini subsidies for projects of volunteer centres, training opportunities, exchange opportunities, and targeted support. These measures helped ensure volunteers stay involved and maintain their motivation over longer periods of time.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Despite all the progress made, there are still hurdles. Integrating spontaneous volunteers into the structures of blue light organizations is difficult because these organizations depend on well-established teams and clear chains of command.
- In many crises, the willingness to help often exceeds the number of suitable deployment options, a phenomenon known as "aid hype."
- Additionally, local social institutions are not always able to clearly articulate the support they need during crises.
- Another challenge is differentiating between government tasks and voluntary work to avoid excessive demands and misallocation of resources.



## Sustainability Strategies

- To safeguard the initiative, lagfa relies on the continuous development and maintenance of close contacts with the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, particularly the Disaster Control Department.
- The "Disaster Relief" working group of lagfa plays a central role as a specialist and exchange platform for volunteer centres. In the future, the transfer of knowledge, such as blackout concepts, will be further intensified.



## Transferability and Scaling

In the future, lagfa plans to implement successful concepts in other municipalities and strengthen collaboration with emergency services organisations to enhance the integration of spontaneous volunteers.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

- **Crisis resilience must be part of organisational strategy.**
- **Build up expertise in civil protection.**
- **Utilise all resources in crises.**
- **Be prepared to adapt everyday working life flexibly in favour of crisis work.**







## The Irish Red Cross – Branch Outreach Programme

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Republic of Ireland (national); part of global Red Cross Movement (191 countries, 16 million volunteers)

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Irish Red Cross (IRC)

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

1939 (IRC, following the Red Cross Act and Geneva Convention adoption)

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To provide humanitarian support during crises and wars,
- To assist during health emergencies,
- To address social vulnerabilities within local communities.



**Crois Dhearg na hÉireann**  
Irish Red Cross

The Irish Red Cross (IRC), founded in 1939 under the Red Cross Act and the Geneva Convention, is part of the largest humanitarian network in the world, spanning 191 countries with 16 million volunteers. Within Ireland, the Branch Outreach programme focuses specifically on empowering local communities.

For the Irish Red Cross, community resilience means strengthening the ability of local people to respond quickly, empathetically and effectively in times of need. Volunteers are not outsiders—they are neighbours, friends and trusted community members who know the context intimately. Vulnerability is understood not as a personal trait, but as the absence of adequate support structures. By identifying and addressing these vulnerabilities early, communities become safer, more confident, and better prepared.

*At the heart of our Branch Outreach is community engagement and accountability—putting the community's needs first. We work alongside existing local stakeholders without duplicating efforts, adding value through training and expertise, which makes our branches agile and ready to respond to future crises.*



## Core Activities and Approaches

The Branch Outreach programme strengthens 72 volunteer-run branches across Ireland. Its workflow is characterised by:

- Initial conversations with branch committees to get their buy-in;
- Use of BOCA (Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment), an international Red Cross self-assessment tool, helping branches reflect on strengths, challenges and potential growth;
- Community-driven initiatives, such as the Dundalk branch training primary school students in CPR, sparking broader engagement and preparing a new generation of humanitarians.
- Branches are supported with training, forums and tools to better assess and support their communities. Twice a year, clusters of branches (three to four counties grouped together) meet at branch forums, alongside a digital forum for accessibility. Here, branches share knowledge, collaborate and receive technical training.
- The programme applies Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA), ensuring all actions are designed around real, identified needs. These tools help train volunteers as facilitators, assess branch capacity, and track strategic progress over time.

## Financing

- The initiative is funded through core government grants, EU health funding, corporate fundraising, and local branch fundraising.
- To ensure sustainability, the organisation is developing a new fundraising strategy that includes a revenue-sharing model to ease pressure on local branches and allow them to focus on community work.
- They also pursue partnerships and cross-border funding opportunities to increase resources. Overall, the organisation aims for sustainable, broader impact funding that benefits multiple communities.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- The Irish Red Cross holds a mandate as an auxiliary to the state, established under the Geneva Convention and the Red Cross Act. This mandate is automatically activated in times of crisis, and the organisation forms part of the major emergency framework.
- At the local level, strong relationships are fostered with three key stakeholders: Local Authorities, Volunteer Centres and Local Development Companies. Partnerships with these actors help to clarify roles, avoid duplication and strengthen community resilience.
- Nationally, the organisation participates in platforms such as the National Auxiliary Forum and the National Emergency Forum, working alongside Civil Defence, St. John Ambulance and others.
- In addition, close cooperation with Volunteer Ireland and international counterparts enables the Irish Red Cross to align with best practices in volunteerism and remain responsive to emerging needs.



