

Eco upcycling training course is a non-formal education programme for people in the field of youth work, held from 20 to 28 October 2020 at the Hotel Bitoraj located in Fužine in mountainous Croatia. The program was organized by the NGO Institute of Youth Power Croatia and is the first of a total of three planned trainings within the broader ERASMUS + KA2 project Sew the future, which in accordance with the epidemiological situation, will seek to continue with partner organizations in Greece and Poland this year and the next.

In addition to five participants from Croatia, the training was attended by twenty other participants from Belgium, Greece, Italy and Poland. Participants were accommodated in double rooms, and the working language of the project was English. In this multicultural environment, project participants had the opportunity to learn theoretical knowledge and acquire practical skills on environmental issues such as sustainable development and green policies of the European Union and share examples of good and bad practices implemented at the national and local level in their countries of origin.

The group started with the workshops on October 21, the morning after arriving in Fužine, and the training facilitator was an experienced Croatian youth worker, Ivan Tomasić. Every day, the activities started with games such as ice breakers and other energizers, first led by Ivan, and later given to the participants to suggest and share with the group the games they learned by participating in previous international projects. Most of the activities were based on working in mixed groups, with some topics presented by national groups on the specifics of each country. The workshops included classic ways of expression such as making posters and visual and stage expression, but also the use of modern technology to create digital content such as audio-visual materials and photographs on given topics.

Throughout the project, the creativity and innovation of all participants was encouraged, and they all contributed to performing tasks in a way that suited them best, but also the participants were quite often more than happy to leave their comfort zones in order to gain new knowledge and competencies. The emphasis was on mutual cooperation in solving the set challenges and conducting constructive discussions on topics such as: green economy, youth unemployment, positive and negative sides of certain energy sources, sustainable policies and practices, human rights, 5R, performance and responsibility of individuals, nations and supranational organizations in environmental protection and the fight against climate change. Practical workshops included making jewelry from used plastic bottles, personalized gift bags made from recycled paper and collecting waste from the environment to create an exhibition of sculptures from garbage collected on the streets of Fužine. During the open space workshop, one of the participants held a practical workshop on the topic of zero waste, during which all participants learned how to make hygiene products such as toothpaste and soap from exclusively natural materials.

After each of the activities carried out, the formal part of the day always ended with reflections. After lunch, the participants spent most of their free time in nature, staying by the nearby lake, and in the evening, they watched educational films and organized intercultural dinners where they showed traditional dishes and customs and entertainment such as songs, dances and games from their countries.

Dorotea Strelec