## Achievements and Impact

- The Branch Outreach programme has strengthened community resilience by focusing on preparedness and risk management, with teams receiving international training. This capacity has already proven effective during events like Storm Eoghan, when members mobilised quickly and efficiently.
- Branches deliver tailored responses to local needs: in Waterford, expanded support for migrants; in Dundalk, first aid education that inspired an integration café; and in Mayo, a pandemic-era food hub now evolving into a lasting resource. Such initiatives reflect the Red Cross commitment to placing communities at the centre and avoiding duplication.
- Community feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The trusted Red Cross emblem has helped branches build new local partnerships, while in North Louth more than 20 international protection applicants now volunteer weekly. Impact is also measured through stronger branch engagement and spin-off projects, such as the expansion of school CPR training from Dundalk to other cities - evidence of growing momentum and national reach.

One powerful example comes from a teacher who, after attending a Red Cross first aid session, used the skills the very same evening to save their child while waiting for an ambulance. This experience inspired wider school involvement and helped launch a broader community programme.

More broadly, newcomers to communities have found friendship, purpose and a sense of belonging through volunteering. The programme not only fosters inclusion but also equips communities with tools such as psychological first aid, strengthening both physical and emotional resilience.

## Community & volunteer engagement



- The Irish Red Cross engages local communities through regular branch forums, both in person and online, where volunteers share experiences, receive training and plan activities. Using the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approach, every programme is tailored to real needs. Projects such as the Integration Café start with Red Cross support but are gradually handed over to local groups, ensuring sustainability and agility.
- Branches are entirely volunteer-led, making volunteer care essential. Engagement is built as a two-way relationship, with volunteers shaping how they contribute. A dedicated staff role now supports recruitment and retention, helping address post-pandemic challenges. By respecting time, listening carefully and recognising contributions, the organisation ensures volunteers remain motivated and communities well served.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Managing attitude change within the organisation; adjusting to new ways of working with staff.
- Volunteers initially felt unheard and unsure how to engage.
- Recurring issues across multiple branches.
- Unrealistic expectations, e.g. around online registration.
- Risk of losing trust without immediate solutions.
- Building trust by blending staff role with years of volunteering experience.
- Active listening, visiting branches, and acting on concerns.
- Using a “helicopter view” to prioritise systemic rather than isolated problems.
- Managing expectations, avoiding promises until progress is confirmed.
- Ensuring clear communication and timely updates, even when solutions take time.



## Sustainability Strategies

The initiative's sustainability rests on:

- Integrating BOCA 2.0 into the national strategy, backed by dedicated funding, to ensure real support for branches, members, and volunteers.
- Adopting a data-driven approach for long-term planning,
- Reviewing the 72-branch model for effectiveness and sustainability,
- Encouraging branches to operate more sustainably, streamlining processes like committee meetings through annual work plans and budgets. .
- Aligning branch priorities with national strategy to create better synergy across all levels.



## Transferability and Scaling

The model is designed for replication. Already, Irish branches are learning from international counterparts in Geneva and Budapest. The use of global Red Cross tools ensures adaptability to other national societies.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



***Start by listening to the community you want to support—make sure their voice is part of the conversation. Avoid duplicating efforts by collaborating with existing organisations; have open conversations to see how you can complement each other's work. Building community resilience is about different groups working together, each with a clear role, to address vulnerabilities. When crises happen, strong partnerships help communities respond calmly and effectively.***

Paraic McGahey, Irish Red Cross, 2025





## Integrated Readiness – The Red Cross Model for Everyday and Emergency Resilience

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

Tønsberg, Vestfold, Norway

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Norwegian Red Cross (Norges Røde Kors) – local branches supported by a joint district-level staff team

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

The Red Cross Rescue Corps was formally initiated in 1920, with local branch structuring evolving over time.

### MAIN OBJECTIVES

- To serve as an integrated component of Norway's official emergency services, supporting search and rescue operations, community preparedness, and health-related voluntary efforts. The overarching goal is to reduce and alleviate suffering and need—both in normal conditions and during crises.

The Norwegian Red Cross has operated locally in Vestfold and Telemark for decades. Through the Rescue Corps (Hjelpekorps), it serves as an integrated part of national emergency services. Its mission is to reduce and alleviate suffering, both in daily life and during crises.

Resilience, for the Red Cross, is both systemic and individual. Communities must have robust operational plans, and citizens must feel educated and supported. The Red Cross bridges these levels through preparedness, volunteer mobilisation and everyday humanitarian outreach.





## Core Activities and Approaches

The Red Cross Rescue Corps (Hjelpekorps) operates as a fully integrated part of the national rescue service, initiated and coordinated by police authorities. In the Vestfold region, five local rescue teams are coordinated through a unified alert system. Operations include:

- Search and rescue missions across local and neighboring districts
- Crisis preparedness planning and implementation
- Maintenance of digital alert systems with contingency plans for technology failure
- Stockpiling and logistical systems to ensure seven-day operational self-sufficiency
- Participation in the County Emergency Council (Fylkesberedskapsrådet) as an advisor to the County Governor (Statsforvalteren)

The district office provides support across both counties, while the local branches retain operational responsibilities for volunteer activities.

## Financing

- State compensation for lost gambling revenue (administered centrally)
- Local fundraising and grant applications (e.g., from Bufdir or county programs)
- Strategic partnerships with retail chains and corporate actors
- In-kind donations (e.g., food or goods during emergencies)
- Government emergency support for international projects (via Norad and MFA, though this is separate from domestic operations)

## Cross-sector cooperation

Red Cross cooperates formally and informally with a wide range of stakeholders:

- Public Sector: Operates within the state's Total Preparedness (Totalforsvaret) framework; directly activated by police for rescue; liaises with municipal emergency planners and County Governor's offices.
- Civil Society: Coordinates with other humanitarian actors such as the Women's Public Health Association (NKS), Norwegian People's Aid, and farmers' associations for local joint action.
- Private Sector: Maintains local agreements with stores and suppliers for emergency food and goods access; national partnerships through donation systems (e.g., bottle recycling scheme).
- Methods include scenario planning, digital resource mapping, volunteer databases, and tiered crisis response mechanisms.

Methods include scenario planning, digital resource mapping, volunteer databases, and tiered crisis response mechanisms.



## Achievements and Impact

The Red Cross is a trusted and expected presence in emergencies. Communities know they will receive support in floods, storms or accidents. Integration into official structures ensures rapid mobilisation and credibility. Locally, preparedness plans and youth engagement build trust and long-term resilience.

- Institutional trust and reliability: Red Cross is a stable and recognised actor in both daily support and crisis management.
- Community assurance: Residents expect Red Cross presence and support in the wake of emergencies.
- Operational readiness: Local branches maintain their own preparedness plans and can operate independently when needed.
- National recognition: Membership in emergency councils and strong cooperation with authorities reflects operational credibility.

## Community & volunteer engagement



Recruitment is locally driven through community events, municipal collaborations, national campaigns, and stands at public gatherings. Once new volunteers register interest, they are contacted within a few days by local coordinators to match them with relevant roles.

All volunteers undergo a mandatory introductory course (Startkurs) followed by role-specific training, including certification and background checks where needed. Activities span rescue, visiting services, prison support, youth programming, and humanitarian outreach. Structured onboarding, role-specific training and peer support ensure high motivation. Insurance coverage and flexible roles—from high-intensity rescue to low-threshold care—make volunteering accessible.

## Challenges & Solutions

- **Volunteer Supply and Uncertainty:** ensuring an adequate and consistent volunteer force is increasingly difficult. High turnover and fragmented commitment patterns undermine long-term capacity.
- **Systemic Blind Spots During Crises:** in large-scale emergencies, key volunteers may be reassigned to other services, and the organisation lacks full visibility on who remains available due to data privacy laws.
- **Personal Prioritisation During Disasters:** even committed volunteers may prioritise family safety or personal needs over operational duties in crisis scenarios - an unpredictable but natural limitation
- **Data Protection and Operational Readiness:** GDPR restrictions hinder cross-institutional personnel coordination, particularly in complex emergencies where volunteer roles overlap across agencies.
- Clear standard operating procedures
- Investment in digital systems with fallback analog protocols
- Structured volunteer training and delegation
- Internal stockpiles and infrastructure for independent continuity
- Advocacy for pre-approved collaboration agreements with other civic actors (e.g., volunteer centers)



## Sustainability Strategies

- Active participation in national preparedness planning
- Diversified financing through national redistribution of legacy gaming revenues, fundraising campaigns, and local grant applications
- Use of strategic planning frameworks like the Red Cross Evaluation Matrix ("Røde Korsvurdering") to determine whether to initiate new projects
- Continued investment in local collaboration, visibility, and youth engagement to secure the next generation of volunteers.



## Transferability and Scaling

The model is already replicated nationwide, with uniform legal and operational structure across branches. The Red Cross Evaluation Matrix ensures resources are allocated where there is clear societal need, avoiding overlap with other actors. The framework could be applied internationally to assess feasibility before launching new corps.

**The organisation views resilience as both systemic and individual: operational plans must align with public expectations, and citizens must be educated and engaged. Red Cross invests in both structural preparedness and in fostering a culture of local responsibility and trust.**

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



**Start by identifying concrete needs in the local community. Assess whether anyone else already fills that role. Focus on operational readiness and legal clarity. Build trust through consistent delivery—and collaborate without duplicating. Above all, remember: resilience is built before the crisis, not during it.**

Norwegian Red Cross, 2025



## Local Volunteer Centre Magdeburg

### GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE

The city of Magdeburg, Germany

### LEAD ORGANISATION

Volunteer Centre Magdeburg

### YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT

Founded in 2005; association established in December 2005; work commenced in spring 2006.

### MAIN OBJECTIVES



- Promotion of civic engagement through counselling, information, qualifications and project initiation
- Network partner to support civil society structures, administration and politics

Founded in 2005, the Volunteer Centre Magdeburg is the official contact point for civic engagement in the city. With a small, flexible structure of six employees and several volunteers, it provides counselling, training and initiates projects that strengthen volunteering. The centre serves as a neutral network partner, connecting civil society, administration and politics. Its central mission is to enable effective civic engagement, particularly in times of crisis.

For the Volunteer Centre Magdeburg, community resilience means maintaining flexible structures that can adapt to emergencies while supporting long-term civic participation. Rather than taking on operational crisis management, the centre acts as an intermediary and an information hub. Its role is to coordinate, advise and connect, ensuring that the energy of citizens complements but does not overlap with professional emergency services.



## Core Activities and Approaches

Everyday activities include counselling citizens, matching them with volunteering opportunities, providing training and initiating projects to strengthen participation.

In crises, the focus shifts to:

- Operating digital platforms and databases, e.g. a joint platform was established with the City of Magdeburg and other partners to transparently collect needs and offers of support.
- Coordinating spontaneous volunteer deployments for non-critical tasks.
- Serving as an information hub and mediator between citizens, civil society and municipal crisis teams.

For example, during the 2015/16 refugee crisis, the centre coordinated spontaneous help while avoiding overlap with emergency services. During floods, it supported clean-up efforts and household assistance rather than core rescue tasks. This clarity of roles ensured both efficiency and safety.

## Financing

The Volunteer Centre is primarily funded through public funds, complemented by donations, sponsorships and in-kind contributions from local businesses.

## Cross-sector cooperation

- The volunteer centre has strong links with municipal authorities, emergency response organisations, civil society groups and companies.
- From the outset of the Ukraine crisis, it was involved in the city's crisis team, enabling close coordination and rapid information sharing.
- Companies often supported the centre's work by making donations in kind or cash, which it coordinated as the recipient. For example, it accepted large donations in kind, such as suitcases from Aldi.

**Over the years, the centre has demonstrated that resilience grows from continuity – by being present in every crisis since 2005, it has built strong relationships and credibility with institutions and the community alike.**





## Achievements and Impact

The volunteer centre has been actively involved in various crises, including the refugee situation in 2015/2016, the Ukraine crisis, the Coronavirus pandemic, and flooding. The agency's focus was on providing structured information platforms and databases that enabled the efficient coordination of volunteers and resources. For instance, a joint platform was established with the City of Magdeburg and other partners to transparently record and communicate offers of assistance and requirements. This digital infrastructure was a significant improvement after previous crises. The volunteer centre primarily acted as a mediator and information hub.

**The work of the volunteer centre has helped many refugees gain a foothold and become volunteers themselves. Crisis work has also given rise to new initiatives and associations that contribute to long-term integration and community strengthening. The centre identifies gaps in the system and offers targeted support, such as childcare or help with cleaning up after floods.**

## Community & volunteer engagement



The centre is committed to treating volunteers with respect, organising recognition events such as thank-you parties after intensive crisis phases. Recognising that many volunteers only participate in crisis work temporarily, the volunteer centre supports a gentle exit from an active role, while ensuring that volunteers are not deleted from the database if they wish to become active again later.

## Challenges & Solutions

- Initially, one of the biggest challenges was clarifying responsibilities with municipal authorities and emergency services.
- Managing expectations has also been a challenge: not every volunteer task is suitable in crises.
- Over time, continuity of staff and stronger networks created trust and streamlined processes.
- The centre resolved this by carefully delineating volunteer roles and creating communication platforms that explain responsibilities clearly.



## Sustainability Strategies

The volunteer centre has significantly strengthened its resilience through experience of several crises. An important success factor is continuity within the team and among partners, enabling trust and efficient processes. The centre has learned to manage expectations regarding the capabilities of volunteer management and to optimise the use of digital tools, such as databases and apps. Handling sensitive data and access rights has also continuously improved. Great importance is placed on maintaining its technical systems, such as databases, and participating in new developments, particularly in artificial intelligence.



## Transferability and Scaling

Volunteer Centre Magdeburg demonstrates how a small, agile volunteer centre can provide large-scale impact. Its model of digital databases, neutrality and respectful volunteer management is easily adaptable to other cities.

## Lessons Learnt and Recommendations



***It is important to realistically assess your own resources and coordinate with others to maximise the benefits. The volunteer centre benefits from its many years of experience, acting as a neutral organisation that many partners value as a reliable point of contact.***

Birgit Bursee, Volunteer Centre Magdeburg, 2025



# Guidelines for Launching and Implementing Successful Community Resilience Initiatives

The case studies gathered in this manual highlight that while every context is unique, there are recurring lessons that can inspire and guide others. Below are key guidelines drawn from the collective experiences of organisations from Ireland, Germany, Norway, Croatia and Romania.

## 1. Start with Identifying Community Needs

Strong initiatives begin with listening. Take time to understand the real challenges and priorities of the community through surveys, focus groups and open dialogue. This foundation ensures that activities are relevant, rooted in local realities and welcomed by those they aim to support.

## 2. Build on Community Ownership

Resilient initiatives are strongest when they grow from within the community. Involve citizens, schools, and local groups from the outset so they feel the project is theirs. Community ownership ensures continuity and creates a sense of shared responsibility.

## 3. Diversify and Secure Funding

Financial sustainability depends on reducing reliance on a single source. Combine different streams — EU and national programmes, local authority budgets, donations, sponsorships and in-kind contributions. A broad financial base provides resilience against uncertainty.

## 4. Empower and Motivate Volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of community resilience initiatives. Keep them motivated by providing:

- a clear purpose and vision,
- opportunities for learning and growth,
- recognition and celebration of their contribution.

When volunteers are part of decision-making, they develop ownership and long-term commitment to the cause.

## 5. Strengthen Cross-Sector Collaboration

No single organisation can build resilience alone. Partnerships with local authorities, schools, businesses and civil society multiply impact. Collaboration ensures that resources are shared, duplication avoided and solutions are more innovative.

## 6. Adapt and Stay Flexible

Resilient initiatives respond to change. Keep participation open and inclusive, and adjust programmes to reflect evolving needs, whether this means shifting to food hubs during a pandemic or starting new activities to engage young people.



## 7. Measure Impact in Human and Practical Terms

Impact is not only about numbers. Collect both quantitative data (such as volunteer hours, event attendance) and qualitative evidence (personal stories, empowerment, stronger social ties). Together, these give a fuller picture of success.

## 8. Involve Young People Early

Engaging young people ensures fresh energy, continuity and sustainability. Schools and youth groups can act as gateways to building a culture of volunteering and resilience for future generations.

## 9. Focus on Inclusion and Social Cohesion

Resilience is not just about responding to crises, but about ensuring that all groups feel part of the community. Design activities that reach vulnerable or marginalised groups and create spaces where people can connect, learn and support one another. Inclusive practices ensure no one is left behind.

## 10. Prepare for Crises through Everyday Action

Crisis preparedness is not only about emergency drills. It is about building strong everyday networks. Strong volunteer networks, trusted communication channels and shared experience in everyday activities make communities more ready to respond effectively when crises arise.

## 11. Strengthen Democratic Participation

Resilience grows when communities practise democracy in everyday life. This means involving citizens not only as beneficiaries but as decision-makers, shaping priorities, co-creating solutions and holding institutions accountable. Whether through youth councils, participatory forums or open consultations, embedding democratic values builds trust, fairness and legitimacy. Stronger democracy leads to stronger resilience.

## 12. Share Knowledge and Inspire Others

Scaling and transferability often come from storytelling and peer exchange. Sharing experiences openly through networks, study visits or storytelling can spread good practices and inspire other communities to adapt and replicate successful models.

**What stands out across all case studies is that resilience is not built overnight. It is cultivated through trust, persistence and the everyday contributions of volunteers, organisations and communities. By combining strong partnerships, financial sustainability, inclusivity and the energy of volunteers, initiatives can not only respond to crises but also shape communities that are fairer, greener and more connected.**





## Useful Resources

- **AMARE-EU Toolkit: “Building Resilient Communities Without Leaving Those at High Risk of Exclusion Behind”**

A toolkit designed to support local authorities and organisations in developing inclusive and resilient communities.

<https://www.amareproject.eu/about-the-project/>

- **DIY Manual on Engaging Stakeholders and Citizens in Climate Adaptation**

A practical manual providing tools and methods for effectively engaging stakeholders and citizens in climate adaptation processes.

[https://climate-pact.europa.eu/eu-climate-action-academy/resources/diy-manual-engaging-stakeholders-and-citizens-climate-adaptation\\_en](https://climate-pact.europa.eu/eu-climate-action-academy/resources/diy-manual-engaging-stakeholders-and-citizens-climate-adaptation_en)

- **EU Resilience Compendium: Saving Lives and Livelihoods**

A collection of approaches, methodologies, and case studies aimed at strengthening resilience at multiple governance levels.

[https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/eu\\_resilience\\_compendium\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/resilience/eu_resilience_compendium_en.pdf)

- **EU-wide Resources on Adaptation & Climate Resilience**

A consolidated set of EU-level resources, tools, and solutions supporting climate adaptation and resilience-building.

<https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/solutions/resources>

- **Recovery and Resilience Plans – Supporting People Across the EU**

Guidance from the European Commission on how Recovery and Resilience Plans deliver support to people across EU Member States.

[https://commission.europa.eu/publications/recovery-and-resilience-plans-supporting-people-across-eu\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/recovery-and-resilience-plans-supporting-people-across-eu_en)

- **Updated Guidance on Recovery and Resilience Plans**

The latest recommendations and clarifications for the development and implementation of Recovery and Resilience Plans.

[https://commission.europa.eu/publications/updated-guidance-recovery-and-resilience-plans\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/updated-guidance-recovery-and-resilience-plans_en)

